

Opinion



Other Viewpoints

Political dynasties just keep going ...

Caroline Kennedy? Jeb Bush? Chelsea Clinton? What does that smack of? We'd look on it as a dynasty type nightmare. But it could come to realization.

Caroline Kennedy (by the way, does she have a married last name?) is trying hard to get the nod from New York's governor to replace Sen. Hillary Clinton, who President-elect Barack Obama tapped as his secretary of state. Should Mrs. or Ms. Kennedy move into the United States Senate, she will join her uncle, Ted Kennedy in that chamber, and her cousin, Patrick Kennedy, Ted's son, who is in the House of Representatives. And, looking down the road, Caroline could eventually seek the office held by her late father, President John F. Kennedy.

Jeb Bush is one of the most popular people in the state of Florida, where he so capably served as governor. He was, according to reports at the time, the family's choice to run for president at some time in the future.

Jeb, who will seek the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Sen. Martinez in 2010, should win without question. That would "at some time in the future" put him in the running for president. Well, it should, but brother George spoiled those plans and the nation might question having another Bush in the White House.

Chelsea Clinton can't be counted out, either. Coming from a household with two of the most influential Democratic politicians ever, she will be prepped to go when Mom and Dad say so. Maybe Chelsea, in time, will be able to do what Mom couldn't.

Let's see now:

- The Kennedy name. We can't come up with a number, just too many of them. But any addition strengthens the dynasty factor.
- The Bush name. George Herbert Walker Bush served four years and George W. served eight. Sorry, Jeb.
- The Clinton name. William Jefferson Clinton served eight years, his wife, none so far.

The Bush and the Clinton families combined lived in the White House 20 years. Is enough enough?

—Tom Dreiling, *The Norton Telegram*

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You can't get there from here

You get lost once or twice, sink up to your hubcaps in mud and have to call for help and your children think you can't get where you're going without a global positioning device.

Oh, they warned me. That, they said, was what they would get us for Christmas because mother was not to be trusted out on the road by herself.

Hey, I'll have them know, I've been out on the road by myself since I was 16 and I've only gotten lost once or twice a year since then. (Oh dear, that is a lot, isn't it?)

Still, I know how to go around a block to get back on the right track. One time that block was several counties square, but hey, that was in Colorado, and they don't just have roads over every mountain out there.

So, it wasn't with any great surprise when Steve unwrapped the little Garmin on Christmas morning.

The girls figured that it would go in my car — and it probably will eventually.

However, right now their father has a new toy and is he having a ball with it. He punched in how to get from our house to the Colby Free Press office. He's been going over to that office every day for four or five months. Now he



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

has to have a mouthy little machine to tell him how to get there.

He soon turned off the sound. That woman in the machine kept telling him to turn right, and she has a real nasty way of saying it after about the fifth time. Steve may ask for directions but, he doesn't necessarily take them.

We went to Lawrence over the weekend, and Steve put in our son's address. Since he lives on 21st Terrace, not exactly the middle of town, I always have a hard time finding the place, and the Garmin gave us all the right turns and got us there right when it said we were supposed to arrive.

The last time I went to see my son on my own, I drove right past the turn to his house as he was standing out in the yard watching me go by. If I don't toss that pushy little machine

out the window, it may come in handy yet.

Steve says that I have to use it next time I leave town, and he's probably right. My son was laughing so hard when I got back to his house, he was almost in tears.

My biggest complaint about all these time-saving things is the time it takes to figure them out. I like my devices simple: Turn it on and it works.

That is one of the reasons my cell phone doesn't take pictures, send e-mail or tell me the time. I just want something that rings. I answer. I talk. I hang up.

When oldest daughter saw my cell phone last month, she smiled and noted that she hadn't seen a cell phone that big that didn't do anything but make calls in years.

Well, maybe I should look for a little newer phone.

Maybe I'll turn the Garmin's voice back on, and the two of them can talk to each other and leave me alone.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis.

