

## Other Viewpoints

### Spare us rhetoric; give your solutions

We have some advice, a request, for the next politician showing up in town, whoever that is. Before you start to speak, just let us assume that you love America. We'll assume you intend to work hard and that you are going to listen to us when you are elected, just like all the others do.

Trust that we understand the mess Uncle Sam is in. Imagine, if you have to, that we already understand what our problems are and don't need that all mirrored back to us. Assume we already know that we're the hard-working salt of the earth, the protectors of the old ways and values.

We'll stipulate that America can't spend itself into solvency and that taxes are a bad thing.

Spare us the blabbing points and all the ranting about how we're victims of godless or brainless elites out to make our lives miserable. We get enough of that nonsense from the screaming heads on TV and the bloggossips, twitterati and e-gaddies of cyberspace.

We realize if you cut all of this from your "listening" tour, it won't leave you with much to talk about. You'll be left having to ... well ... listen.

So listen to this: If you don't tell us where you stand when you come here, there is no way for us to find out. We're listening for solutions — specific proposals and why you think they will work — not lectures on the glories of capitalism and the horrors of socialism and the evil intent of the other party. Less about what you're against and something of what you're for.

What we're looking ... and hoping ... for is some assurance that our next representative has actual demonstrable, pragmatic ideas or, failing that, at least that he has some clue of what he's getting into to represent us.

Don't say you're not going to raise taxes — that all you're going to do is cut spending. This may be Oz but it's not LaLaland, and it doesn't take a CPA to see that the federal government can't cut enough spending to balance the budget. There are going to be some tax increases involved, so don't insult us by trying to sell that fantasy.

If you can't bring thoughtful solutions with you — if you can't treat constituents like adults — please just pack up your bumper-sticker politics and stories about wacky Washington and anecdotes about ignorant city folk and lunatic judges and bureaucrat zombies, and take your burlesque show on down the road somewhere else.

— *The Clay Center Dispatch, via The Associated Press*

### 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. 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. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate)

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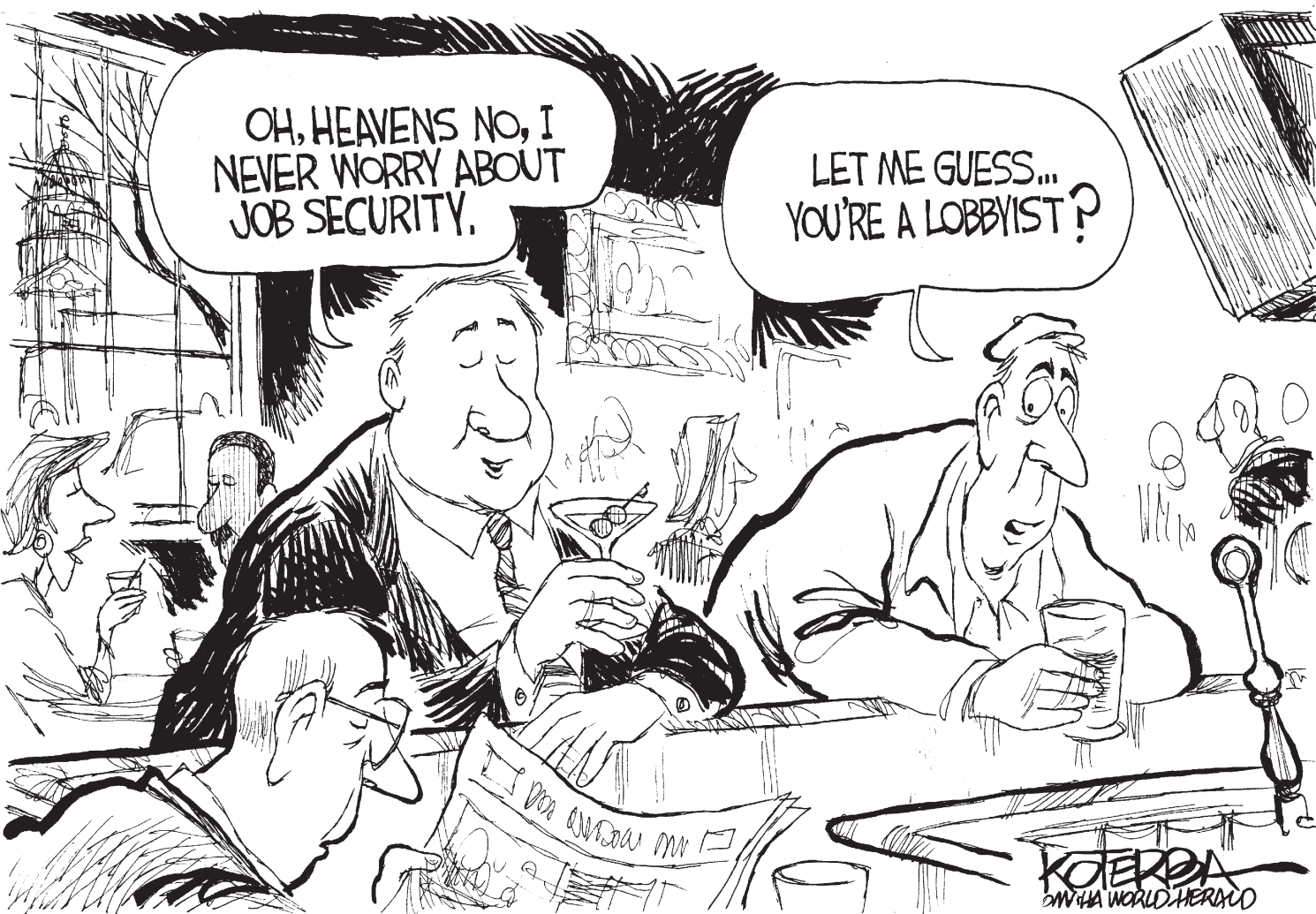
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### Small griefs add up, as do goodbyes

