

# Opinion

## Free Press Viewpoint



### Political roadtrip

Kansas Rep. Jerry Moran visited Colby and other places in Northwest Kansas this week.

Not only should we require him to make such visits (remember, he wants our votes) but we should be thankful that he does find time to chat with residents in his district because of the size of the district.

Moran's district is gigantic in terms of number of counties and geographic size. It reaches from the Colorado border into central and northern Kansas to Seneca, easily considered northeast Kansas.

Moran is not alone. Eastern Colorado's representative, Marilyn Musgrave, has a similar sized territory running from the Nebraska and Wyoming borders south to the Oklahoma border.

Tom Osborne, the former University of Nebraska football coach-turned politician has an even bigger zone. His district runs from the panhandle to nearly Lincoln. Scottsbluff to Lincoln is about 425 miles. Some people don't go that far on vacation.

Because how Representative districts are created, cities like Denver, Colo., and Wichita almost have their own representative. Those Representatives can tell constituents in other parts of the district, "I'll be there in 45 minutes."

Moran, Osborne and Musgrave probably say, "I'll be there in a couple of days."

That's just one challenge rural-area representatives have.

Moran probably hears from small-town Sharon Springs residents what they need to make their town still viable and have hope for the future. Moran also has to hear from constituents in Reno County and Saline County who notice whatever progress is made in city-like Hutchinson and Salina — and how Hutchinson can feed off of even bigger Wichita.

Do those urban-heavy representative districts have that diversity? Moran sees both extremes.

Rural America has its own challenges. Kids grow up in the small-towns and most eventually leave for the big-city opportunities. Stores cut back or even close because few of those kids come back to start or raise their family. High schools drop to play eight-man football, or merge with the neighboring school so they can still play eight-man football.

It's easy for anyone, not just Representatives, to get caught up in the glitz and glamour of a city's success and conveniences.

Northwest Kansas should thank Moran for finding the time to visit and talk with us about our successes and concerns.

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

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## Friendship is a sweet responsibility

In recent weeks, I have received many notes from friends and family on uplifting holiday messages, but none have come close to the one I am about to share.

In addition to all the hustle and bustle during this wonderful time of the year, it can also be used as a special moment to reflect on all the good things we have and the beautiful memories of family no longer with us.

Even though the holiday season can be a happy time it can also be a sad and depressing time, which is why this particular story might be comforting to those with heavy hearts. The author is unknown. Here it is:

There was a young woman who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness and had been given three months to live. So as she was getting her things "in order," she contacted her pastor and had him come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes.

She told him which songs she wanted sung at the service, what scriptures she would like read, and what outfit she wanted to be buried in.

Everything was in order and the pastor was preparing to leave when the young woman suddenly remembered something very important to her.

"There's one more thing," she said excitedly. "What's that?" came the pastor's reply.

"This is very important," the young woman continued. "I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand."

The pastor stood looking at the young woman, not knowing quite what to say.

That surprises you, doesn't it?" the young woman asked.



**Patty Decker**

### • Deep Thoughts

"Well, to be honest, I'm puzzled by the request," said the pastor.

The young woman explained. "My grandmother once told me this story, and from there on out, I have always done so. I have also always tried to pass along its message to those I love and those who are in need of encouragement.

"In all my years of attending church socials and potluck dinners, I always remember that when the dishes of the main course were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say, 'Keep your fork.'

"It was my favorite part because I knew that something better was coming...like velvety chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie. Something wonderful, and with substance!"

So, I just want people to see me there in that casket with a fork in my hand and I want them to wonder "What's with the fork?" Then I want you to tell them: "Keep your fork...the best is yet to come."

The pastor's eyes welled up with tears of joy as he hugged the young woman goodbye. He knew this would be one of the last times he would see her before her death. But he also knew that the young woman had a better grasp of heaven than he did. She had a better grasp of

what heaven would be like than many people twice her age, with twice as much experience and knowledge.

She knew that something better was coming. At the funeral people were walking by the young woman's casket and they saw the pretty dress she was wearing and the fork placed in her right hand.

Over and over, the pastor heard the question "What's with the fork?" And over and over he smiled.

During his message, the pastor told the people of the conversation he had with the young woman shortly before she died. He also told them about the fork and about what it symbolized to her. The pastor told the people how she could not stop thinking about the fork and told them that they probably would not be able to stop thinking about it either.

He was right. So the next time you reach down for your fork, let it remind you ever so gently, that the best is yet to come. Friends are a very rare jewel, indeed. They make you smile and encourage you to succeed.

They lend an ear, they share a word of praise, and they always want to open their hearts to us. Show your friends how much you care. Remember to always be there for them, even when you need them more. For you never know when it may be their time to "Keep your fork."

Cherish the time you have, and the memories you share...being friends with someone is not an opportunity but a sweet responsibility.

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

## Your turn

### Judgment day comes for all of us

**Sandra Rall Colby**

I was in shock after being out of town and coming back to Colby only to find that a wonderful businessman, Dave Jennings, had lost his battle with his health problems. He will be sadly missed and will always be remembered as an outstanding person for the many things he has done for our community and his family. He will be remembered by me as a person that always knew everyone and called them by name. Dave Jennings lived his life well.

Dave always spoke highly of Dr. Hildyard as well. Shortly after Dave's passing, Dr. Hildyard's livelihood was taken away from him by the Kansas Board of Healing Arts after 30 plus years.

My personal experience with Dr. Hildyard has been nothing but positive. Dr. Hildyard was by my side and by the side of various family members that have since passed away.

He was always compassionate and, at the

same time, provided top level medical care. It appears to me that a few obviously influential and biased people are calling the shots in this situation rather than letting the democracy make the decision.

I don't believe this is how our government was intended to function, but even in the corner of northwest Kansas we are not exempt from political vendettas and corruption.

Dr. Hildyard has been to court numerous times with his peers supporting every questioned act. Each and every time Dr. Hildyard was cleared of any wrong doing.

Unfortunately those few that were out to get him couldn't abide by the hearing officer's decision in Dr. Hildyard's favor.

After numerous failed attempts they persisted until they found a group, the Kansas Board of Healing Arts, they could influence their direction by whatever unknown means without requiring consent of the court system.

I believe we need all the doctors we can get in

Colby. What's wrong with having a choice of doctors and businesses to choose from? With the medical situation the way it is, how will our community continue to grow? Are you thinking about the jobs that will be lost and lives that will change if the Colby Medical and Surgical Center has to shut their doors? With Dr. LaDonna Regier now alone in that clinic, what if she also decides to leave?

What about the elderly people in our community needing a doctor who knows their health history? Who wants to come to Colby with this medical Peyton Place that has been created?

It has split the community, hurt businesses, destroyed friendships, families and squelched other opportunities.

Judgment day comes for all of us, I pray that everyone involved in this mess will be prepared. My vote in our democracy is to give back Dr. Victor Hildyard his license, so he can continue to save lives.

### 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. Thank you.

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