

Opinion

Free Press Viewpoint



Good games need good fans

By John Van Nostrand

Of all the things to take to a sports game these days, one thing that should not be forgotten is advice from Fred White.

White, who broadcast Kansas City Royals games on the radio, told a Colby crowd last year, "The closer you are to the field, the harder the game is to play."

How true.

Tonight is the start of a new season for Colby Eagle football. The team has a new coach and fans are anxious to see what Bob Ray will do to the program that has not won a game since September 2004.

But please don't make judgment of Ray after tonight's game against Hoxie, or even after his first season. Let Ray and the other coaches do what they think is right. They have spent the time with the student-athletes.

Sports can be a good escape from our routines. Watching our kids score touchdowns, cross the finish line and spike the air out of the volleyball is a good escape from the mortgage payment, leak in the radiator and what is in the "in" box at the office.

But what sports does not need is a stadium full of fans who think they know more than the coach, always have a better plan for a player and are quick to criticize an official. Our student-athletes don't need that kind of support. Our schools and towns don't need that kind of reputation — no matter what is on the scoreboard.

If fans want to make an impact, they should make it a good one. It's OK to admit an opposing team has a good player or made a good play. Before yelling at an official for missing a call, first remember the mistake you made at your job.

Would you want your favorite team's coach or a referee standing over your shoulder watching you work and telling you what you do wrong?

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

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: 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

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John Van Nostrand - Publisher
jvannostrand@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor
pdecker@nwkansas.com

Tisha Cox - General Assignment
tcx@nwkansas.com

Jan Katz Ackerman, Area Reporter
ackermanjk@ruraltel.net

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director
crystalr@nwkansas.com

Jasmine Crottinger - Advertising Sales
jasminec@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Lea Bandy - Circulation Manager
lea@nwkansas.com

Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping & Ad Building
japplegate@nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansas.com

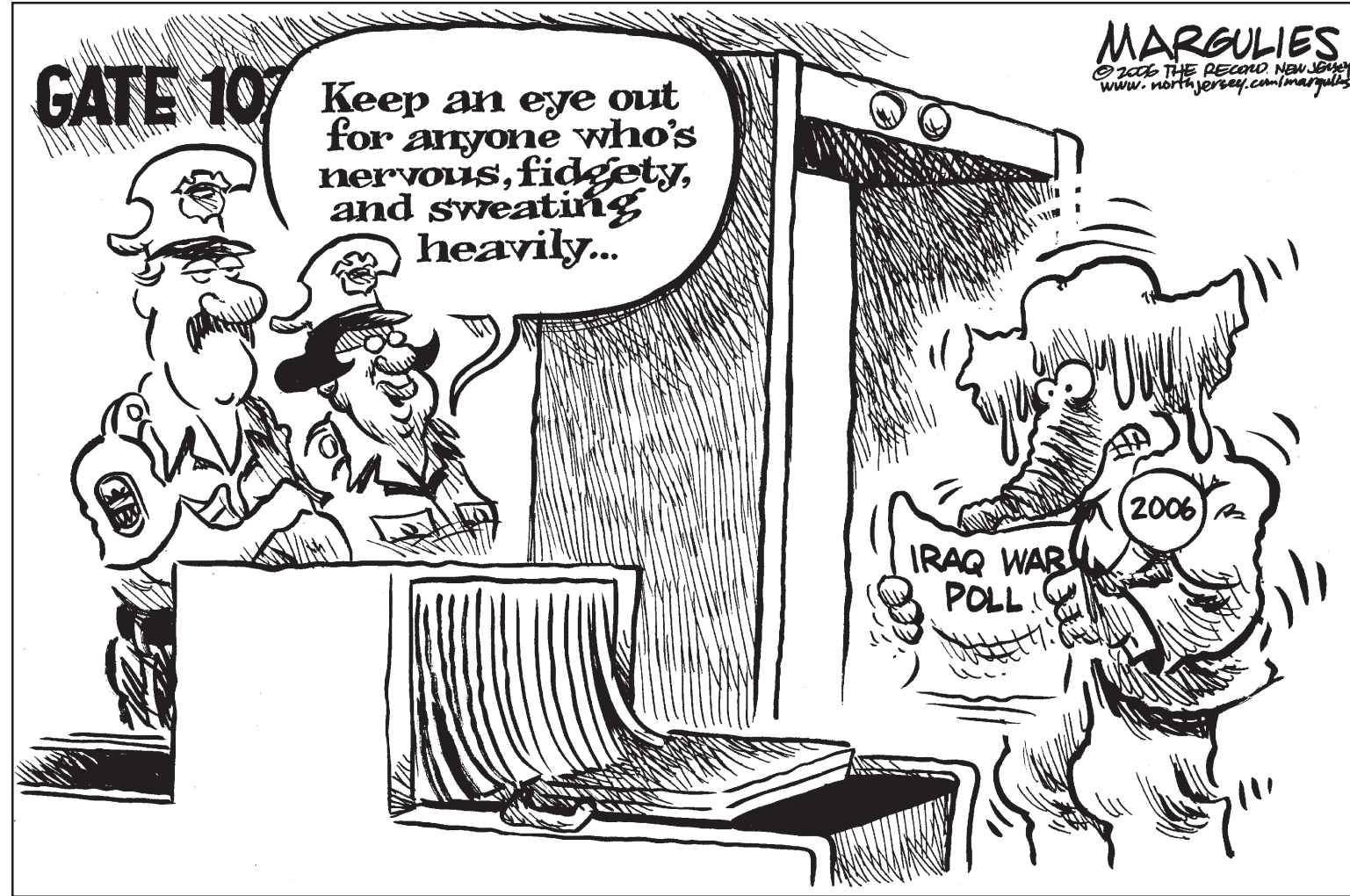
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The other corner of the state

