

# Opinion

## Free Press Viewpoint



### Vegetables are good for you and TV

The NBC television network may have learned their lesson. Next month, NBC will air VeggieTales as part of its Saturday morning lineup geared towards kids. VeggieTales is a Christian-based animated series that emphasizes many aspects of the Bible. The main characters are talking vegetables, named Bob and Larry. Exactly what NBC and VeggieTales agreed on for content is yet to be seen, but considering how popular and strong VeggieTales is, it is a safe bet the people behind VeggieTales, Big Idea, will do the job right. Even Big Idea's slogan fits, "Sunday morning values, Saturday morning fun."

NBC's last attempt at something Christian was abysmal. Not long ago, viewer and ad support behind "The Book of Daniel" sit-com were outraged at what was in that show.

"The Book of Daniel" was promoted as a show in which Jesus appeared as a recurring character. But the show incorporated about everything Christianity opposes. The substance abuse and immoralities became the focal points of the show. Very few people liked it. Advertisers stopped running their ads. Viewers stopped watching. NBC noticed the disaster and pulled the plug on it.

Now what is usually aired on Saturday mornings should not be compared to what the networks look for on prime-time slots, but VeggieTales is another step in the right direction for the "screen" media.

In the last few years, there have been some excellent and popular movies with a Christian-theme. "The Passion of the Christ" was a blockbuster movie, even though none of Hollywood's major studios wanted to carry it.

Last winter, the C.S. Lewis' book-turned-movie "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" was another hit. Then there was "End of the Spear," a true story about missionaries work in South America.

If VeggieTales and NBC have a good partnership, maybe that will help convince the other networks to think about what kind of content they want in all their shows, and not just on Saturday mornings.

*John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press*

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](mailto:jvannostrand@nwkansan.com) or [pdecker@nwkansan.com](mailto:pdecker@nwkansan.com). Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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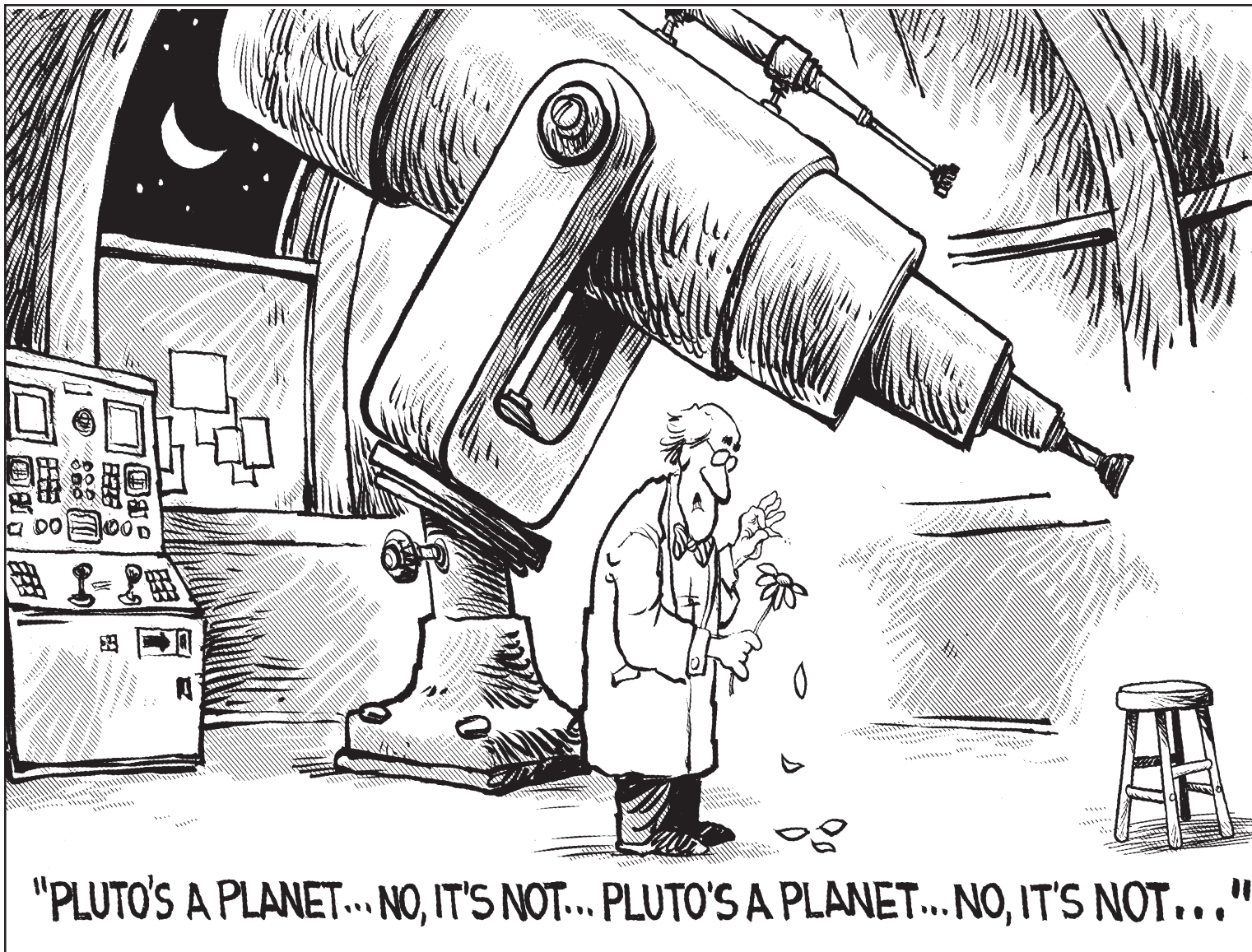
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## Questions and answers

Today's publication includes a special section honoring the 50th birthday of the interstates. The section has articles ranging from historical viewpoints to places of interest and much more.

