

# Opinion

## Free Press Viewpoint



### Lesson for us all

The real story behind the tragic shooting deaths of the Amish school students in Pennsylvania on Monday should be an inspiration to us all.

Amish communities, which dot some Midwest and eastern states, are well known. Amish people and their ultra-conservative lifestyle do not use electricity and many other conveniences and technology the rest of the world uses every minute of the day.

Amish people rely upon their deep, highly developed faith in God to provide for them.

Amish farmers use horses, not tractors. Some Amish farmers claim crops produce better without using tractors. Amish farmers do not purchase crop insurance. If a storm ruins the crop, Amish farmers are not to ask for compensation. They are supposed to live with it and make do with what they have.

It's unfortunate, and borderline insulting, some organizations near Amish communities use the Amish as a tourist attraction just because their conviction not to live the ways of the world millions of others do.

It's not what Amish don't live with that matters — it's how they live.

Amish communities take great care and consideration about how they should interact with the rest of society. Some Amish communities have approved to be taken somewhere by an automobile, use a telephone for emergency situations and work with some gasoline-powered equipment. They do know how modern conveniences work.

It's hard not to think some of the talking heads and reporters near that school think Amish don't know about gun shots and tragic deaths. For a certain group of people who have lived outside of society for centuries to be suddenly thrown into one of America's biggest ills, the national media wonders how they will deal with it.

But even though Amish don't live with on buttons and extension cords, does not mean they don't know about struggles in life. Amish may be better prepared for struggle than anybody else because of their faith.

According to a Lancaster, Penn., newspaper Marian Fisher, 13, one of the students killed, told the gunman to shoot her first as a way to protect the younger kids in class. Marian's sister, Barbie, 11, said the same thing, was wounded but survived. Girls as young as 7 and 8 were killed before the gunman turned the gun on himself.

Marian and Barbie must be remembered for their incredible selflessness and sacrifice even at such young ages. Those girls knew what to live for.

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

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### Planning for a baby

Even though I am out of the child-bearing years, I still have friends who are either planning to have a baby or are pregnant now.

Who knows, maybe even one day I will be a grandmother.

What got me to thinking about babies is something a good friend said last night. She is almost full-term with her first child and we got to talking about how she was feeling.

I said things like, "You don't look like you have dropped," or "How have the contractions been?"

In response, my friend talked about stations, effacements and, in general, left me scratching my head.

Maybe it's a generational thing, but when I was pregnant with my two children more than 20 years ago, I knew the basics and that was about it. More than likely the Internet has done much in getting information out, but still, it is something — how much moms know as compared to what we knew 20 plus years ago.

Not only is my buddy more educated on her pregnancy and delivery, but she's also extremely organized. She has been ready for her little girl's arrival almost since the day she found out she was pregnant.

Yes, she even knows the gender of her child. I can remember asking the technician when I had an ultrasound, but he wouldn't tell me and if the truth be known, I am not sure I really wanted to know. Today, however, all parents have to do is ask and they can find out whether to buy pink or blue clothes.

Getting back to my friend's baby — she has the crib, diapers, clothes (for the next two years), rocking chair, changing table, etc. etc. all ready



**Patty Decker**

#### • Deep Thoughts

to go. That sure wasn't the case with my first child. We were college students when our daughter was born and I was thrilled having a bassinet, let alone anything else. The changing table was the bed and we relied heavily on help from our parents for clothes, diapers and other accessories. In my friend's situation, I think it's a lot better. She is ready and waiting, which is a good thing rather than hit or miss like we were.

The one thing that hasn't changed about having a baby though is the joy, anticipation, and even the nervousness, anxiety and downright fear before delivery.

The responsibility of having a child is also overwhelming at times. That little person's life is in our hands and we need to do whatever it takes to keep them healthy and safe.

The cost involved is also something else. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, it costs the average, middle-income family more than \$190,000 to raise a child until age 18. That's unbelievable.

We had three children, so that is well over one-half million dollars — but then imagine someone with four, five or six children. Wow!

Looking back, now that my children are adults — I don't regret any of it. To me, each one of them was worth it.

