

## Free Press Viewpoint

### Ghoulish blood tests raise rights questions

A federal program has police and prosecutors in Idaho and Texas drawing blood samples in the field for alcohol testing. Officials say they hope to cut down on the number of drunk-driving cases that go to trial, but the program raises constitutional questions and frankly, it's just a little bit creepy.

In Arizona, the Phoenix Police Department has been taking blood from drivers who refuse a breath test for several years. There, however, blood is taken from drivers who agree to the test after being told the alternative could be to lose their license for a year. For the few who still won't comply, officers can get a search warrant from the on-call judge and take the sample by force if necessary.

Under the pilot program in Idaho, however, officers are authorized to use force without bothering to get a warrant. They can call other officers over to hold a suspect down for the draw. Officials say the procedure meets standards set by the state and U.S. Supreme Courts.

No one's in favor of drunk driving, of course. But the specter of officers pinning drivers to the hood of their cars for forcible blood tests may be a bit much.

Police have used blood tests for people who refuse a breath scan for years. Normally, though, they have to get a warrant and take the driver to a hospital. By the time the blood is drawn, which can be hours later, the suspect's blood-alcohol level may well have gone down.

In Idaho, 20 percent of the drivers stopped for drunk driving refuse a breath test, which is slightly under the national average. Most of these people hire a lawyer and go to trial, challenging the evidence at every turn. That's their right under the Constitution.

Federal and state officials involved in the pilot project say the aim is to reduce the number of trials by taking blood in the field. Officers have to pass training used by regular phlebotomists, workers trained to draw blood at a hospital or clinic. They learn safety and sanitation procedures and blood-letting techniques.

Not everyone is thrilled with the idea of cops taking blood samples on the hoods of patrol cruisers. In Phoenix, for instance, drivers are taken in to a precinct station or to a mobile booking van for the test.

The tests are not perfect. Police have to preserve the chain of evidence so vials don't get mixed up and be careful to properly store blood, which can ferment, increasing the alcohol content, if it gets warm. A medical error could result in illness and a lawsuit, and officers themselves stand some risk from the blood.

Maybe this is a step forward in the drive to eliminate drunk driving. But the very idea of police holding people down and taking blood against their will seems like something out of a science-fiction movie.

Somewhere along the way, Americans may want to ask if the ends do justify the means.

— Steve Haynes

### Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author. We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

