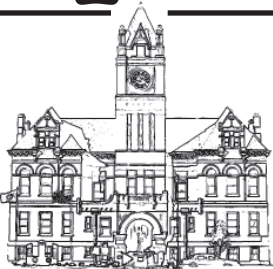




Opinion



Another Viewpoint

I wish for you

Dale Dauten
King Features Syndicate

“The future is called ‘perhaps,’ which is the only possible thing to call the future. And the important thing is not to allow that to scare you.”
— Tennessee Williams

Here’s the question I’m hoping one of three kids will ask me someday: “What makes for a great career?” Not a likely question, but I’m working on my answer, just in case. Here’s what I wish for them, and for you, too.

I wish for you that you go to work at a place where they’re glad to have you, one where they’re busy enough to need the help, a place happy-busy with success, not grim-busy with suspicions and worries. A place where they wonder how to keep up with business, not where to stalk it.

And I wish for you that before too long you get chosen for a big assignment. Someone singles you out and says, “This may not work, a long-shot, but I think it has the best chance if you’re involved.” Most of your coworkers tell you not to take on the project, calling it doomed, but others urge you on, and you realize that it’s the people you respect most who are saying to go for it and so you do. But it doesn’t go well, looking like a failure, and you’re about to quit when you say, “There’s one more thing I want to try” and that’s the one that works.

I wish for you that you have the privilege of being scared. That someone gives you a promotion or new job and you say to your spouse – the terrifically supportive one that I wish for you – “I don’t think I’m ready” and your spouse says, “Well, they picked you, so they think you’re ready. And me too, because you’re the best.”

But I also wish for you that somewhere along the way you get fired. You push an idea too hard, and a VP from L.A. who’s jealous of your experimentation and your popularity decides to put you in your place and gets you axed. Then someone you used to work with calls you and offers you an even better job and a year later you run into that VP at a conference and sincerely say, “Thank you.”

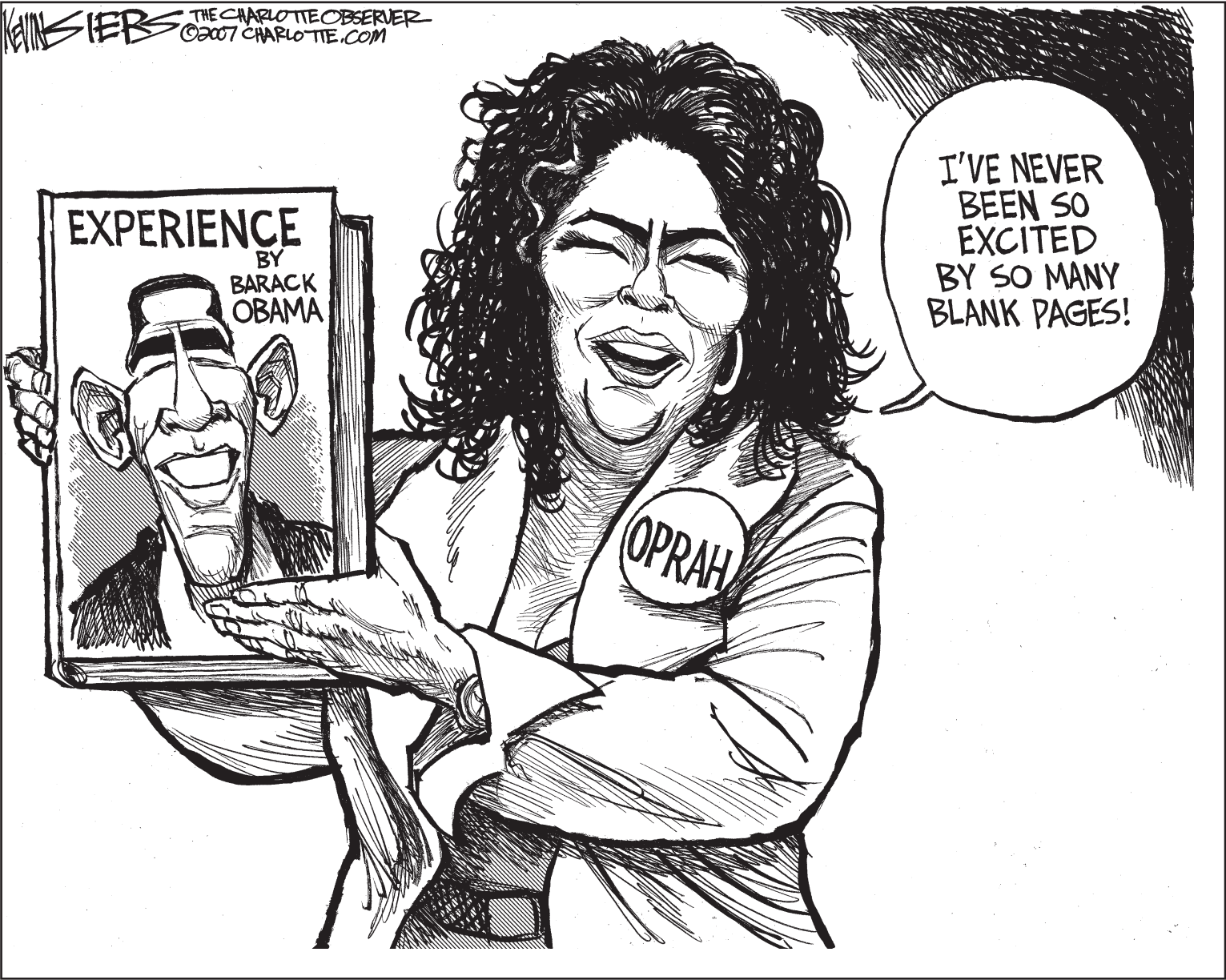
I wish for you that you get to hire extraordinary people, some of whom are ones that don’t look or act the part and your coworkers wonder if you know what you’re doing. And those oddball employees understand that you gave them a break and they wonder how they can ever pay you back even as they are doing so. And you hire friends’ kids for summer jobs and they when they’re asked how you were to work with, they smile and say, “Cool.”