Along with the contributions from Goodland, St. Francis and Colby, along with the many sources willing to help us, we also owe a big thank you to our advertisers who made this section possible.

As a tribute to the section and for those who enjoy trivia, I pulled some questions from a book compiled by Barbara Brackman about Interstate 70 and other locations not too far off the beaten path. Maybe some readers might even remember a few of these questions from a previous article.

Still, I thought it would be a great idea to kick off the interstate's birthday celebration.

To start off, let's see if anyone knows the answer to this unique sight along I-70.

- Motorists can see this natural wonder along I-70 in Russell County as it drops seven inches a year. What is it? Answer: A sinkhole where the underlying salt structures are collapsing. The **Crawford Sinkhole** is at mile marker 179.



**Patty Decker**  
• Deep Thoughts

Now for a few easy questions:

- Where is the "Oasis on the Plains?" I sure hope everybody knows this one — **Colby** and, yes, this was a question in Brackman's book.
- WaKeeney is about 60 miles from Colby east on Interstate 70, but how many remember how the town got its name? The founders were

Mr. Keeney and Mr Warren and thus the reason for the capital "K."

- In 1939, Dr. Karl A. Menninger (Menninger Clinic was located just off Interstate 70 in Topeka) psychoanalyzed Kansas in an article called, "Bleeding Kansas," and diagnosed the state as suffering from what? Answer: **An inferiority complex.**
- Here's another one we should all know the answer to: At 4,039 feet, what's the highest spot in Kansas? Answer: **Mount Sunflower.**
- Although quite a ways south of I-70, maybe you still might know what town in Kansas is known as the Pinto Bean Capital? Answer: **Leoti.**
- What town located north of I-70 is the oldest city in Kansas? Answer: **Leavenworth.**
- Although this singer and an actor were not born in towns along I-70, maybe you can still guess who the rock star born in Hutchinson was. (Hint: He was a member of the Beach Boys.) Answer: **Mike Love.** As for the actor, some hints

include that he was born in Dodge City and starred in movies to include *Easy Rider* and *Rebel Without a Cause*? Answer: **Dennis Hopper** (I bet the movie *Easy Rider* gave it away)

- Since we are on the subject of famous people, here's what should be another easy question. What Colby native, born in 1942, was for a time the *primo basso* with the New York City Opera and has also performed with the Metropolitan Opera? If you guessed **Sam Ramey**, you are correct!
- Kansas artist John Steuart Curry (1897-1946) was commissioned to do a series of paintings in his home state, but the works proved so controversial that the commission was canceled and the painter allegedly died of a broken heart.
- Where are Curry's unfinished paintings located? Answer: On the second floor of the state capitol building in **Topeka.**
- Although not really related to the interstate, here's just a couple of interesting questions.
- At the Cincinnati Centennial Exposition in 1888, Kansas had an impressive building of exhibits that was guarded by a giant figure of what creature? Answer: **The grasshopper.**
- What happened on "Black Friday," 1935? Answer: **The worst dust storm to hit Kansas blew across the state.**

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*Decker is editor of the Free Press. Her column appears on Fridays.*

## Parents should worry about teen drivers

**From The Wichita Eagle**

Parents are right to worry about putting their teens behind the wheel. It's hard to ignore the sobering statistics:

- In Kansas, teens make up less than 7 percent of registered drivers but account for 20 percent of traffic accidents.
- Car crashes are the leading cause of death for 15- to 18-year-olds.
- In 2004, 51 Kansas teens died in car accidents and almost 6,000 were injured.
- And 85 percent of Kansas teens who died in those 2004 wrecks weren't wearing seat belts.

The numbers don't lie: We're giving teenagers too much freedom, too soon behind the wheel — and it's costing lives.

Kansas has one of the weakest teen driving laws in the nation: A kid can get a learner's permit at 14 and an unrestricted license at 16.

Many experts think that's too much, too soon. "The way we've licensed young drivers has really been analogous to teaching someone to swim by shoving them into deep water and hoping they survive," Robert Foss, a teen driving researcher, told The Eagle.

He and others would like to see a more graduated, transitional approach to teen licensing in Kansas, including a period of driving with nighttime or teen passenger restrictions, or both.

Both rules make sense: Kansas is one of only six states that doesn't have nighttime driving restrictions. ... Plus, teens are more likely to be

distracted when other teens are in the car — and they're more likely to want to show off and take risks for peers.

The Legislature should also take another look at banning cell phone use by teen drivers, another major distraction; a similar law passed last year by Colorado could be a model.

AAA Kansas would like to raise the learner's permit age to 16 and the unrestricted driving age to 18. That's probably a stretch, but some raising of the bar is needed.

Teens won't like any of these ideas.

Don't think of new restrictions as punishing teens but rather ensuring that they get the level of training they need to be safe, responsible drivers.

### 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. These are used for verification of the writer only. If, however, you want your address and telephone number to appear with your letter, please ask us to do so when you submit your letter, or include a note with your letter. 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. You can expect your letter to appear in print within 24-48 hours of receipt. Letters to the Free Press allow readers to become engaged in public debate on topics they deem important. Please consider sharing your thoughts with the family of Colby Free Press readers. Thank you.

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

