

Free Press Viewpoint

Space station still offers value

In Europe this week, leaders of several countries are talking about whether or not they want to pay to keep the International Space Station running past 2015.

The station has been up there since 1998, but does anyone really give it a thought? How many of us know what they do up there? Unless you read every story coming out about the station, you'd probably be hard pressed to name anything that happened on board.

Astronauts have done experiments with remote ultrasound medical procedures, long-term studies into gravity's effect on plants and animals and many other research projects.

The station provides us an invaluable tool for studying many things. Whenever we decide to head to other planets, it'll be useful to know the effects of long-term life in space.

The trip to Mars, as we can do it now, would take 260 days. We need to know what that much weightlessness (actually, near-weightlessness in the case of the space station) will do to people. We need to know what kinds of radiation the crew would be exposed to. We can theorize all we want, but this way we get firsthand knowledge without leaving Earth orbit.

The station also is a permanent platform looking down at earth. Satellites are fine, but this way we have long-term, first-hand observation of our ever-changing world. It also allows us equipment for looking out into deep space in a spot more easily repaired than, for example, the unmanned Hubble telescope.

The station has led to a lot of innovation. The European Space Agency developed an automated freighter to ferry parts, water, experiments and other things up to the station. It's not the Millennium Falcon, but it's an interesting new spacecraft that could be a stepping stone to shipping goods in space.

New rockets, such as the European Vega, have been developed specifically to reach the station. Previously, the Europeans, who did not have an extensive space flight infrastructure, had been using converted Russian missiles to get their spacecraft up to the station.

The station is important, even if only as a symbol of international cooperation. It includes modules from the United States, Russia, Europe and Japan. Mission control centers in the United States, French Guiana, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, Russia France, the Netherlands and Japan serve it.

The current commander is Frank de Winne, a Belgian. The crew includes astronauts from all of the contributing countries plus some who don't have the money or equipment to build a module themselves.

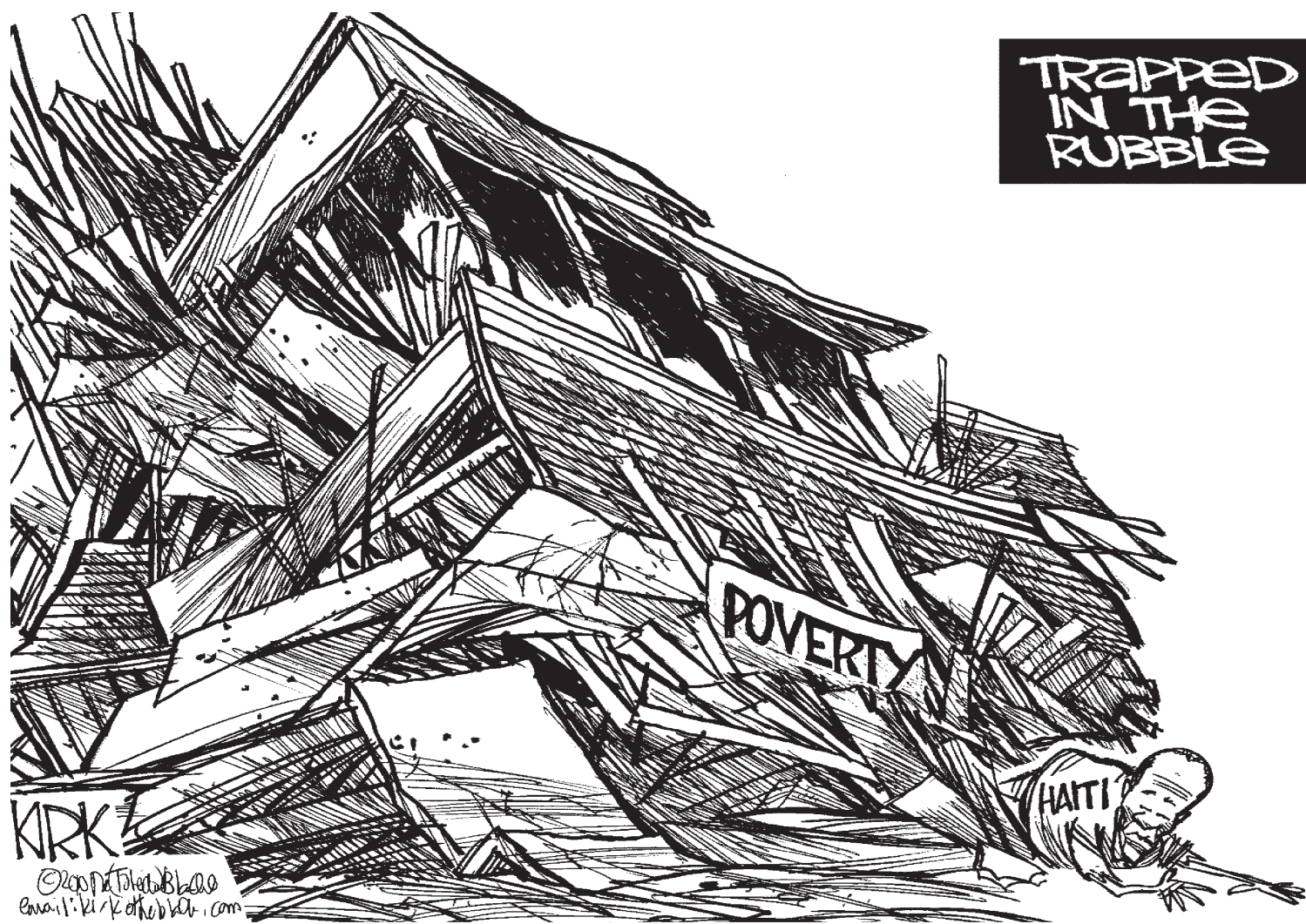
We need to keep this invaluable tool up and running as long as we can, and we need to replace it when it's outlasted its functional life. With space travel it seems as soon as we take a giant leap forward, we take another step back.