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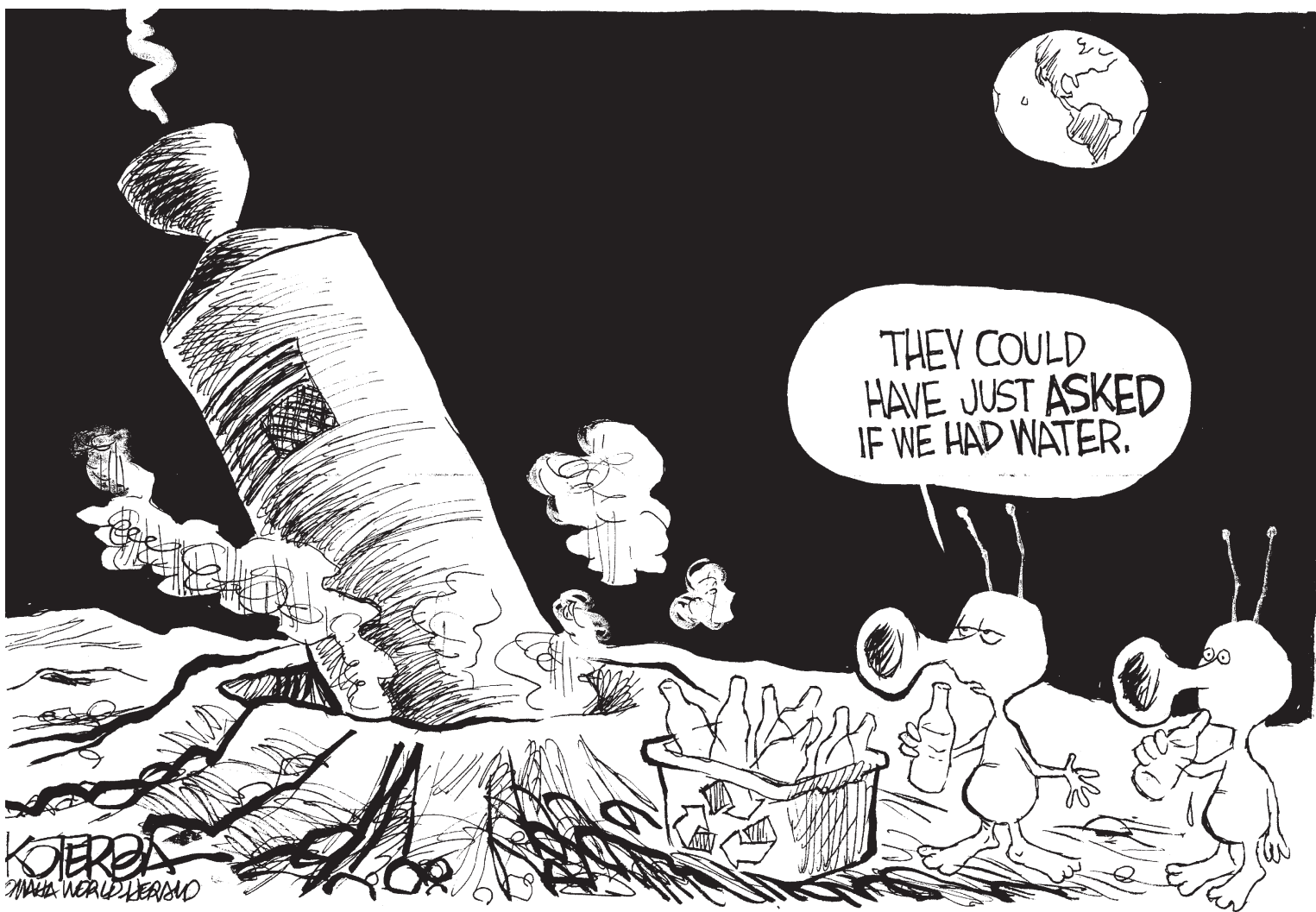
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### Mardi Gras in Mobile: a family party

Mardi Gras. It's a party. Everyone is enjoying the parades, the masks, the balls the royalty, the food and the drink.

Welcome to Mobile, Ala. "What, where?" you say. "What happened to New Orleans?"

Nothing. New Orleans still does its thing, a little bit louder and a whole lot bawdier, but here in Mobile, the annual pre-Lent party has been going on for more than 300 years.

The first Mardi Gras was celebrated in 1703 at Twenty-Seven Mile Bluff, the first settlement in Mobile, according to the historians at the Mobile Carnival Museum. So this port city proudly proclaims itself as "the birthplace of Mardi Gras."

We were in Mobile for the annual National Newspaper Association convention last month, and several friends and I had the opportunity to visit the museum, which is part classic exhibits, part hands-on fun and part party central.

In the hands-on area, we got to board a mock float and see what its like to rock down the street. There were even beads to throw to those waiting their turn. We put our faces in the painted wood figures of the king and



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

queen. Unfortunately, I'm too short for either of them. There was also a dress-up area for children complete with masks, feather boas, fancy clothes and hats. I was all for that, but my friends were ready to move along.

In the museum proper we looked over the robes, crowns and scepters of the royalty. Each year, the king chooses his queen from amongst the city's debutantes. Actually, every year, there are two kings and two queens — one set white and one black. We asked if this wasn't a little outdated, but were told that this was a tradition stretching back as far as anyone can remember and there are no plans to change it.

I noted from the names that many of the queens were sisters, mothers and grandmothers. This is truly a society party in Mobile, and

looking at the pictures and a video, it's a much more family-oriented celebration than the one in upstart New Orleans.

