



Free Press Viewpoint

Woods no issue; crashers really are

Two issues of the past week kept the 24/7 chatter boxes wishing there were more than 24 hours in a day. One issue was not an issue and the other could have had very serious consequences.

• The non-issue concerned an apparent disagreement golfer Tiger Woods had with his wife around 2:30 in the morning. Woods, the perfect role model for young America, jumped out of his suit of perfection and did a little romancing outside his marriage vows. Or so they say.

Strange as it may seem, Tiger Woods' swing sent the wedding ball out of bounds and in the process of recovery, he was forced to jump into his vehicle to get away from an apparent angry caddie (wife). In doing so, he hit a couple of objects, a tree being one of them. This lightning-fast exit left the famed golfer injured and his vehicle sort of scrunched up.

Whatever the Woods' problem was, or is, has absolutely nothing to do with our economy, the job market, the Afghanistan war, health care reform, etc.

That's their problem, not ours.

• The second issue is serious. It deals with a couple who crashed a state dinner at the White House last week. Heads are still being scratched as to how this happened. Fingers are being pointed in a couple of directions, but ultimately the Secret Service has to shoulder the blame. They are the ones responsible for the president's safety 24/7.

This security breach supposedly resulted from a change made in the way guests — and there were nearly 400 invited — were admitted. In the past, so reports go, the White House social director generally supplied the Secret Service with personnel to ensure no wrinkles appeared at the various check points. Inasmuch as this apparently didn't happen this time, it's still not a reason to shift blame from the very organization created to protect the president onto someone or some other White House agency.

Some heads are spinning over this, and should be. Three Secret Service agents were placed on leave pending the outcome of an investigation.

The dinner crashers mingled and even had a chat with President Obama. This uninvited couple managed to slip through the security net, and could have inflicted harm, or worse, on the president if that had been their intention.

Maybe we need to go back to the way state dinners were handled so successfully.

Change isn't always good.

— Tom Dreiling (tad1@st-tel.net)



Congressman's departure is country's loss

The departure of Rep. Dennis Moore from Congress will be as much of a loss for Kansas as it might be for the Democratic party, which will have a tough time finding a replacement.

Mr. Moore is the kind of representative we should have at the Capitol, regardless of party. He's intelligent, thoughtful and a heck of a good guy. He takes time to meet with people who come to Washington, and shows a genuine interest in what they have to say.

He may not always agree, but if he doesn't, he'll tell you why — with a smile — and go on to other issues.

Going into his 12th year, the six-term congressman told reporters last week that he had only planned to stay about a decade. At 64, he agreed, the every-weekend flights back to Kansas have gotten old.

But as much as anything, he said, the partisan atmosphere which has marked Washington for most of our history — “ungodly partisanship,” he called it — finally got to him.

“Eighty-five percent of what we do in Congress should not be about party,” he declared.

And that's true. Most of it should be about what's good for America and the American people. What increases our freedom rather than diminishing it. What helps rather than hurts. What's right, not wrong.



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

The truth is, it's seldom been that way. Partisan feeling ran deep in the early years, the administrations of both Adamses, Monroe, Jefferson and certainly Andrew Jackson. Partisan feeling, overlain by the slavery issue, preceded the Civil War. It resumed its march at war's end.

And while it ebbs and flows, partisanship has peaked in the Clinton, Bush II and Obama administrations. Whichever party controls the Congress has worked to block the opposition president's programs and appointments. Today, it's no different, and House members have less freedom to buck their leadership.

It'll be interesting to see where Dennis Moore lands. Will he return to Johnson County to practice law? Retire? Become a highly paid capital lobbyist?

We'd like to see him back in Kansas, frankly.

The race to replace him will be interesting. Can voters back east do as well this time?

Doubtful.

We'll remember Mr. Moore as the guy who always took time to hear us out when we visited on press association business, as the congressman who, when he had to rush off to a vote, said “Come on,” and waved us to follow him to the chamber, then came back and talked to us some more after the vote.