I wish for you that when business goes down and the slope slips, you don’t. An employee comes to you and says, “These numbers look awful, but we could fudge a little right here on this line and forget to report this account and then they’d look okay.” And you give them the tight smile and the hard eye and say, “No, we’ll either figure it out or tough it out,” and your employee looks at you with relief and admiration and says, “I was hoping that was what you’d say.”

And I wish for you that you are so good at what you do that it doesn’t need to be all you do. That one day when the boss wants you to give up a vacation to work on planning to plan, you can say “sorry” and not be, and not be worried that you’ll get fired. And I also wish for you a family that believes in you and what you do, so on the day when you find out that the supplier in China has made your new line of baby shoes out of broken bottles and used syringes, you skip a family visit to Chuck E. Cheese without feeling guilty about it.

I wish that when you start to think about retiring that your coworkers are horrified and talk you out of it by coming up with a plan for you to ease out, working fewer days, becoming the revered one, the person everyone looks to for wisdom. And I wish for you that when you’re old you have a mild heart attack, where everyone prays for you and comes to visit and they all realize how much they love you. And when, after a long healthy life, you die, I wish that everyone says, “THAT was a life well lived” and then, every so often, when things are tough, they think of you and smile, and try one more thing, and that’s the one that works.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Ore-mail jvannostrand@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.



A look into Thomas County hoops

Today was the final school day of the semester for most schools in northwest Kansas and with Christmas break now upon us, we have reached the quasi-mid-point of the high school basketball season.

There’s still a lot to be decided, but with most teams having already played six or seven of their 20 games, it’s close enough.

So rather than write about the Mitchell Report or Roger Clemens (I’ve had enough of that to last me a lifetime) here are my early returns on Thomas County basketball as we get set to unwrap all those presents and ring in what promises to be a great new year of Thomas County sports:

Colby girls (6-0)- Clearly the best team in western Kansas. Quite honestly, I came away from the Oakley game not all that impressed with their play, but beating a #1 ranked team by 16 points when you shoot 25 percent in the first half is pretty amazing. Even when they look vulnerable, they never seem to let teams make a serious run on them. The talk of the Lady Eagles going undefeated is legit, but I think they’ll slip up once in the regular season. There’s little doubt in my mind they’ll make it back to state. What happens from there is anyone’s guess.

Colby boys (5-1)- Scary good at times. I don’t know who they play in the Orange & Black Classic, but it would surprise me if they lost more than four games all season. They are the best boys team I’ve seen in this area, and also have the two best players I’ve seen, Ethan Stover and Levi Schlick. Even beyond Schlick and Stover, the Eagles can go eight or nine deep without much



Joe Falkoff

• A Sideline View

fall off. Don’t be surprised if the Eagles come close to hanging 100 on a few teams this winter. If they don’t at least make it to the sub-state finals, it would shock me.

Brewster boys (4-1)- The potential to challenge for a league title is there. Brewster features one of the better inside-out duos in the Western Kansas Liberty League, Jance McKee and Corey Siruta, and have a solid supporting cast surrounding them. It’s debatable how much they miss Jeff Reid, but the Bulldogs lacked a scoring punch in their 16-point loss to Atwood Saturday. They rebounded with a big win over Cheylin, which was good to see, but the Bulldogs will have to improve their perimeter shooting to challenge for the league title.

