

# Opinion

## Free Press Viewpoint



### Easy now, tougher later

Give the Colby school board some credit. Last month, they approved Feb. 23 as a day off for students since they did so well with the various standardized tests. Feb. 23 is the first day of the state high school wrestling tournament. By the way Colby High has wrestled lately, it's safe to say the Eagles will be there. If the team is going to be there, fans and students should too.

Strong fan and student support will make Colby look even better among its 4A peers. It's common for the Bicentennial Center in Salina, where 4A tournament is held, to be full of students and fans of participating teams.

But what about future test results and students? Colby school board member Janice Frahm fears the board is setting new precedence allowing a day off.

If next year's test results are just as good as this year's will those students expect to have a day off too? Frahm implied she wished there would have been other choices to give the kids. Could have each school building had an appropriate movie during an afternoon to show the students? What happened to the education and just passing those tests as being the kids' reward?

Today's kids must realize they can't expect compensation for every good thing they do. The world does not operate that way. Giving students a day off is the goldmine. Frahm was the only board member present to vote no on the day off.

The board is thrilled Colby schools and students have met the highly criticized No Child Left Behind, a federal program. They should be too.

Implemented earlier this decade, all public schools must meet certain academic requirements. Those requirements intensify as the years pass, should Congress leave it in its original context. Revising the program is an option during Congress' current session.

Schools that didn't make the requirements are public record. Although school officials have 55-gallon drums full of reasons why they didn't, or won't, make the cut, those schools are slapped with a potentially unfair reputation that their school is not good.

Next year's students will too probably want a day off. But students in the future will be under more stringent demands from No Child Left Behind, compared to today's No Child Left Behind requirements.

Should Colby one day not make the No Child Left Behind grade, critics and board members are going to want to know why.

And somebody is bound to say, "How is student attendance?"

It's obvious. If students are not in class they can't be taught.

— John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press



### Blessed are the encouragers

"Now the leaders of the people settled in Jerusalem, and the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of every 10 to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while the remaining nine were to stay in their own towns. The people commended all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem." Nehemiah 11:1-2

When the Israelites returned to Jerusalem under Cyrus the Persian, they were but a pitiful remnant of what had once been a proud and numerous people. The entire group was less than 50,000 whereas Jerusalem itself had been bigger than that prior to the captivity.

It was no wonder Nehemiah, returning later, found that work on the wall had ceased and the people had become indifferent toward the commands of God. As a weak and subject people, they had evidently allied themselves with the pagans around them (though there was no idolatry this time.)

After much cajoling and receiving not a few threats and even surviving a couple of assassi-



#### Jay Kelley

- Speaking MyMind

nation attempts, Nehemiah led the people to finish the wall and begin populating the countryside again.

For this small people, it must have seemed a monumental task. The work ahead for those who would stay in Jerusalem would be daunting to say the least. Numbering about five percent of the pre-captivity population, those who stayed in Jerusalem would be tasked with keeping the infrastructure going, rebuilding was not working and either placating or defeating the plans of a large number of people who didn't

want their schemes upset by the return of the Israelites to the Promised Land.

Of course, living in the countryside wasn't going to be a picnic, either. The land had long been idle and had become a haven for the kind of people who would be only too happy to prey on lonely travelers.

But Jerusalem was the capital. If Israel was going to be a nation again, it would come from Jerusalem, and so those who stayed — and some had apparently volunteered — had a lot of work to do.

There will always be those among us who make such decisions, just as there will always be those among us who cannot, for whatever reason.

Both are important and both should be encouraged.

Jay Kelley is the evangelist for the church of Christ in Colby, Kan., and contributes to the Colby Free Press. His e-mail is jkelley@st-tel.net.

#### Patty Decker

- Deep Thoughts



Colby Free Press Editor Patty Decker's column will return later this month.

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

## What happens, happens

**By John Schlageck, Kansas Farm Bureau**  
If you haven't been to northwestern Kansas this winter and traveled off highway, it's another land. Looking out over the flat landscape during the day or night looks like — a sea of snow as far as the eye can see.

It looks cold out there too. If you ask the farmers and ranchers who live there, they'll tell you it is cold.

Bitter cold. Ice cold. Steel breaking cold — even one month after all the rain, sleet, snow and ice.

In Sheridan County, west of Hoxie, you can look in any direction, north, south, east and west and you'll see this snow — a real oddity after nearly eight years with hardly a wisp. This snow is anywhere from a foot and a half to two feet deep. The ditches are full of snow and the dirt roads are filled with large, deep ruts.

The few vehicles that travel these roads, creep along. No one travels fast — everything moves slowly.

For years, in some cases nearly eight years of drought, everywhere you drove in northwestern Kansas, vehicles were covered with a film of dust. Not today. The blacks, greens, reds and blues have been replaced with the color of mud — and that's often from the roof of the car or truck to the bottom of the tires.

In the Hoxie feedlot, eight miles west of town, some of the cattle are still covered with ice. Talk about cold. These cattle are not round or fleshy and covered with a fine, glossy coat like they usually are. Instead they're brown and caked with mud.

The ground inside the pens is like the roads — carved up with holes where the cattle make small

#### Other Viewpoints

- From Pens of Kansans

craters with their hooves when the soil thaws. With zero-degree nights, these holes freeze and form an extremely sharp, hard circle. The next morning, when it's still zero, the cattle stumble through these mud mines.

The constant range of temperatures from zero and below during the night and early morning to 32-plus degree is the afternoon will eventually take its toll in pneumonia, and other illnesses.

And what about the cow-calf producer?

It's getting worse, according to veteran cattleman Wilfrid Reinert, 71. Reinert has farmed and ranched in Sheridan County for nearly a half century.

His family was one of the first to bring Angus cattle to northwestern Kansas. Today he runs approximately 50 cows along with his crop acreage.

The snow has started to melt and its getting wet, Reinert says. The snow blows nearly every day so the tracks and roads must be cleared.

The long-time rancher is feeding his cowherd cane and alfalfa. Luckily he doesn't have to haul his stock water.

"My cattle are losing a little weight and the weather is hard on them," Reinert says matter-of-factly. "I don't know how much, but they're

looking smaller than they did a month ago."

His cowherd will begin calving this week. This means a lot of cold nights — for his cattle and for him. Reinert will have to crawl out of a warm bed a couple of times during the night, and check to make sure the calving process is going right.

So far, his herd is healthy. No pneumonia yet, but some will get it.

"They're cold, they'll get wet and there will be problems," he says.

Reinert has heard some stockmen in the area have lost 10 percent of their calves.

"They think they've got them going and the little ones get sick and die," he says shaking his head.

This loss of cattle and bloodlines that have been in his family for three generations is a bitter pill for Reinert to swallow.

"I'm getting up in age where I'm going to cut back," Reinert says. "Any cattle that die, that will just be one less. I'm getting too old to be out here in this."

In spite of the harsh elements, Reinert will go on feeding and caring for his cowherd. He'll begin feeding them in the morning and spend all day doing so during these brutal conditions.

The weather has taken its toll on everyone — both people and animals.

"It's hard on me too," Reinert laughs. "I'm too old to worry about what will happen. Lot of people worry. What happens, happens."

John Schlageck has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for more than 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in 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



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