

Opinion

A Kansas Viewpoint



It's the location

From The Hays Daily News
 First Amendment is absolute about speech but not about location.
 The First Amendment protection of free speech was for the town crier. It was so any citizen could stand on a street corner and criticize his government if he wanted and not get arrested — or executed — for it.
 The First Amendment was not created so that wackos could assault a grieving family at a funeral with hateful messages. The First Amendment might be absolute in its protections but not without any limits on time, place and manner.
 Kansas' own Fred Phelps and his now nationally notorious Westboro Baptist Church group test those limits. The anti-homosexuality crusaders, not content merely to protest on street corners, took to picketing at funerals of gay people. Now, in an especially warped twist to their theology, they picket at soldiers' funerals.
 But no one is trying to eliminate the message or silence the messengers. No one is trying to arrest any of them for their speech.
 What they are trying to do is give grieving families a little space. And doing that is a way both to respect the First Amendment and also be sensitive to the grieving family, as well as to the memory of men and women who make the ultimate sacrifice for our country — and its freedoms.

Congress now has passed, and President George Bush has signed, a law restricting demonstrations at national cemeteries.
 And 11 states have passed laws this year restricting funeral protests. Kansas is not one of them, though not for lack of trying.
 The restrictions likely are to be challenged in the courts. But they may be defended under the argument that funerals are not traditional public forums, so government can establish reasonable restrictions — again, not to squelch the speech but to limit primarily the distance.
 That is what the authors of the Constitution wanted to protect — to protect people from being arrested or censored solely for their speech.
 They did not envision a hate group, unlike any of us ever have witnessed, picketing at a gravesite funeral — any more than they could have imagined semi-automatic weapons when they put the freedom to bear arms in the Second Amendment.
 And that is the problem with an absolutist view. Defending a right of the Phelps clan to get into the faces of grieving families does more to undermine our beloved freedoms than to defend them.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail jvannostrand@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

Where to write, call

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- U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521
- U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124
- State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 303 SW 10th St. Rm. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorrison@ink.org web: www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorrison
- State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us



A turning point in Thomas County

When historians look at Thomas County 100 years from now, some will say Saturday's decision by the Kansas Board of Healing Arts to revoke Dr. Victor Hildyard's medical license cut deeper into an already gaping wound.
 Others will say it started a healing process.
 Either way, supporters of both sides of the situation must now look to the future and decide how they want Thomas County to be viewed.



Jan Katz Ackerman

• From Where I stand

Do the residents want Thomas County to be viewed as a place that's dying or a place that's thriving?
 But the county is not only being viewed by current residents and those in surrounding counties, it's also being viewed by potential Thomas County residents.
 For instance, if you were an outsider thinking about moving to Colby or Thomas County, what would you have thought after visiting the area this week and reading papers and talking to folks?
 Would you want to relocate here?
 Would you bring your family to a community tearing itself apart with strife?
 It's questions like these that city and county fathers, as well as individual fathers, mothers and business owners need to be asking themselves.
 How can a community grow with darkness surrounding it?
 Will people take measures to apply a much needed ointment to a situation that's been ongoing for years, and looks to be ongoing for some time in the future?
 Over and above the outcome of Dr. Hildyard's efforts to retain his license, will Thomas County residents appeal to the deeper part of their spirit and find a way to bring harmony back to the area?
 Long-term battles like the one currently engulfing Thomas County only stand to deteriorate things unless people demand they improve.
 What can a person do on an individual basis to

turn darkness into light?
 Each and every person can dust off the Golden Rule, memorize, then recite and live by it.
 Through the next days, weeks and possibly months as Thomas County continues to watch the situation with Dr. Hildyard's license unfold, hopefully people can remember what the Good Book tells us about being kind to one another.
 For instance, in the 13th chapter of the book of Hebrews we are told we should not forget to entertain strangers because some have "unwittingly entertained angels" by doing so.
 I'm sure the Good Lord was talking about more than people we don't know here, but people in our families, our neighborhood, our community and its surrounding area as well.
 Are we acting kindly toward each other so that in the instance we've entertained an angel we'll one day hear "Well done, my good and faithful servant." (Matt. 25)
 Just a thought to ponder.
 Speaking of historians and what they record, did you know today is Hee Haw Day, marking the debut of the television show on June 15, 1969. Critics hated the show and it lasted 20 years.
 It's also Recess at Work Day, which means you should have spent part of today outside playing.

