

Opinion

A Kansas Viewpoint



Spirit, willingness leads residents

By Kansas Sen. Pat Roberts

Kansas just received the news we all had been waiting for: FEMA approved the remaining requests for federal disaster assistance following one of the worst snow and ice storms we had ever experienced.

From utility and road repairs to public building repair, FEMA will reimburse the state for much of these significant costs. That is fantastic news and a major relief for communities that suffered damage.

I also want to thank FEMA for stepping up to the plate so quickly for our state. In working with them for the last few weeks, both in Kansas and in Washington, along with the state's emergency management officials, they have been engaged, active and responsive to our needs. They have toiled around the clock to ensure we make the best case possible to obtain additional federal aid. They even opened an office in Topeka to manage the crisis.

In the wake of disasters, there are always stories of help and heroism. Let me share a few. First, kudos and thanks to General Bunting and the Kansas National Guard, which leaped into action after the snow and ice fell on much of Kansas at the start of the new year.

Knowing that cattle on the frozen plains were in danger of starving and freezing to death, the Guard mobilized to airlift hay and generators for water to the mired herds. While this was not the kind of mission the Guard had trained to perform, they took the initiative and did it because it had to be done.

They were not alone. Kansans leaned forward to help their neighbors. In Sharon Springs, one hero showed up and ran his front loader for three solid days clearing debris for the nursing home, hospital, police and fire stations. There were stories of farmer after farmer using their tractors to tow utility trucks to downed poles.

In Syracuse, a local business provided equipment to the fire and police departments so that they could communicate despite their downed towers. Gray County allowed Haskell County to route their emergency communications through their facilities. The families of Pioneer Electric executives fed chili to the 300 utility workers called in to fix the lines. The Sheriff and his deputies in Hugoton made it their mission to visit every resident of the county to ensure their safety.

I even heard the story of John "Dusty" Dowd, Jr., a crop duster who put skis on his plane to reach a stranded motorist reported missing for over 46 hours somewhere on a Hamilton County road. Dowd landed on the road, found her car empty and then at his own risk, flew to several houses to see if she had taken shelter at one of them. She had, indeed, managed to make it five miles to one of the area homes. Satisfied she was OK, Dowd flew on to help others.

As you know, this spirit, this willingness of ordinary citizens to help, despite great personal expense, and without being asked, is a common occurrence in Kansas. Aren't we lucky?

It is no surprise that with this kind of example local, state and federal government echoed the actions of these Kansans. We can be proud that the results of a sound partnership among all levels of government provided real results in an emergency.

It is good to know that when we are tested, we live up to our motto, "To the Stars through Difficulties."



February, March, ... April?

We here at the *Free Press* are trying to make the best of the continually growing piles of snow.

Evan and Patty are curious what day this spring the famous Mount Colby will disappear. Mount Colby is the pile of snow always created by city of Colby crews when removing the snow from places in town. Mount Colby is located near Franklin and Plum.

I've always wondered who has the coldest, or shadiest, spot in town. What I mean is, who will have the last patch of untouched snow on their property? Usually on the north side of houses and buildings and shadowed by trees, it will take warm days to melt those areas that have snow. Some people are guessing the same New Year's Day weekend snow will be around until late March.

If you think you have the coldest spot in town and have snow eight or 10 weeks from now, give me a call.

(Please, don't cheat by keeping a chunk of snow in your deep freeze then throw it in your backyard on Easter Sunday.) Yes, I know, April snows have happened. I've scooped them before.

If you receive your *Free Press* by carrier and live on the north side of town near Cottonwood or in the housing development that has streets named after makes of cars, I have some unfortunate news.

We have been without a carrier for those neighborhoods since the week before Christmas. We have asked and advertised for someone to take that route over, but with little response. One per-



John Van Nostrand

• Line in the Dust

son tried the job for one day and decided it was not for him. It's a unique job. I have been delivering the paper since then.

Because of other commitments, having employees deliver papers can't be permanent. We are researching what we need to do to switch those subscribers on the north side of town to receive their *Free Press* through the mail. Those people will receive the paper the next day. I understand your frustration if you are one of those subscribers.

If you know of anyone who is interested in taking the route over please give Lea or I a call. We have other routes in town available too.

I thank all our carriers, especially during a rough winter.

Wow.
The Colby Community College Board of Trustees has some mighty big plans unveiling their 2,400 seat gymnasium and other facilities last week. I think the idea is fantastic. Selling it also needs to be a fantastic job. The college needs \$20 million to do it.

