





Free Press
Viewpoint

Sticky situation on northern border

A news story the other day recounts the problems along our “other” border, the 5,500-mile, mostly unfenced and often imaginary line that separates the U.S. from Canada. Both U.S. and Canadian authorities realized the mostly unguarded border sees increasing traffic in both guns and drugs. The U.S. is using unmanned aircraft to keep an eye on the border and plans to send hundreds more border agents to the north.

The length of the border and its remote nature, far in most places from major cities, makes tightening controls tough, if not impossible.

While Americans cry for a fence and tough enforcement to the south, there’s little talk of tougher measures at the Canadian border, other than the requirements for identification in place everywhere people enter the U.S.

Fair enough. To the south, Mexico has become a hotbed of drug traffic – and violence. A crackdown by the Mexican government has resulted in as many as 10,000 murders in the last few years as drug cartels fight the army, federal police and each other.

But we hear little about drugs from Canada. Truth is, the Associated Press reports, it isn’t the problem seen in Mexico, but illegal traffic from the north is growing. Biker gangs and Asian drug runners move marijuana and other drugs across the border. Indian reservations straddle the line in a few areas, allowing almost free access back and forth.

What’s the answer? Government men always say it’s more enforcement, both because they tend to think that way, and because they can’t afford to speak the truth.

And the truth is, without spending a lot of money and committing a lot of manpower, it’d be next to impossible to close off the 5,500-mile border. We can’t afford that much fence and that many border agents.

The head of the Drug Enforcement Agency, James Burns, said as much to the AP: “It’s a long border, mostly very remote, very wooded, very sparsely populated. It’s easy to go from one side to the other without detection.”

Truth is, you can make something illegal, but you can’t keep people from getting what they want. They want drugs, someone will supply them. Making them illegal just drives up the price and improves the cartels’ profits.

The border patrol, drug cops and others build empires on trying to stop this traffic, but mostly it’s a waste of money. Contraband flows towards money and demand. Fences, airplanes, agents on the ground can only do so much. When they catch a big load, it looks good, but that’s about it.

In the flow of illegal drugs alone into this country, one truckload is a drop in the bucket. Even a dozen don’t amount to much.

We’d be better off spending the money to track and locate terrorists and to help people learn to stop doing drugs, than to spend billions on border controls. The benefits are too few, the cost too great.

That said, expect a big push to waste a lot of money on the border up north. That’s what the bureaucrats will ask for, and likely, what Congress will do. The futility of it all will escape notice, but what’s a few billion here and there?

— Steve Haynes

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 NorWest 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, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72



Here’s what I did last summer

Essay — What I did during my summer vacation.

I fed things. Remember that standard, start-of-school question?

Back then, my answers were pretty standard, too: went to the pool, went to the lake with parents, went to the library on bicycle, took care of pets, and so on and so on.

Well, we just got back from our summer vacation in Colorado, and looking back, I realize that I fed everything that moved out there, including quite a few hungry mosquitos.

I started my week out making hummingbird food for the three feeders on the front porch. I use my neighbor’s recipe — one cup of plain white sugar added to three cups water. I add a few drops of red food coloring to mine. It makes no difference to the birds, but that way I can see when the syrup gets low in the feeders. That was about every other day, since the hummers were both numerous and hungry.

The next step was to fill the bird-seed holders to attract finches, sparrows and anything else that likes a mix of millet, corn and sunflower seeds. The two feeders hang on a double shepherd’s crook in front of a medium-size evergreen tree in the front yard so I can see them from the front windows.

Those bird were voracious. I sat in the house one day and counted more than 30 in the tree and on the feeders. They would fly back and



Cynthia Haynes

- Open Season

forth trading places. A dozen at a time could sit on the six perches on each feeder and chomp seeds. They also spilled enough on the ground to keep the larger blackbirds, who find it tough to cling to those little perches, walking all over the yard.

These bird feeders needed to be filled twice a day. I finally picked up a really big bag of seed. I didn’t notice that it was a 50 pounder until I tried to fill the galvanized pail I keep the seed in and only half the bag would fit. However, before I came home, the last of the spare seed was in storage in the pail waiting the next sucker, er, bird-feeder filler.

The cats had their bowl that required regular refills, and the dog got her cup of food a day.