After sending a mere 12 men to the moon, we haven't returned in nearly 40 years. Space stations are the one area where we've kept up. Skylab begat Mir which in turn led to the International Space Station. Let's keep up the good track record.

Space travel is not cheap, as opponents are quick to point out, and it's never going to be cheap. Estimates run to 100 billion euros (about \$145 billion) for the entire life of the station.

The benefits are tangible, but they are rarely in the form of monetary profit. The benefits from the station and from space flight in general are in innovation, knowledge and inspiration, and those are far more valuable.

— Kevin Bottrell



TRAPPED IN THE RUBBLE

Colby girls basketball team on a roll

In case anyone hasn't noticed, the Colby girls basketball team has been dominating their competition as of late.

It's a real challenge to find a weakness in this year's squad. There are no noticeable chinks in their armor. They pass well, they are quick, they play tough defense and they don't make many mistakes.

If I had to use one word to describe the team, it would be solid. The girls have developed a calm and confident demeanor over the last three games that suggest that they know how good they are. They are not cocky, but they look like a team that expects to win every time they step on the floor.

The Lady Eagles are in the midst of a five-game winning streak after dropping two of their first three. The streak has included emphatically ending two teams' perfect seasons: They pounded Oakley 39-19 and trounced Holcomb 55-38.

I think the two victories would have created more of a stir among Colby fans if they had been closer games, but the Lady Eagles were so much better it was easy to forget these were two undefeated teams they were hammering.

And I think anyone who watched the games closely will tell you Colby's large margin was not a fluke. The Lady Eagles were that much better than these teams. This isn't meant to be a knock on Oakley or Holcomb. Both solid squads, but they just weren't on the Lady Eagles' level.

The girls' season has rolled along in a manner similar to last year's. Both years, the girls improved as the season progressed. Since the start of the season this year, the Lady Eagles' offensive execution has gotten crisper, the de-



Andy Heintz

Wildcat Ramblings

fense tougher, the cuts to the basket sharper, the passing more purposeful, the mistakes fewer and the shots are starting to fall more often.

The key to this years success is defense. Even when the girls' shots are not falling in, their defensive play keeps them in the game. If you want to get a feel for how good Colby's defense is, look no further than their win over Oakley on Dec. 18. In their previous three games, the Lady Plainsmen had scored 66, 64 and 61 points. Their second-lowest scoring game was 59. The Lady Eagles held them to 19. Nineteen!

The one thing that jumps out at me about Colby's defense is its quickness. Juniors Kayla Hockersmith and twins Katrina and Katherine Kaus, sophomore Morgan Bell and freshman Alexa Haas are all extremely quick. Their collective quickness has given opponents a lot of trouble.

