

Opinion



Other Viewpoints

Sebeleius needs to stay in Topeka

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius apparently will spend the next two years where she belongs, in the Kansas governor's office.

We don't know exactly how high or low Sebelius' name was on the lists of potential candidates for cabinet positions under President-elect Barack Obama when she said she wasn't heading east, and we don't really care at this point. She has a job here that demands her attention — one she asked the voters for as recently as 2006.

Leaving an elective office to accept a job in Washington certainly wouldn't have been an unusual move — Obama is creating plenty of such vacancies in his wake as he puts together the raft of cabinet secretaries and other high-level administrators who will follow him to the capital.

In better times, you might think a Kansas governor jumping to a cabinet position was a sound political move. But with Kansas experiencing severe financial difficulties, Sebelius can't in good conscience turn her back on the state, particularly as her successor would be a lieutenant governor who was appointed, not elected, to office.

That's not to suggest that Mark Parkinson wouldn't have been up to the task had Sebelius vacated her office. We just think voters expect the person they put in office to stick around in tough times and see the job through.

And these are tough times. ...

Before the extent of the state's revenue shortfall was known, the governor went so far as to say she would like to spare the state's schools as much as possible from budget reductions for the current year.

It has since become evident that it's highly unlikely the budget crunch can be solved without cuts to education, which takes nearly half the state's revenue pie, and everything is on the table for consideration heading into the 2009 legislative session.

That's the way it should be. And the state's elected governor and legislators should work together to negotiate the budget difficulties in the way that causes the least damage to essential services.

It's a job they all were elected to do.

It's the one job they all should be concentrating on now.

—The Topeka Capital-Journal, via the Associated Press.



Fear substitutes correctness for judgment

A recent e-mail with the subject "Diamond Rio Concert" and a link to an "unreleased song" came in from a friend of mine.

It was beautifully presented, with pictures that were breathtaking. The words of the song were inspiring and the accompaniment was pleasing.

The introduction on the e-mail claimed that this song was refused by the media because it was not politically correct. I can't vouch for that claim nor I can I refute it. If you haven't received this e-mail, you can listen to the song at video.aol.com/video-detail/diamond-rio-unreleased-song/1432657923

I have no problem with this song. In fact, I like it. However, "we" here in America don't seem to really exhibit that trust very well.

Am I being judgmental? Perhaps I am, but I know my relationship with God and I know my failures to always rely on Him first.



Ken Poland

• Ken's World

We wrap ourselves in the flag that symbolizes national superiority, we trust the almighty dollar and when that dollar falters, as it is now doing, we panic and begin scrambling to protect ourselves, even at the expense of others less fortunate than ourselves. We rattle our sabers at any group or nation that doesn't bow to our demands and we threaten withdrawal of both financial and medical assistance.

The majority of the "we" in this song are afraid to trust God for our security. "We" want

to turn to our national government to proclaim by proclamation, statuary and plaques that prove our "Christian" status. "We" don't trust the power of God in the individual Christian's heart. "We" want to eliminate, by decree, any religious diversity.

The "we" in society throughout all of history have never been successful in changing the hearts of man by decree!

Patriotism and allegiance to any nation or religious affiliation cannot replace a personal relationship and trust in God.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semiretired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at rwinc@cheerful.com.

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COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

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State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$40, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$74. By mail within Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$53, 8 months \$65, 12 months \$82. Other Kansas counties: 4 months \$60, 8 months \$70, 12 months \$85. All other states, \$85, 12 months.

Chilly tree led to warm Christmas

Several years ago, when my children were small, I was asked to show my home for the Methodist Christmas Homes Tour.

I was thrilled and honored to be asked. Decorating, art, and flower arranging have always been things I enjoyed, so I started making plans right away.

I decided the Christmas tree would be my main center of interest, since it would be in the living room and one of the first things seen as the guests arrived. How would I decorate it? It had to be something out of the ordinary, something unusual.

Right away, I headed for the Colby Super Market, in downtown Colby at that time, to pick out my tree. While I was shopping in the store, I noticed a large display of snow-flocking kits. That was something you could spray on your tree with a vacuum cleaner to make it appear as though it had been out in a snowstorm.