Then there were the chipmunks. I didn’t see too many, but the peanuts on the stump out back disappeared and the dog went nuts whenever she got near the woodpile, so I’m guessing that’s what I was feeding.

Then there was us. I made steak soup, fried chicken, bean soup,

barbecue beef sandwiches, green chili, twice-baked potatoes, blueberry scones and zucchini bread. I made enough of everything that the freezer was full and I was having trouble finding places to put the rest.

I made a ton of zucchini bread — which I passed out to everyone I knew. I took some to Mary J, the 86-year-old reporter we hired nearly 30 years ago to do society news. She’s still doing it. Brownie and Christie got a loaf; he’s a painter and photographer and she’s an actress.

The neighbors got tomatoes, zucchini, cucumbers, carrots and garlic from our garden. In the high country, they really appreciate that.

And I brought food back to Kansas. Now my freezer is full — at least until I go to Lawrence to feed my last chick. Our son always appreciates his bachelor status and closeness to home when it comes time to get frozen steak soup, fried chicken, bean soup, barbecue beef sandwiches, green chili, twice baked potatoes, blueberry scones and zucchini bread.

It was a pretty good summer vacation, and I’m looking forward to feeding more birds, cats, dogs, chipmunks and friends and family next year.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of NorWest Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes @ nwkansas.com

Involvement trumps pessimism

During the last few years, politics has worked perversely: taxes on the wealthy have been cut, and so have programs directed at the poor. The reason isn’t difficult to explain.

Many Americans — especially those who have been losing ground — have given up on politics. As their incomes have shrunk, they’ve lost confidence that the “system” will work in their interest.

That cynicism has generated a self-fulfilling prophesy. Politicians stop paying attention to people who don’t vote, who don’t work the phone banks or walk the precincts, who have opted out. And the political inattention seems to justify the cynicism.

Meanwhile, the top tier has experienced precisely the opposite — a virtuous cycle in which campaign contributions have attracted the rapt attention of politicians, the attention has elicited even more money, which in turn has given the top tier even greater influence. — Robert Reich, secretary of labor in the Clinton administration.

I don’t remember where I found this quote. Most likely it came off the Internet, and being an amateur writer, I failed to get the source. However it speaks very clearly my own observations. The pessimistic opinions I hear from many friends concerning political involvement and voting are almost as dangerous as the radical elements that are, essentially, advocating the overthrow of our system.

What is the nature of that overthrow and when is it going to happen? When the public gullibly swallows the misrepresented and false reports on various proposed bills or are convinced that we should throw out all of the present legislators and government administrators.

Overthrow is just around the corner when we take away all government regulation and



Ken Poland

- Ken’s World

oversight of business, either private or corporate. Health care will diminish in quality when we take away certification of providers and the pharmaceutical companies no longer have to meet government regulations. Honest and meaningful health care is already being denied to nearly half our population.

We worry about government telling us who our doctors will be and how and what our treatments will be. What are our “for profit” health providers doing now? My doctor tells me she will have to check with my insurance provider before she prescribes certain medications. One of those is not available in generic form. My insurance denies full reimbursement on that medication. Many insurance and health-care organizations will not make full reimbursement if you go outside their contractual arrangements with selected doctors, clinics, or hospitals.

No, I’m not predicting violent physical overthrow. The overthrow will be from within and our Constitution will have lost its value and meaning to the majority of our citizens. Our government will no longer be there to provide services and protection for all individual citizens. If you can’t afford to pay the lobbyists or make substantial campaign contributions, you will have no representation.

Our original constitution has been amended to give full citizenship to our African-American population; it has given women equal

voting rights; it has eliminated financial or property ownership requirements to vote. Our court system has reinforced the protection of religious liberty and property rights. The courts have guaranteed equal rights regardless of religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, education, social status and many other discriminations in society. Our courts have attempted to define “freedom of speech” that allows respect and dignity. Shouting matches and disruptive demonstrations do not qualify for protection under freedom of speech.

Our national Constitution is not an instrument cast in stone that cannot be challenged or changed as our culture and individual needs have changed.

Get out of your negative and futile attitude! Study the issues, join in honest debate of the pros and cons to legislative proposals and court decisions. Stop being a parrot who repeats only the negative views of the few who feel threatened by their loss of unilateral control by virtue of their political power or financial positions.

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 rcwinc@cheerful.com.

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Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

