



## Other Viewpoints

### Is the Statehouse a worthy project?

Considering the state's current financial status, it only makes sense for officials to carefully examine just about every expenditure of taxpayers' money.

Although the state has closed prisons and cut funding for social services and education, and still is being forced to delay scheduled transfers, legislators still saw fit this year to approve \$38 million in bonds to keep the Statehouse renovation project going. That may be a prudent move, but as House Majority Leader Ray Merrick said this week, "We owe it to ourselves and the people of this state" to make sure.

At Merrick's request, the Legislative Coordinating Council has agreed to consider hiring a Kansas City, Mo., management firm to review the renovation, which now has grown into a \$285 million project.

By all reports, the restoration work being done is beautiful and of high quality. When they approved the additional bonds, legislators also pointed out that it made no sense to delay the project when it was about three-fourths done and that stopping the project and restarting it in a few years would only raise the price tag.

They also speculated that the state could benefit from lower labor and materials costs that have resulted from the slumping economy. It's true that bids for many government construction projects are coming in under the estimates, but will that really help the state on the specialized Statehouse project? It seems that legislators already have sent the message that they are willing to appropriate about any amount of money contractors say is needed to do this project "right."

Yet, while legislators were approving \$38 million in bonds for the Statehouse project, the Kansas Board of Regents had to fight to claim \$7.7 million for maintenance projects on all of its state university campuses. That amount is appreciated, but it will hardly make a dent in the maintenance backlog, which has grown to an estimated \$825 million.

It's too late to go back and limit the scope of the Statehouse project, so perhaps the state has no reasonable option but to spend the money and move ahead but, as Merrick said, we "owe it to ourselves" to make sure.

—Lawrence Journal-World, via The Associated Press

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That's  
not  
what I  
meant!

## Last challenge – don't waste your life

I have some good news and some bad news.

I'll start with the bad news, which is that this is my last column for the Colby Free Press until – who knows.

Those who follow my column know that I will be editor for my college newspaper next year. It requires extra work during the summer, including writing as many stories as possible for the first issue in September. With working full-time and an online class beginning next week, I have decided that my weekly column needs to end.

Ending my column makes me sad, but it will enable me to devote more time to my new job and my class so I can do my best and be prepared for the upcoming school year.

Unfortunately, there are so many things I want to tell you, so many thoughts that are just waiting to burst through my fingers. But this is not the right time and, perhaps, not even the right place.

The good news is that you can still access my writing. I have a blog site (www.destinationbeautiful.blogspot.com) where I have posted columns I have written from August 2008 to the present. I began the blog in February 2008, using it as a place to put down my thoughts. When I started writing my column again, I realized I could use it as another means to archive my columns besides the three-ring binder that overflows with published articles and columns.

The words I have written on the site are more personal than anything I have written for any publication. They give a small glimpse into my heart and reveal my beliefs and my



**Michelle Myers**

• A Moment with Michelle

love for God that never made it to the pages of a publication. I will continue posting on my blog site, so feel free to read.

Also, since I will be writing a column for the college newspaper once the year starts, published columns will be available on my blog site as well.

So, in actuality, my column isn't really ending; it's just changing. I will continue to write about what is important to me, whether my readers agree with me or not. I will also maintain my objective for each column, or blog, that I write, and that is to challenge my readers to live differently, to live for something, for someone bigger than themselves.

My last challenge for my readers, for you, is simple: Don't waste your life. The hours from morning to night were given to you by God. Don't let those hours dissolve into nothing—or worse, into regrets. Sure, we can't turn each minute into an epic turn in history, but living each minute as if you were about to breathe your last breath could possibly create some spectacular moments.

On this side of heaven, my destination is unknown, but I have a feeling that it will be beautiful. My dad once said that he would build me a house, a beautiful home just like the one I

grew up in – as I lived no more than 20 miles from home.

