

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

Diners are voting with their dollars

From The Hays Daily News

The U.S. surgeon general recently reported that second-hand smoke is indeed harmful — as harmful as smoking itself. Within hours, Kansas health officials announced their consideration of a statewide ban on smoking in public places. We say: Slow down. Measures that would affect many businesses' bottom line and that would restrict the personal liberties of smokers need to be weighed carefully and prudently. Public policy decisions, even with the best of intentions, should not be knee-jerk reactions to any report. ...

Carmona detailed grim statistics, including the fact that more than 35,000 nonsmokers a year die from heart disease caused by secondhand smoke. It can increase the risk of a nonsmoker getting heart disease or lung cancer. It also puts children at risk of sudden infant death syndrome and other illnesses such as bronchitis and pneumonia.

Such findings are not surprising. Nor are they disputable. But even though 17 states and hundreds of towns, cities and counties — including 11 cities in Kansas — have passed strong no-smoking laws, that is not necessarily the best approach.

Consider the city of Hays. No ordinance prohibits smoking in public places, yet the number of restaurants and bars where one can smoke has dwindled considerably in recent years. Why? The marketplace has demanded it. Diners are voting with their dollars. ...

Kansas Department of Health and Environment Secretary Rod Bremby stopped short of demanding a state-imposed ban. But he did leave the door open when he said: "We will continue to monitor that as a policy alternative."

Legislators should not consider it as a viable alternative. Let the free market run its course.

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774

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: jmorriso@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

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@nwkans.com or pdecker@nwkans.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.



Book reveals struggles of small-town life

I'm not in the habit of giving my opinion about books I read, but anyone who enjoys reading, history or court news will be delighted to read "A Matter of Chastity, the High Plains Saga of a Woman's Revenge," by Douglas Yocom.

Yocom brings to life court proceedings as outlined by 1894 Norton County District Court documents. He tells the story of a murder which his own grandmother became the defendant. Yocom tells the story as if it was he who was reporting for the local newspaper.

Not only does Yocom capture the courtroom activities of nineteenth century Norton, he intertwines the account of a rape which prompted Ellen Lunney and two co-defendants, John McKeniff and Tom Lunney, being on trial.

While McKeniff and Tom Lunney were later cleared of charges, Yocom writes that it wasn't until he was an adult that he learned of the murder trial and conducted his research for writing the book.

A story his family members rarely talked about, Yocom tells how small-town Kansas life presented hardships endured by those living on the plains. He writes about buffalo rushes which lasted nearly two days, conditions presented by horse and buggy travel, and a lifestyle which was less rushed than our hurried one of today.

A well written book, "A Matter of Chastity," is one which captures the reader's attention right from the start and makes it hard to put down.

Just over 200 pages, Yocom dedicated the book to his grandmother, Ella as she was often referred to, "who endured more than we knew."



Jan Katz Ackerman

• From Where I stand

Whew, some 18 down and about eight to go, give or take a few and not including those created by greeting cards companies.

I'm talking about holidays. I like holidays as much as the next person, but just think of the hours we spend getting ready for and cleaning up from a holiday. That's why I prefer the in-between-holiday-time the best.

And for those who have to cook for the holidays, suffice it to say it's a mess.

I'll never forget the first holiday after my children's dad returned from Germany where he had been an Army cook for several years. Let's leave it at that we ate well and had leftovers for days.

He had a tough time downsizing his recipes from 400 to four.

I didn't have to cook for most of my first marriage, and when it was just my daughter and me, well, I about had a panic attack the first time I went to the store alone.

I remember a friend coming along side of me in the freezer section and telling me to let go of the door handle. She asked how long I had been

standing there, to which I couldn't answer but to say, I didn't realize there were so many brands of peas.

In years past, all I had to do was help carry groceries in and put them away.

How spoiled I was. And now, cooking for two is just about as bad. I understand why so many older couples, and singles too, frequent the restaurant. If it was up to me, I'd never cook and only eat out.

I'm told eating out gets old, but I'd sure like to try it for a while.

A friend of mine sent me a bunch of Christian one-liners. Here are ones I liked best. Pick your favorite:

Don't let your worries get the best of you; remember, Moses started out as a basket case.

Some people are kind, polite, and sweet-spirited until you try to sit in their pew.

Many folks want to serve God, but only as advisors.

The good Lord didn't create anything without a purpose, but mosquitoes come close.

Some minds are like concrete thoroughly mixed up and permanently set.