For the last few days, I was out of town visiting our son at Benedictine College in Atchison and our daughter, who has been living in Berlin, Germany for the past two years.

It was so good to see Tracy, in particular, since she has been out of the country for so long and I have missed her very much.

Atchison is the place for many of our family get-togethers because not only is it our hometown, but it's also about halfway for us in the west and the rest of my family driving from the east.

I also feel connected when I go there because it was my father's birthplace and many of our relatives on his side lived, worked and died there.

Although I was very young when we moved from Atchison (about 3 years old), it still holds a certain appeal.

What has been unique about Atchison in recent years is my older brother, Pete, stumbled into a renewed love for the town and shared that experience with myself and my other brother. In fact, he wrote about his reasons for returning.

For those of us who love Kansas — whether we were born here or transplanted — it sure was good for me to reconnect with my own past.

In fact, I discovered recently Darlene Gillespie (Lyle's wife) was from Atchison and her father owned the Ford dealership there.

The following is a trip down memory lane as written by my older brother. As for myself, it was enjoyable and may spark new connections here in Colby. In God's world, there is always more to be revealed and, as I said, maybe these memories will strike a chord with someone else here.

Initially, my reasons for visiting Atchison were strictly personal and for the most part unrelated to the characteristics of the town.

It was my father's hometown and the place I lived for my first seven years. My father, Warren Tracy, was born in 1924 and was a 1942 graduate of Atchison High School. Upon graduation he went into the Army and was sent to Europe where he received a "battlefield promotion" to second lieutenant.

When World War II ended, we returned to Atchison and dad attended St. Benedict's College on the G.I. Bill. He was recalled to the Army for the Korean War, but graduated from St. Bene-



Patty Decker

• Deep Thoughts

dict's in 1952. We ultimately left Atchison in 1955 when he took a position in Kansas City and we moved to a new ranch-style house in suburban Merriam (near Overland Park).

During my years in Atchison our home was at 1125 Atchison Street. My best friend was a kid named Mike Calovich and together we began first grade at Sacred Heart School in the fall of 1952.

Mike's father was Matt Calovich, the owner of the Nash Dealership which I believe was located in the general vicinity of the current River House Restaurant. I can remember being driven to the Fox Theater in their "bathtub" Nash to see movies like "Peter Pan" and "Davy Crockett." In the second grade I transferred to Martin School where one of our neighbors, Miss Townsend, was a teacher.