If approved and built, it should bring attention, and a lot of people with tournaments and events, to Colby. The college will be done playing volleyball, basketball and having other events at the Colby Community Building. The Colby Community Building serves its purpose, but those purposes have limitations.

One item the college board did not mention, maybe because it is still too early, is naming rights. New professional sports stadiums have set the battle field for having corporations fight over who gets to plaster their name over the new place. If the college board goes that route, hopefully it will be done in a peaceful, appropriate way.

Congratulations to Indianapolis and Chicago playing in the Super Bowl Feb. 4. It's good for the game and fans to have new teams in the Super Bowl every year. Chicago played in the Super Bowl in 1986 and the Colts go back much longer.

Like I wrote at the beginning of the NFL season, football fans should enjoy the game on network television as much as they can. I fear when the NFL Network fixes its embarrassing blunders it has with cable television providers across the country, it will one day switch the Super Bowl to its own cable network and continue its blatant greed and arrogance by charging fans at home a pretty penny to watch the game and the hyped commercials.

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*.

Your turn

Too many leaders have abdicated

Ruth Theimer Colby

I could not believe what my eyes were seeing on the front page of the *Free Press*, Wednesday, Jan. 17, 2007. The headline screamed at me: "College proposes \$20 million facility."

My reaction was, "Ah, this has to be a mistake."

No, it was not a printed mistake. My next reaction was: "This is just unbelievable, unreal, unthinkable, totally unacceptable."

Immediately several facts of life came to my mind.

1. Being an agricultural community, the past number of years should have brought in a large part of revenue from the farms to Thomas County. That has not happened. We, together

with all farmers in a vast area have suffered year after year with crop failure (due to drought, wind, storms, freeze, hail, dust, heat, insects, disease and more).

Our taxes are sky-high now and quite frankly — we can't take any more.

We've had enough. It has all become an impossible burden.

2. At the time the college was started, how many of you remember the "Promise" that taxes would not exceed \$5 per quarter section of farmland? I do remember it well, and I also know that soon that promise turned out to be nothing but a lie. It was not even a bad joke — a turning of fact into an untruth.

3. I am speaking not only of farmers here. I am aware of people in the urban communities

who are also really suffering. Some, living on fixed incomes have to make a choice between paying taxes and providing a decent way of life for family.

I know some good hard-working people who cannot afford health insurance and are not financially able to purchase medicines for their families.

4. This town and community are already divided: Split in two by Colby's medical mess. Just keep up this tax fiasco and you will end up with nothing, believe me.

Too many leaders have abdicated their responsibility to those whom they serve, thereby causing everyone to suffer greatly.

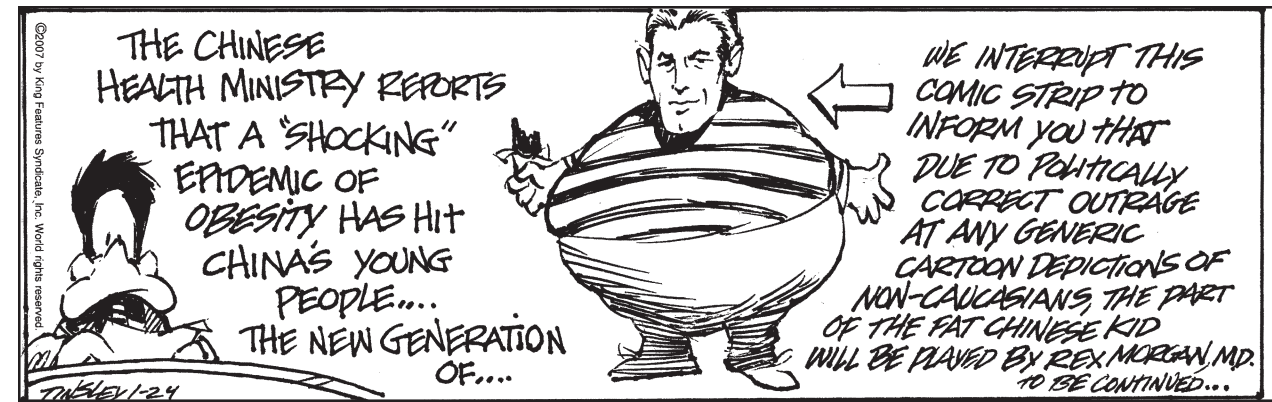
The college tax alone on this family farm for 2006 was \$1,217.40.

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



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