Don't wait for six strong men to take you to church.

If God is your co-pilot - swap seats!

He who angers you, controls you!

Hey, want to make God giggle? Tell him your plans!

Jan Katz Ackerman is a reporter for the Colby Free Press

Your turn

Postal services assists community papers

Azeezaly S. Jaffer, vice president Public Affairs and Communications U.S. Postal Service Washington

This letter is in response to your recent editorial, "Sharp increase in postage could deepen postal woes," in the May 31 issue of *The Oberlin Herald*. (The same editorial ran in the June 2 *Colby Free Press*.)

There is no better time than this year, the 300th anniversary of the birth of Benjamin Franklin, to remind your readers of the U.S. Postal Service's rich tradition of connecting people to their community newspapers. Franklin was not only the nation's first postmaster general, but also a newspaper publisher. In fact, during the early days of the Post Office Department, newspaper publishers often served as postmasters, which helped them to gather and distribute news.

If Mr. Franklin were alive today, he might be scratching his head over the assertions made recently on your editorial page as he would understand the challenges faced by any postmaster general and the costs associated with getting the mail delivered every day.

Nobody likes to pay more for postage, and we

don't like to announce proposed rate increases. But just like any other business, when the cost of doing business goes up we have to raise prices to cover those costs. As one of the nation's largest transportation and delivery organizations, the Postal Service is extremely sensitive to rising energy costs. We have also experienced significant growth in health benefit payments. That is why proposed rate adjustments for 2007 include a rate increase to mail local newspapers to subscribers. Despite what you may have heard, this increase is not designed to drive away community newspapers. Instead, it is required by law to cover associated costs.

For the past 20 years, rate increases for local newspapers (technically termed "In-County Periodicals") generally have not only been smaller than those of the other periodicals subclasses, but also lower than the overall rate increase for all domestic mail. In-county rates are much lower than any other postage rate. For instance, they are much lower than even a similar nonprofit newspaper mailed from the local office and delivered to the same address. In January of this year, there was even a 2.3 percent rate

reduction for In-County publications, when virtually all other mail got a more than five percent rate increase.

There are some suggestions, we believe emanating from Washington, that next year's proposed increase for mailing newspapers could run as high as 30 percent. Let's look at this with real numbers. The fact is the increase would only amount to a couple of pennies. The new price for most community newspaper mailings would be 9 cents to 11 cents, depending on weight and where it is entered into the mail stream. Sound like a good deal? It is, especially when you consider community newspapers often receive same-day service. Think about it, local newspapers often get Express Mail service (currently \$14.40 for a Flat Rate Envelope) for about a dime!

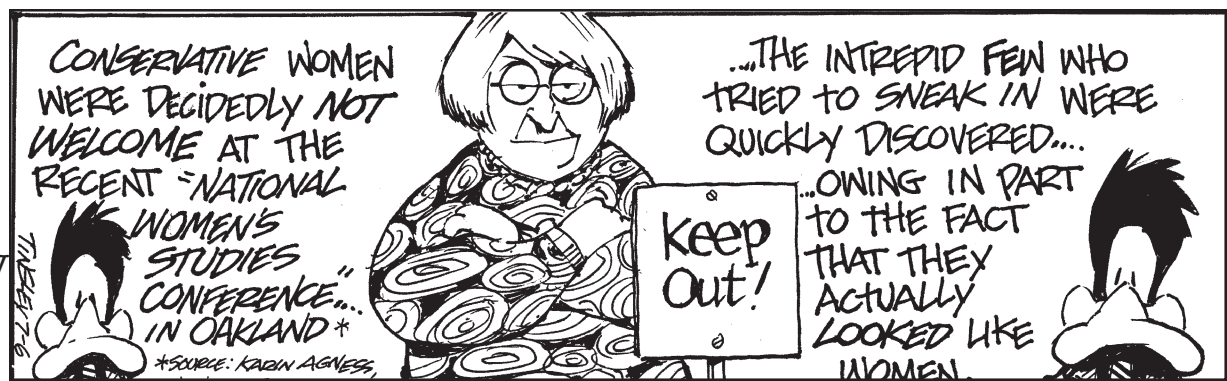
The very low rates that In-County publications pay have always been a bargain and will continue to be a bargain. We will always strive to keep these rates as low as possible because community newspapers serve a vital function in American society. That was true in Benjamin Franklin's day and is true today.

About those letters . . .

The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company