Benefits shouldn't discriminate

To the Editor:

I have just reread the article published in the Friday, Dec. 12, *Colby Free Press*, "Health care federalism begins at home," by Gregory L. Schneider of the Flint Hills Center. I wanted to know more about Medicaid, because every time I see the word, my mind goes blank and I'm left wondering if I'll ever be eligible for Medicaid.

Probably not, because if I lost Medicare and Social Security, Medicaid simply wouldn't be there either.

I believe that all people should have these benefits, particularly because they benefit me in this national health system. I don't know about the state plan, but I know that Medicare needs to pay for transportation to and from a hospital since it does not do it now. For instance, I needed emergency transportation by plane to a Denver hospital and my CalPERS (California Public Employees Retirement System) paid for it. Otherwise, I would have been stuck with a bill for several thousand dollars.

I'm not speaking about Medicare for just people who work, but for all citizens of the United States. This will take time, but it is a goal.

President-Elect Barack Obama said that he wants all people to have the same health benefits that federal employees have. I was a state employee and have those benefits.

We are still shackled with a government that discriminates against women. Because I am a divorcee after 20 years of marriage, a certain percent of my Social Security is withheld from my check since the death of my ex-spouse.

Although men are discriminated against in some cases, the Government Pensions Offset definitely discriminates against women. This time last year, retirees were asked to write the Senate Finance Committee to support Social Security fairness. Although the following excerpt is from *California State Retiree*, it applies to all former state employees:



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

"Retirees, are encouraged to write the members of U.S. Senate Finance Committee, as well as their district representatives, in support of S. 206, sponsored by Senators Feinstein and Collins. The measure, which is also supported by CalPERS, would repeal two discriminatory provisions, of the Social Security Act.

• "The Government Pensions Offset, which eliminates some public employees' Social Security benefits from a deceased spouse or survivor by an amount equal to roughly two-thirds of his or her public pension.

• "The Windfall Elimination Provision, which reduces some public employees' earned Social Security from previous employment.

"These provisions do not adversely affect private-sector employees in the same way as some public employees.

"Thirty-six percent of CalPERS active members are not covered by Social Security. Very few safety members — predominately police officers, firefighters and and correctional officers — are currently covered by Social Security. No state and school safety members are covered and only 8.5 percent of public agency members are covered.

"According to current law, retirees cannot receive a Social Security benefit based their own work record and also receive a full spouse or widow's benefit. Rather they can only collect the larger of the two.

"A public retiree's entire pension is subject to federal income tax — including the part that is deemed equivalent to Social Security. Most

Social Security benefits, however, are tax-free. So the public retiree is effectively hit twice — once with taxes and again with the offset. It's simply not right."

Edna Hatcher, Colby

Who's paying counsel?

To the Editor:

There is a legal issue in our community that needs to be addressed publicly. How many times have you heard it said, "Why vote? They'll do it anyway."

If legal counsel receiving taxpayers' funds as payment for his expertise for an elected school board's promotion of a bond issue that is voted down, be allowed to immediately use taxpayers' funds to manipulate the same "end" for the board that the voters have just voted "NO" on?

Wouldn't it seem logical at that point that the taxpayers' paid counselor would be obligated to explain to the elected board members what "no" means?

Wouldn't that be legally correct?

Lloyd E. Theimer
Colby

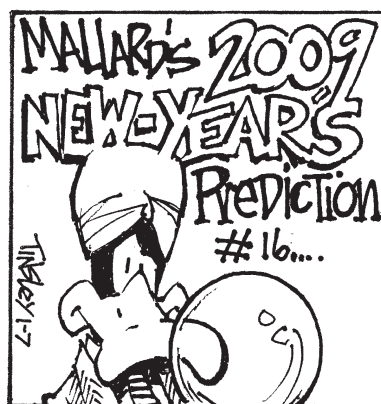
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We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



CHEVROLET WILL REPLACE ITS ELECTRIC CONCEPT CAR, THE "VOLT"...



...WITH THE "DOLE" A NEW CROSSOVER THAT RUNS ON TAX DOLLARS...