In their last game against McCook High from Nebraska last Friday, they caused the Lady Bison to turn the ball over 32 times. Hockersmith has shown a knack for getting steals; she already has 34 this season. Hockersmith has tremendous court vision and she usually finds someone open for an easy layup after she steals the ball.

Katrina Kaus is especially adept at getting ahead of the pack for transition baskets. Given her success as a cross country runner, it's not surprising that she usually beats her defenders for easy layups.

The Lady Eagles' offense has been successful this year because the team is so fundamentally sound. Other teams can't focus on one player because everyone on this team can score. The fact that they are excellent passers and everyone on the team is unselfish doesn't hurt, either.

Another reason Colby's offense has been so good has been the Lady Eagles' leading scorer, Katherine Kaus. She has really stepped up her game from last season. Katherine Kaus has become a well-rounded player who can score inside, handle the ball, dish out assists and knock down three-pointers.

Junior Kelsey Shields and Bell have also shown a lot of improvement on offense. Bell is a great athlete who can shoot, rebound and drive to the basket. While she has improved a lot, I think Bell's best basketball is still ahead of her. Her potential seems limitless. Shields has played well and consistently. She can score inside, she's a solid rebounder and she makes smart decisions on the court.

The Lady Eagles have the talent and the attitude of a team who could make a run at the state title. In the meantime, we should just count ourselves lucky to be able to watch this team perform each week.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.

Write yourself into the new decade

This is Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg, poet laureate of Kansas, bringing you a writing exercise to test-drive solo or with friends.

Right now in your life, you have stories to tell and a way of telling them unlike anyone else. When you use your own words to tell your truth in your own voice, your writing is strong.

Writing can introduce you to more of yourself, illuminate your particular gifts and challenges, and put into words your life's biggest questions and answers. It's also one of the most democratic of arts. All you need is some paper or a computer screen, a little time and enough faith, imagination or suspension of disbelief to begin. From there, to paraphrase Robert Frost, way leads to way, and words lead to words.

Ten years ago, I had a 4-year-old instead of a household of teens, all the original appliances we bought with our house, and my father, step-father and father-in-law were still alive. I didn't know the new decade would bring a cancer diagnosis, a writing project about the Holocaust, an ability to fill out a Free Application for Student Aid form in a flash, and a profound love for yoga. Life is like that. Or as one of my friends put it – after adopting one child, and a year later getting a phone message that simply said, "Would you like the brother?" (she would, and now has 12- and 13-year-old siblings) – "life has more imagination than we do."

As we enter a new year and a new decade, I invite you to inventory your life. Begin by making a list of all that has changed for you

Other Opinions

Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg Poet Laureate of Kansas

in the last decade. Maybe you moved, got a couch, got therapy, got fed up with one job and found another. Maybe you went back to school or finished school. Feel free to list the big things (your mother passing on) and the little things (singing in the shower more).

Keep adding to the list over several days. You might find it useful to divide up changes into categories, such as work, family, finances, passions, losses, community, marriage, art.

When you're done, look it over, and see if you can name this decade. I named my last 10 years, "Sorting: The Decade of Prioritizing," although I realized I could call the decade before the last one, "Exhaustion: The Decade of Too Much to Do." Find a name that fits for you and allows you to see more of where you've been.

Now make a list of all you want to invite into your life in the next decade in terms of family, marriage or partnership, work, art, finances, community, etc. Be lavish but precise, and consider if all on this list is what you truly want (remember also the old standby: if you ask for it, you might just get it). This can be

your wish list for the next decade, and because you're the boss of you, you can revise this whenever needed.

From here, you can do any/all of the following:

Write about what difference it will make in your life to have something on your wish list. How might this change you seek give you greater freedom, strength, creativity, time, or whatever else it could bring?

Write a letter from yourself 10 years ago to yourself now, and then write back to your younger self. In doing so, you'll see what shining coins of wisdom you've found.

Correspond with yourself 10 years older than you now. You could also write this as a dialogue.

Pluck anything off your list from the last 10 years, and write the story of this change in your life.

Find more writing exercises at Caryn-MirriamGoldberg.com, and if you click on "blog," you can also link to a podcast of this column, or you can go to: web.goddard.edu/~cmirriamgoldberg/podcasts/Jan10columnmp3

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