He was the guy who followed his father's example in more ways than one, and kept his Dad's “Mr. Moore goes to Washington” poster from the 1960s (He never made it to D.C. himself) on the wall as a reminder. It was a point of pride that, after service as district attorney in heavily Republican Johnson County, he'd fulfilled that dream years later.

Of course, Mr. Moore has had to play the partisan game some days. Still, he sticks out as a guy who tried his best to do what he thought was right. You can't ask for much more than that from anyone.

Steve Haynes is editor and publisher of The Colby Free Press and president of Nor'West Newspapers. In his spare time, whenever that is, he like to ride and watch trains.

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Science prizes don't reflect U.S. education

“U.S.A.! U.S.A.! We're Number 1!”

From press reports, you would assume that eight of the nine science Nobel Prizes were swept by U.S. scientists—another affirmation that the American system of education was still the best in the world's best, at least eight-ninths of the time.

Well, count again. The press stretched the facts in making all but one of them seem American. In truth, all but three were schooled elsewhere.

The 2009 Nobel Prize in Physics went to three scientists. Charles K. Kao was born in Shanghai and got his doctorate from University of London. Willard S. Boyle was born in Nova Scotia and educated in Canada. Only one, George E. Smith was born and educated in the U.S.

The 2009 Nobel in Chemistry went to three researchers. While Venkatraman Ramakrishnan is a U.S. national, he was born and educated through his bachelor's degree in India, and today works at the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology in the United Kingdom. Ada E. Yonath was born and educated through graduate school in Israel (and is the only one of the nine recognized by the press to not be American.) Again, only one, Thomas A. Steitz, was born and educated in the United States.

The 2009 Nobel in Physiology or Medicine went to three researchers. While Elizabeth H. Blackburn is currently a resident of the United States, she was born and educated in Australia. Although he resides in the U.S., Jack W. Szostak, was born in London and is a Canadian. Only one of the three, Carol W. Greider, is an American educated in American schools.

So, only three out of the nine science Nobel Laureates are products of the U.S. educational system. And those three Americans were all educated in the U.S. before the “Nation at Risk” report threw the U.S. into a frenzy of educational reforms that has culminated in teach-to-the-test memorization. They were all educated by our earlier educational system that allowed



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

science teachers to decide what to teach, how to teach and when to teach with ample opportunity for creative course and labwork.

That is hard to find today due to the oppressive standardization movement. Because there is a lag period between when research is accomplished and when time shows it is critical enough to be of Nobel Prize stature, the last years' awards have provided plenty of evidence that U.S. dominance of the science prizes is coming to an end.

The fact that most of these researchers came to the U.S. for research opportunities shows that we “bought” many prizewinners with our state-of-the-art research facilities. But while the U.S. university system is still considered the best in the world, more and more young international talent is now going elsewhere. One-third of the new U.S. patents are by foreign-born scientists. Recent international rankings of universities show a decline in U.S. schools and a rise in Asian schools.

Defenders of the current U.S. system declare that other countries only educate a small elite while we educate all children. That is no longer correct. In my last trips to Beijing, Nanjing, and Shanghai, their schools were graduating over 70 percent of their students into college, and nearly all of those students finished college in four years, a much higher rate than for the U.S.

Other countries have always envied our ability to teach students to be creative. They had a standard national curricula that forced teachers to teach-to-the-test. They admit: “We are not impressed with our students' ability

to rank No. 1 on international tests. We teach our students to take tests. We don't get Nobel Prizes.”

Korea, Singapore and China are attempting to get off of national standardization in order to provide their teachers the autonomy to vary teaching. Meanwhile, the U.S. is only months away from moving to national standards, locking us into teaching-to-the-test and shutting down our remaining creative science teachers.

American-education scientists won three, not eight of the nine science Nobel Prizes. Enjoy them while we have them. We may not see many more.

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