I don't know if he remembers saying that, but I sure do, and I'm going to hold him to it because, who knows? Maybe someday I'll be back in the Oasis on the Plains, watching my own kids play with our dog in the front yard, waving to my neighbors drive by, listening to the country sounds of wheat heads beating against each other.

But wherever my destination is, I refuse to waste my life on the way there. And, for me, a day that is far from wasted is:

- To wake up to a faithful sun
- And a faithful God
- To begin the day with You on my mind
- To pray until I forget I'm on my knees
- To feel blessed by the things I did not receive
- To let God reach into the basin of my mind
- And touch the feelings no one has ever seen
- To fall in love with God
- To let it be just the two of us
- Talking, walking in the rain
- Pouring His heart out to me
- And me to Him
- To delight in His creativity
- To see His love for those He created
- To fall asleep safely in His arms
- And dream about life and love until morning
- When I will wake up to the faithful Son.

Michelle Myers, a Colby native, is a student at Multnomah University in Portland, Ore., majoring in Bible and journalism.

## Crank 'er up – demand rising for food

It's hard to believe one billion people – almost 20 percent of the world's population – are hungry. I'm not talking about people who miss a meal a day, but those who are chronically malnourished.

At the same time, the world's population is exploding. Some say the greatest growth in the history of our world is underway.

It's estimated 3 billion more people will be born during the next 40 years. This would increase the world's population to 9 billion, mostly in the hungry parts of the world.

As a result, pressure on the world's economic and natural resources for food will become intense. Demand for food will mean opportunity for farming and ranching. It will also become critical for public/private enterprise to ramp up food production.

While some would label technology as the No. 1 environmental enemy, food producers, including farmers and ranchers, view technology as the application of knowledge.

As humans, we survive by adapting the environment to our needs. Take away technology and humans would be just like other primates – confined to tropical regions and subject to extinction due to environmental changes. To survive, mankind has changed the environment while conserving resources and continually creating new ones.

Resources are made, not born. Land, ores, petroleum, etc. – the raw materials of our planet – are not inherent resources. They do not inherently further human purposes.

Man determines what is useful and how to use it. Topsoil becomes a resource when a farmer tills the soil and plants wheat seed, for



**John Schlageck**

• Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

example. Ores become resources when metals are extracted from them.

During the past two centuries, technology has been creating resources more rapidly than humans have been consuming them. By every measure of price and availability, resources have become more abundant.

Without science and technology, today's farmers and ranchers would be unable to feed the masses outside of our agricultural industry. Farmers use technology responsibly. They constantly use new farming methods and practices by attending training sessions and courses.

But new farm technology is expensive. It is in the best interest of farmers to use it carefully and sparingly. Misuse just adds to the cost of production, resulting in an even lower return on their investment.

When new advances in biotechnology are discovered, farmers must abide by stringent testing and monitoring practices that ensure only safe products in the marketplace.

The idea that "we're tinkering with nature" goes back at least 50 years. It's the same argument that surrounded the adoption of hybrid seeds. Genetic selection in seeds has been occurring since the beginning of time. Tens of thousands of genes have been bred into or out

of plants. By definition, agriculture is man affecting the natural order to produce better and more food.

Hybrid seeds have allowed for greater cereal crop production. Without such advancements, it's estimated that an area the size of Western Europe would have to be added to crop production.

Without new science and new technology, where is the new grain going to come from? Are we going to farm more land? Are we going to take down Salina, Manhattan, Wichita or Kansas City? Where is this additional land going to come from?

There won't be more farmable land. Additional food to feed the world's hungry mouths will come from greater productivity per acre.

Farmers, ranchers and agriculture live for such opportunities. It's why they farm and ranch.

So, whether you're a farmer from Kansas or anywhere else, that means you will be able to bring tremendous value to the table, no pun intended.

Today's farmers must be ready to produce more than they ever have before. They must be ready to make the right decisions. They must be ready to sell their crops at the best time to make the most profit.

There will be a bright future for some in agriculture. It will boil down to circumstances and opportunities. Those with vision, who seize these opportunities and see a future, will flourish.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas.

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