Our staff here at the *Colby Free Press* has changed again. That's the way of things at newspapers, I'm told, but as Jasmine Stewart, advertising manager since before I started here, cleaned out her desk and passed around mouse pads and chairs and all the smaller things that accumulate in an office, there were some bittersweet moments to get through as well. Bitter because we'll miss her; sweet because she is returning to a field she loves.

It is a time of grief, complete with a farewell party. And it is a reminder, in a small way, of all the moments of grief that make up a single lifetime. Another reminder is the coming holiday season (yes, Virginia, Thanksgiving is only 10 days away), when anyone old enough to vote is likely to experience at least a few moments of nostalgia for past holidays.

Yes, nostalgia is a form of grief, though a very mild one. Grief is something that hits at odd times and unexpected ways — the dad who cries as his baby goes off to kindergarten is grieving, though he may not be able to name all the reasons. He's grieving for hours spent cuddling a sleepy newborn, because they are over forever. He's grieving for times he was too busy, or too tired, to give all his attention to a childish game. He's probably grieving a little in advance, as well, for the day his tiny charge will be off on bigger adventures in high school and college and beyond.

Seeing a coworker move on reminds me of another grief, that of graduation day. Some people walked off the stage with a diploma in one hand and a ticket out of town in the other. Others of us helped load U-Hauls, waved goodbye, and went back to temporary jobs un-



**Marian Ballard**

#### • Collection Connections

til it was our turn. It's harder in some ways, I think, to be the one left behind, without a new adventure to push aside loneliness for familiar companions.

Whatever the cause, any break in day-to-day patterns is a chink in the armor, opening the door to grief.

That's not to say that grief is bad. It isn't. It's often uncomfortable, but remains an essential aspect of good adjustment to the world. Think of it as the process of restoring order when life is thrown into chaos. Chaos may be the death of a spouse or a child. It may be the loss of a job. Or, it may be winning the lottery. Any sudden, permanent change can throw us off balance.

When I'm off balance, I may stagger a little. That's a way of restoring equilibrium. If I stumble, I do what I need to do to catch myself.

Sometimes, though, loss is sneaky, and grief may go unrecognized. Lost illusions and faded dreams are the stuff of growing up, but they still carry pain. Being forced into making pragmatic choices, as most people are, means grieving over the path not chosen. Usually that means suffering in silence, for those who could have sympathized with you have also suffered

quietly from their own pragmatic choices.