I decided to first purchase the tree to see how much flocking I would need. The tree I chose was a giant, long-needle pine that the carry-out boy was more than happy to place in the trunk of my car, however, that involved tying the trunk lid with rope because the tree would not fit in the trunk. So the trunk lid was left up, blocking the back view.

After purchasing the required amount of flocking, I was ready to go home, but while backing out of the parking lot, I found it to be difficult to see behind me. Suddenly, I heard a loud BOOM. On getting out of the car, I discovered I had run into the glass door at the north side of the store. It was broken into several pieces and just hanging there. People who had been in the store said it sounded like a bomb had exploded. The policeman who came to take the information about the incident, saw my predicament and decided to follow me home so I wouldn't destroy anything else.

When I drove into the driveway, my husband Jim and our three children were in the back yard putting up Christmas lights on the fence. My youngest son was tugging on his dad's shirt — wanting to know if Mommy was going to be arrested.

After I got into the house and settled my nerves enough to think about what needed to be done, I went back outside and explained the



Marj Brown

• Memories

tree-flocking procedure to Jim. Since he was used to me coming up with elaborate ideas, he wasn't a bit surprised. The project took place in our back yard, and it wasn't long until it looked as if there was a regular snowstorm.

The next-door neighbors and their daughter, who were always interested in our projects, came out to help. All three of our children were there to put in their pieces of advice. When we finished, we had a tree that looked as if it had just gone through a blizzard, and the back of our house and the side of our neighbor's house were also flocked.

After the flocking dried, the problem was, how do we get the tree into the house without knocking off all the flocking? The directions suggested wrapping the tree with a sheet, and that actually worked surprisingly well. After wrapping the tree, our two neighbors, Jim and all the children carried the tree through the front room while I held the door.

There were near-accidents in the street as passers by slowed to see what strange thing they were carrying. Finally, there it was, our own snow-covered tree, right there in our living room. I chose to use only blue lights and ornaments on the white tree, not realizing how this would add to the cold effect. However, the tree was beautiful when finished.

The rest of the main floor of our house was decorated with elaborate decorations, many of which I had borrowed from friends. Our children soon learned that none of these things were to be touched, including the tree. The whole main floor of our house was a giant NO!! NO!!

Our basement was another story, because, at that time it was unfinished with bare boards on the ceiling and cement-block walls. Since I was den mother for my oldest son's Cub Scout troop, I decided the basement would be used to display the items the Cubs had been working

on. Saw horses were carried in and wooden planks were placed across them to display the boys' crafts. These included papier-mâché Indian totem masks, sock puppets and Christmas ornaments.

A tree was needed to display the Scouts' ornaments and my children's school ornaments, so Jim brought in a large tumbleweed from the field and I sprayed it silver and splashed it with glitter. The children hung their own ornaments on the tree and we also had a large piñata dangling from the center of the room. The basement also was the place where I chose to serve the visitors cookies and punch.

Then came the day. As people walked through the main floor, they oohed and ahed at the decorations, but they were soon ushered to the basement by their children.

It wasn't long until I realized that I was in the living room by myself with that chilling Christmas tree, but I could hear a lot of merriment coming from the basement. I also realized that of all the people who had gone downstairs, none had come back up. As I walked down the stairs, I could see it was crowded with people who were milling around happily engrossed in conversation and picking up items to examine. Many were sitting around visiting, drinking punch and eating cookies, and the children were running around having fun.

When I went back upstairs to wait for more visitors to arrive, I sat on the couch in the living room by myself and stared at the tree. Suddenly I felt a chill. That monster of a tree gave me the feeling that I was lost in an Alaskan wilderness with no friends or neighbors around to give me comfort. I could see why everyone preferred the warmth of the unfinished basement to the elaborate upstairs, and I longed to be with them.

From that time on, while my children were still at home, we decorated our Christmas trees with a hodge-podge of the things they made at school and other hand made items. There was no more elaborate snow flocking for me.

I learned that it isn't the amount you spend on decorations that make for a happy Christmas; it's having your family and friends around you.

Society Editor Marj Brown first wrote this column for The Prairie Drummer about 1965.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