While doing my research, I also ran across an article from Redbook magazine, which surveyed 1,000 new and expectant parents. In this survey, 76 percent of expectant parents said they felt financially prepared for parenthood. (My friend is in good company). In addition, 41 percent of new parents, in hindsight, admitted they were not prepared and fewer than half of expectant parents had created a new budget for baby-related expenses.

My friend is doing well on the expenses too. For those who may be expecting and are not quite as prepared as my friend is, I thought I might offer a few tips to ease the stress of pending parenthood.

Budget planning tips. New parents will need to revise the household budget to fit the new, expanded family. Factor these points into your budget:

— Determine which expenses will change. Entertainment costs will likely decrease at first, but remember babysitter fees later on.

— A reduction in household income (if one parent quits work or goes part time) can significantly affect your budget.

Years ago when I had my daughter, a friend gave me a special gift that I keep readily available today.

It was a framed saying by Carl Sandberg, which read: *A baby is God's opinion the world should go on.*

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

### Keeping promises

#### From The Topeka Capital-Journal

The candidates for Kansas governor from the two major parties have earned our respect for refusing to sign the no-new-taxes pledge. By doing so, they are being honest with Kansas voters.

Both Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and her challenger Jim Barnett have pledged to do what they can to keep taxes as low as possible.

In fact, even though some question her claim of \$1 billion in savings, it's clear that Sebelius has reduced state government spending in her first term — not counting education funding.

But for either Sebelius or Barnett to promise that they could operate state government for the

next four years with no tax increase is a pie crust promise because the future is so uncertain.

Actually, if the Kansas economy continues the growth it has shown in recent months, there is a slim chance that the 2007-2011 governor could get along without a tax increase.

But court-ordered increases in education funding likely will cause budget deficits over the next few years.

Assuming a 4 percent growth in state revenues each year, the state would have a \$262 million budget deficit by 2009.

Assuming a 5.5 percent growth rate, the state would have a \$34 million surplus at the end of 2009.

But even that isn't a large enough reserve for the government to operate properly.

A spokeswoman for Sebelius said the governor would look to "absolutely every other option" before turning to taxes in the case of a revenue shortfall. Barnett called raising taxes "the worst thing we can do."

Fortunately, though, both are shunning the political pie crust promises when the likelihood is that, no matter who wins, the promise will need to be broken.

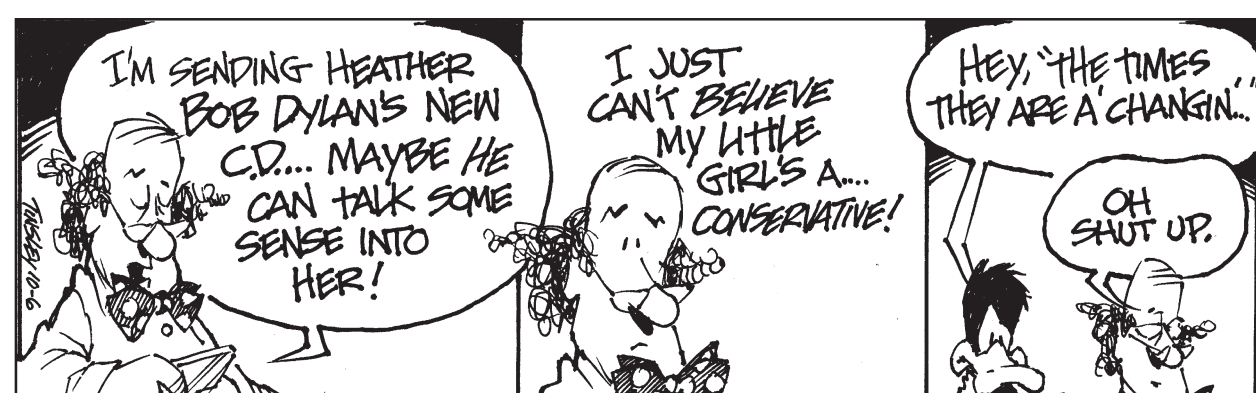
No one likes paying more in taxes, but voters also are getting increasingly frustrated with campaign promises that don't last long past inauguration day.

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• Bruce Tinsley



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