Brewster girls (4-1)- Have only seen them play once, but just like the boys, they have the pieces to challenge for a league title. They have a good shooting point guard (Abbie Allen), a perimeter scorer (Nichelle Erskine) and a solid presence inside (Melissa Baird). Depth is clearly going to be their biggest problem with only nine players on

the team and seven who play significant minutes. Too early to make any predictions about where they’ll finish, but if they don’t end up in the top four of their league it would surprise me.

Golden Plains boys (3-3)- Could easily be 4-2 had they held on to that first game against Tribune. I think they’ll be a sleeper team in the Liberty league this season. They’ve beaten a St. Francis team that hung with Colby Thursday and feature one of the best duos in the league with Dan Rogers and Tate Bruggeman. They look a little disoriented on the offensive at times, but other times they look unstoppable. They’re kind of a Jekyll-and-Hyde team, but I wouldn’t want to play them in the post-season. Golden Plains is going to give a lot of people fits this season.

Golden Plains girls (1-5)- Just like volleyball, it’s going to be a struggle for the Lady Bulldogs, but the return of Aisha Walter should help a lot. If they can develop another someone to compliment Brittany Ritter, it would help immensely. There’s no doubt they’ll get better as the season goes along, but how many wins that translates into is still up for debate. If Walter can handle the ball and provide a little scoring, this team could be in the middle-of-the-pack in their league.

There it is. A look into the crystal ball of each Thomas County team.

The first quarter of the season has been pretty good to Thomas County basketball fans, and there appears to be a lot to look forward to even after all the presents get unwrapped.

— Joe Falkoff is a reporter for the Colby Free Press

Special times, memories

John Schlageck
Kansas Farm Bureau

Many, many traditions are associated with Christmas – a decorated tree, colored lights, gift giving, Santa Claus, parties and turkey and ham dinners.

Most of these traditions are recent additions. If you look at Christmas folklore, before people decorated a Christmas tree, they celebrated with the Yule log. A stump of a tree was often brought home Christmas Eve and placed in the kitchen hearth or main fireplace.

This Yule log always came from a persons’ own land or that of a neighbor. It was never purchased.

Martin Luther was credited with cutting down the first Christmas tree. According to popular legend, Luther brought the tree home and decorated it with candles to imitate the starry skies of Bethlehem.

Under the tree, he placed a crib with the figures of Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus and various barnyard animals. German immigrants brought the tradition of the Christmas tree and its decorations to this country.

Throughout the years, the Christmas feast has changed. During the 17th century, Englishmen often carried a boar’s head triumphantly into the banquet hall while guests sang carols. This feast fell out of favor because the recipe called for finding, slaying and beheading a wild boar.

The idea of decorating homes with ivy, holly and mistletoe dates back many years. This old custom has survived even though some of today’s plants are made of plastic.

One plant that has remained a Christmas staple is the brilliantly red poinsettia. Legend has it that a poor Mexican boy was praying to Christ about how much he would like to give a gift. As he arose from his knees, a poinsettia plant grew at his feet. The boy broke off the branches and laid the beautiful poinsettia at the altar.

Decorations across the Kansas countryside were much different 70 years ago also. At school, the older boys went to a neighbor’s farmland and chopped down a cedar Christmas tree in northeastern Kansas.

Such a tree was usually decorated with popcorn strings, crepe paper, red cranberries and other homemade decorations. Most farm families didn’t have flashing lights and bright-colored tinsel to decorate their trees.

Handmade wreaths adorned the entrance doors in houses across rural Kansas. Country homes were void of blue, red and white lights because most areas didn’t have electricity.

Most children didn’t receive walking, talking robots, DVDs, electronic games or Rescue Heroes. Instead most families exchanged gifts of clothing and other useful items.

Food items were usually never a scarce commodity. Canned fruits, vegetables from the

garden and nuts of every size and shape were consumed in great quantities.

Fresh produce was another matter – it rarely existed. I can remember my father telling us that, “Oranges were a big deal. They were special. We didn’t have many in those days. They were harder to get a hold of.”

While some people believe Christmas has lost some of the magic of days gone by, I would suggest it depends on the individuals and individual families.

I believe people still care about their friends and neighbors especially during the Christmas season. For some, the spirit of Christmas may be even stronger today. During this period of wars around the world, uncertainty and the threat of terrorism, churches, civic organizations and individuals reach out and help those who need it most – especially during this holiday season.

This Dec. 25, most of us will wake up a little earlier. We’ll make our way to the Christmas tree and unwrap presents. Later, many of us will worship the birth of the Christ child like many others have throughout the world during the past 2,000 years.

Merry Christmas.
John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