Commercial Street (prior to the Mall) was a focal point of many of my early memories of Atchison. Those included going to movies at the Fox and Orpheum Theaters. The smell of baked goods from Vick's Bakery. Ice cream from the Velvet Freeze. Lunch at Thompson's Restaurant, home of the best coleslaw in the world, shopping at Ball Brother's Drug Store when it was located to the west of the present location on the north side of the street and the department store where I purchased my beloved Cub Scout uniform. I loved going down to Commercial Street.

Following our move, my family would return periodically to Atchison to visit my grandmother who had a farm approximately seven miles north in Doniphan County. We would ride into town for groceries or to see a movie, and this maintained my connection with the town. One of the landmarks I remembered was the home of Fred Stein located at the corner of Fourth and Santa Fe. My father and grandmother had worked for

Mr. Stein and I can recall meeting him.

It was actually my link to Fred Stein's house that sparked my interest in becoming an Atchison tourist. Following a visit to my brother in Kansas City, I decided to take a detour and drive through Atchison. It was then I discovered that Fred Stein's house had been converted into the St. Martin's Bed and Breakfast owned by Janet and John Settich. Unannounced, I stopped in and was graciously given a tour of the house by the Settiches.

Prior to this visit, it had never occurred to me to think of Atchison as a destination. I decided to learn more and did a little research on the history of our quaint little river town. A 1970s book on the Victorian houses of Atchison Kansas further fueled my interest and I made reservations at the St. Martin's Bed and Breakfast. For the first time since 1955 I spent the night in Atchison.

John and Janet Settich provided a lot of information and with the book as my guide, my wife, Wanda, and I began walking and biking around the city. We were stunned by the sheer number of spectacular Victorian homes, the hilly terrain, and the beauty of the Missouri River. We later discovered the revitalized downtown area with incredible "destination stores" such as Nell Hill's. A couple of years ago, we went to Atchison to attend the River Bend Art Festival and then we visited Atchison on July 4, 2004, for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Celebration.

I suppose you can say I've come full circle. I feel a strong connection to Atchison and our mutual history. My father's family came to Kansas from Maine in the late 1850s to assure Kansas would become a free-state. My grandmother, Hattie Roundy Tracy (later Miller), proudly told of how the family came to the area because of their commitment to freedom and opposition to the spread of slavery to the Kansas Territory.

Maybe this column might inspire others here in Colby to talk about their personal memories here or elsewhere in Kansas. I know I would like to hear about them.

Decker is editor of the *Free Press*.

The energy behind Kansas

From The Hutchinson News

Kansas leaders stepped up to be renewable energy leaders recently, setting an example not only for environmentalism, but for innovative approaches to expanding the state's economy.

Rep. Jerry Moran joined state lawmakers to commit to a goal for the country to satisfy a larger percent of its energy needs with renewable fuels within the next two decades.

Specifically, the movement is known as 25x'25, a goal for the nation to supply 25 percent of its energy demand with renewable sources by the year 2025.

... Moran is the first Kansas congressman to pledge support for 25x'25. The Kansas Legislature is among four legislatures nationwide to endorse the initiative, and Gov. Kathleen

Sebelius is among 13 governors who have signed on.

The goal is not unreasonable. It is completely feasible, but it does take genuine commitment.

Already, the potential for renewable energy industry is materializing in Kansas.

Two large wind farms are in operation, and a third, located in Spearville, is just now coming online.

Meanwhile, the state has eight grain-based ethanol plants operating, with several more in development.

A traditional energy company even is getting into the game. Recently, Hays-based Sunflower Electric announced it would incorporate renewable energy production even as it expands its coal-fired power plant in Holcomb, near Garden

City. The company also will produce ethanol, biodiesel and methane, recycling byproducts from the various plants and eliminating virtually all waste.

The addition of a bioenergy center to Sunflower's Holcomb expansion is another example of environmental leadership and business innovation. Ultimately, energy companies such as Sunflower Electric need to recognize the value of renewable energy for them to flourish.

Moran, Sebelius and others should continue to be on the forefront of this issue, not just talking about renewable energy but pushing supportive legislation at the national and state levels. It is environmentally conscious and economically opportunistic for Kansas.

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

