



Other Viewpoints

Cosmosphere still needs dome theater

The Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center surely will do its homework before deciding how to renovate its IMAX theater. Management will research the trends and where the large-screen entertainment technology and market are going.

We are no experts on that, but for what it's worth we hope the Cosmosphere maintains a dome theater. That would seem to be what makes a theater attraction in the Cosmosphere unique and special.

A large flat-screen digital theater simply wouldn't be as much of an attraction. It wouldn't hurt to have one to show educational movies, but a domed theater seems more of a bonus or draw for the tourist attraction the Cosmosphere has become.

Dome or flat screen is a key component of three options the Cosmosphere considers as it plans a renovation of the 30-year-old theater. The IMAX dome was one of the first of its kind in the world when it opened in 1980, but it needs repairs.

Simply renovating and retaining the IMAX dome format would cost \$750,000. That is on the low end of the cost scale. But the Cosmosphere's other two options are digital ones — standard digital film format or digital IMAX. Those are increasingly more costly, because they require taking out the dome and replacing it with a flat screen, which would cost about \$1.5 million.

Why consider digital? There is some concern whether IMAX will continue to produce and support its technology on film, and probably people just think digital must be better.

Count us in the retro crowd then. If digital means losing the dome, we say keep the dome.

If film and the domed theater are going by the wayside sometime in the future, the Cosmosphere is a better judge of that. But that would be a shame, because even on film the dome viewing experience is special. Digital sound is an enhancement, but digital doesn't seem terribly better than film, especially if it means going from dome to standard flat screen.

Renovating the dome also is less expensive. And it would continue to give the Cosmosphere a competitive edge over flat-screen IMAX theaters that could open in Wichita.

— *The Hutchinson News, via The Associated Press*

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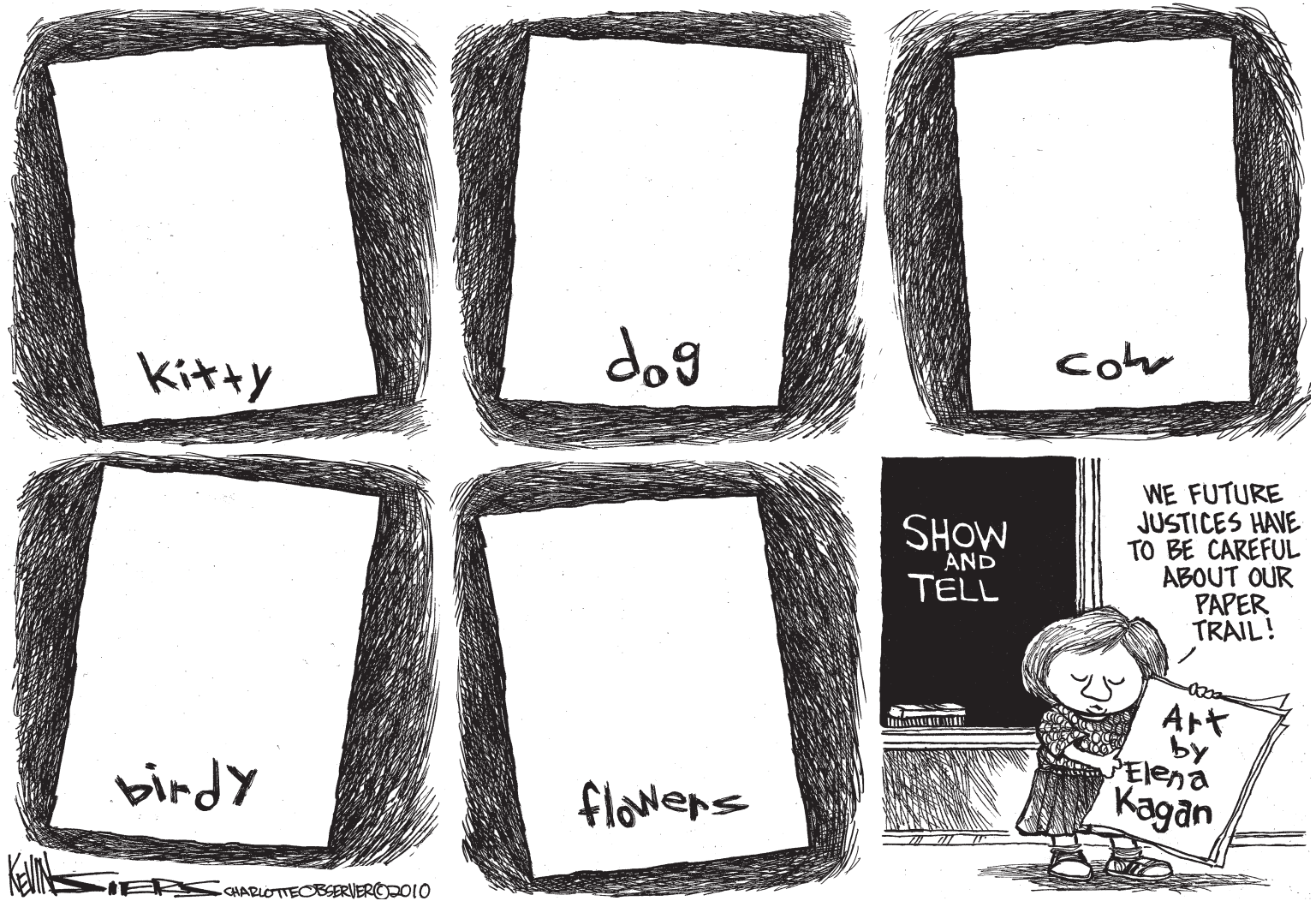
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Nice guy gets his just desserts