After looking at dozens of robes, I was feeling a little overwhelmed and about sparkled out. Each king and queen gets a new robe made for him or her and, it seemed, a lot of their mothers were ready to get them out of the house. I can understand that. I still have stuff from my children, and the last one left home 10 years ago.

I liked the gift shop best. Of course, that's true in just about every museum I've ever been in, from Chicago to Los Angeles.

I wanted one of those boas but settled for a string of beads with an alligator on the end.

Now all I have to do is return to Mobile next spring and enjoy the festivities.

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. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

### Oct. 15 a day to remember lost children

To the Editor:

What does Oct. 15 mean to you? Is that your Grandma's birthday? Maybe that was the day you got married? Or how about the day you got that big promotion? Maybe it means nothing to you except it's on a Thursday, and that means one day closer to Friday. The weekend.

How about the day to remember your lost baby?

For many of us, unfortunately, Oct. 15 is a time to light a candle in remembrance of the children we lost. The ones who were supposed to bury us, not us bury them.

The sadness a person feels over losing a child can never be put into words. We, the parents who have lost a child, would like to say that as time goes on we are filled with peace, a peace so true that it does not hurt as much. But the pain we feel over never seeing or feeling our babies again goes so deep there is never truly peace. Our hearts are broken and only our children can really fix them.

In 1989, President Ronald Reagan declared October as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness month. During this month, he declared Oct. 15 to be the National Day to honor lost babies and their families. Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day is observed with ceremonies and candle-lighting vigils which coincide with an International Wave of Light. That is when everyone in the world in all time zones lights their candles at 7 p.m. for at least one hour, creating a continuous wave of light for 24 hours of remembering our angel babies across the world.

On Thursday, we ask that everyone, whether you lost a child, know someone who has lost a child or want to support anyone who has, to please light a candle at 7 p.m. and to keep the candle lit for at least one hour.

Thanks in advance for lighting a candle.

Jaime and Tony Kinderknecht  
Gove County

Parents to angel son Brett Allen  
Kinderknecht, June 2, 2008



### Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

### Social Security needs small changes

To the Editor:

I think that all bona fide health-care organizations (and the last I knew, there were over 50) should continue to fight against all proposals to cut Social Security benefits under the guise of "entitlement reform" or to achieve "solvency" when what it really means is ending the guaranteed benefits the government has promised to seniors.

I think that raising the retirement age, reducing monthly Social Security payments or unfairly changing the way benefits are calculated is a violation of the guaranteed retirement security the government owed retirees who paid into the system their whole working lives.

I favor allowing Medicare to negotiate volume discounts with drug companies. (The Veterans Administration does this, and its prescriptions cost 30 percent less.)

I favor ending wasteful taxpayer subsidies to private insurance companies. (Medicare Advantage programs cost nearly 20 percent more than Medicare.)

I favor providing early retirees the option to purchase Medicare coverage. (Many of the 5.1 million Americans between the 55 and 64 who lack insurance are casualties of mass layoffs.)

More Americans should know that proposals to "reform" Social Security are based on a mythical crisis that does not exist it a program that has saved retired Americans from a pover-

ty-ridden old age for more than 70 years.

When I was 22, my husband's uncle saw that I was inattentive while he was talking about the issue and exclaimed, "When you get to be 65, you'll be interested in Social Security!"

My answer was, "I should live so long." So, I can understand now how young college students might not be interested very much about their retirement years. It seems to be a long, long way down the road. But they are interest in how the war is affecting them.

However, I got shorted on Social Security because of the years I worked for the government, and in addition those born between 1919 and 1927 get less than others drawing benefits. This is know as being a "Notch Victim." I was born in 1921; I am a notch victim.

This, I believe, is what Keith Olbermann of MSNBC meant when he said, "So, you were screwed. Do you want to fight about it?"

Edna A. Hatcher, Colby

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### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