All the world's a stage, or so Shakespeare said. At the moment, it makes more sense to me to say that everyone in the world is center stage, each with his or her own personal spotlight. As I move, my spotlight moves. As you move, your spotlight moves.

Sometimes they overlap, and our lives meet. Sometimes my spotlight moves away from yours before I am ready to part. I'm left standing halfway in shadow, looking over my shoulder, wanting to grab my life — or yours — and somehow wrench them back together.

That's grief. When life moved on — or death — messy unfinished business gets left behind. Some people stay frozen, letting the spotlight of life leave them behind. Some are determined to stay in the limelight and refuse to look over their shoulders for even a glance, thinking that's the only way to adjust.

I think it takes a little of both. If you look too long, you get out of step with your own future. If you never look, there's lots of fallen bits and pieces to trip over.

As you head into the future this holiday season, I hope you feel free to mourn the past. I also hope you discover something new to lead you forward. The "good old days" are a rich part of how we shape our circle of living into the future.

Yes, we'll miss Jasmine here. Yet each of us has something new ahead. Our best wishes go with her.

*Marian Ballard has collected careers as counselor, librarian, pastor, and now copy editor for the Colby Free Press. She collects ideas, which are more portable than other stuff.*

### Farmers take care of land seriously

Some people have the mistaken idea that farmers and ranchers are harming our environment. You hear it everywhere: at the coffee shop, church, public forums, even in the grocery store where people buy the food farmers and ranchers produce for us to eat.

Children arrive home from school and tell parents about harmful practices farmers are using on the land. It's easy to understand why folks think the way they do about today's agriculture.

Few businesses are as open to public scrutiny as a farm or ranch in the United States today.

While farming and ranching practices occur in the open where anyone can see, the only picture many have of agriculture is what they read in newspapers or see on television. Even fewer people have set foot on a modern farm.

The fondest wish of most farmers and ranchers is to pass their land on to their children. They work years to leave a legacy of good land stewardship. Most farmers learned about conservation and respect for the land from their parents.

Today's farmer and ranchers are doing their part to protect and improve the environment. They use such agricultural practices as early planting, pest control, good soil fertility, conservation tillage and many other innovations that help grow more food while protecting the environment.

Farmers adjust practices to meet individual cropping conditions. Such practices can vary from farm to farm — even from field to field.

As in any other business, farmers and ranch-



**John Schlageck**

#### • Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

ers must manage their operations on a timely basis and use all the technology available to improve quality and productivity. If they don't, they will not be able to stay in business for long.

Today's farmer has cut chemical usage by approximately 40 percent in many cases. Many no longer apply chemicals before planting. Instead, as the crop matures, farmers gauge potential weed pressure and apply herbicides only if needed.

Throughout the growing season, farmers do their best to provide nutritious healthy food. From planting through harvest, they battle weather, weeds, insects and disease.

Efficiency is their best defense against change including unstable world markets, political barriers and fringe groups who may attack their farming methods, yet know little about this vital profession.

Mike and Patty Hipp operate a dryland farming and cow-calf business in Barton County. This family-based operation has emphasized conservation practices for three generations.

100-percent no-till farming practices are employed with crop rotation. The Hipps use wheat, milo, soybeans, alfalfa, sunflowers,

corn and feed in their rotation and have recently begun to use cover crops to minimize soil loss, add nutrients and increase soil structure. The cow-calf operation employs rotational grazing to ensure sufficient annual grass recovery and good calving environment.

Conservation range management techniques like tree and brush treatment and broadleaf weed control are also used to ensure pasture health.

Feeding areas are located away from creeks and ponds to prevent drainage of wastes into these areas. The Hipps were honored as the Natural Resources award winners at the recent Kansas Farm Bureau annual meeting.

Yes, farmers and ranchers like the Hipps and their counterparts across Kansas must live in the environment they create. They can and will do more to improve their environment. They can continue to rely less on herbicides, insecticides and fertilizers.

Agricultural producers can also conserve more water, plug abandoned wells, monitor grassland grazing and continue to implement environmentally sound techniques that will ensure preservation of the land.

In the meantime, farmers and ranchers will continue to take their stewardship seriously. They've devoted their lives to safeguarding their farms and families, while providing us with the safest food in the world.

*John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.*

### Mallard Fillmore

#### • Bruce Tinsley