And, it's National Go Fly a Kite Day, but thinking back to my point to ponder you can't go tell someone to go fly a kite.
 It's also National Nursing Assistants' Day and the beginning of Nursing Assistants' Week. So say thank you to the next nurse you encounter.
 But my favorite part of today is that it's National Sneak a Kiss Day. Grab your spouse or significant other, your kid, parent or whoever you won't offend and give them a kiss and wish them a happy day.
 June 15 also can be remembered for some other pretty neat facts.
 Such as on this day in 1860 Florence Nightingale started her school for nurses at St. Thomas Hospital in London.
 For you sports fans out there, June 15 was the day in 1928 when during a triple steal, 41-year-old Ty Cobb stole home the 50th and final time in his 24-year major-league career. Cobb's Tigers beat the Indians 12-5.
 On this day in 1956, John Lennon met Paul McCartney in Woolton, England, at a church party. Lennon was 15 and McCartney was 13.
 Today's also the day in 1992 that United States Vice-President Dan Quayle advised a Trenton, New Jersey, elementary school student to spell the word potato "p-o-t-a-t-o-e." Oops!
 And only two years ago today, Tim Berners-Lee received the \$1.2 million Millennium Technology award in Helsinki, Finland, for creating the World Wide Web, which helped me compile this data of which you are now reading.
 Have a great weekend.
Jan Katz Ackerman is a reporter for the Colby Free Press.

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What do we do with the prisoners?

By Steve Haynes
 The suicides of three prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, brought howls of protest from prisoner-rights groups in the U.S. and around the world, but not one solid suggestion about what to do with the vicious terrorists held there.
 Apparently, the U.S. is just supposed to release these people and let them go back to their deadly ways. Is that what we want to see?
 President George Bush has proposed trying the terrorists before military tribunals, which presumably could find some innocent and sentence others to long terms. Where they would be held is anybody's guess.
 Prisoners of war normally are held until the fighting ceases, but these prisoners do not fall into that category, at least not according to the administration. They are being held as "illegal enemy combatants" but are not accused of violating U.S. laws.
 In most wars, of course, enemy soldiers are identified with the nation they serve. There is

someone to represent them and to return them to when the war is over.
 This war is different, and the U.S. has no model to follow on how to treat these prisoners. They fight for shadowy movements, not governments. They owe allegiance to ideals, not nations.
 In short, they do not fit neatly into the categories established in previous conflicts.
 The war on terrorism may only have begun. The U.S. and our allies are fighting it on dozens of fronts around the world, with ground troops and intelligence agencies, aircraft and spies.
 No one knows the rules. No one knows when the war will be over. It has no declared beginning and likely will have no clear end.
 So what do we do with the prisoners?
 Guantanamo Bay was a creative solution to an immediate problem. Taking the prisoners there avoided bringing them to U.S. soil or housing them with some ally.
 Wherever they are held, there will be trouble.

The prisoners showed last month they will cause trouble for their jailers at any time, in any way they can. Most are dedicated radicals sworn to fight the American devil.
 Bringing them to the U.S. hardly seems desirable.
 No friendly nation would want them. We can't just release them and tell them to behave.
 Mr. Bush's plan to try them seems reasonable, but it has been held up by legal action. The president has to wait for the Supreme Court to rule.
 Meantime, the whole gang just brews trouble. You can't blame the prisoners for being unhappy, but you can blame them for being terrorists.
 They belong behind bars. Most probably deserve worse.
 It would be nice to hear some reasonable suggestions about what, short of turning them loose, the U.S. should do with them. — *Steve Haynes*
Steve Haynes is owner of Nor'West Newspapers including the Colby Free Press

About those letters . . .

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