The Kansas Press Association gave Tom Dreiling his just desserts the other night, and as they say in the movies, "it couldn't have happened to a nicer guy."

Dreiling received the Clyde M. Reed Jr. Master Editor-Publisher award at the association's annual convention. It's pretty much the highest honor the group gives, citing someone for a life's work in the business, other than admission to the Hall of Fame.

Used to be you had to have been gone for five years before being considered for the Hall of Fame and in those days, I always thought the admission standards were a bit too high for my taste.

Tom, or TD, as he usually signed himself over the years, toiled 44 years in the business until last fall, when the doctors told him his eyes and his feet had failed him, and he'd better stop working if he wanted to keep what he had left.

It was a bitter pill for a guy who loves his work and hated his first stab at retirement, but he agreed and moved to Goodland, where for more than 25 years he put out the old Goodland Daily News. He left in 1989 when new owners took over and told him they planned to cut his salary in half. His stories and his folksy column are fondly remembered more than two decades later.

Tom left his wife Jean in Goodland. She died in 1975 at age 37 after struggling with leukemia. That left Tom with two young sons to raise, a task that he seems to have done well.

Tom worked for the Catholic high school in his hometown of Hays, raising money and running the alumni association, but the allure



Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

of ink was strong. Soon he was editor of the daily in Sheridan, Wyo., working for his old boss from Goodland. But Wyoming was cold, windy and it wasn't home.

He called one day, asking about an ad we were running for a publisher in Colby. He sent his resume and after some debate, we interviewed and hired him. It was the start of a productive relationship.

Two things always came through with Tom. People liked the newspaper when he ran it, and they liked his columns and editorials, at least when they agreed with him. He ran the *Colby Free Press* from 1998 to 2005, when he retired for the first time.

It was a difficult era, with a heated controversy surrounding the hospital. Both sides demanded loyalty, and covering the other at all often was seen as opposing the first. The paper won a major state award for its coverage, but that did not please either side.

In 2005, Tom told me it was time for him to retire. He found an apartment in Hays and moved. We found a replacement, who moved to Colby.

A few weeks later, in a hand-written note, Tom (then 71) told me he'd made "a terrible mistake." He asked if we had any jobs. At the

time, Cynthia was on her second year as publisher of The Norton Telegram, struggling to find time to supervise it and get her other jobs done. We told Tom he could go over there.

And as he had done in Colby, he pulled the staff together and started to make the paper better. He applied his usual soft touch and dose of humor, but when it was necessary, he laid down the law in the office.

Now, he's off to Denver to live with one of his sons, near to all his grandchildren. We wish him well. We'll miss him.

I wish I could say I dreamed up this award for him. That honor falls to Richard Gannon, now the lobbyist for the press association. Years ago, he was, while still in college, elected as a Democrat to be state senator for this area.

Tom and his brother Norbert, who had been state chair of the Democratic party, pushed that campaign, and it was Rich who suggested the whole thing to me. All I did was write the nomination letter.

Rich recalled stopping by to visit Tom during a break from college. He told Tom both parties had asked him to run, and he wanted to know what to do. Next day, to his surprise, an editorial in the *Daily News* talked up what a fine candidate Rich Gannon would be, and the rest, as they say, is history.

That's TD. What a guy.

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.

Is America losing spirit?

The 1977 College Board report "On Further Examination" looked at the dramatic decline in Scholastic Aptitude Test scores between 1963 and 1977, a total of 49 points.

While more students took the test each year, from 2.7 million in 1963 to 4.2 million in 1977, cutting deeper into the student pool was found to be only a minor reason for the decline. The standards did not change. The student population remained 11th and 12th grade students. The study pointed to "more pervasive forces," what it called "national disruption."

In the early 1960s, the U.S. was "riding high." President Kennedy had announced we were going to the moon. Most kids wanted to be an astronaut.

Then there were three terrible assassinations in a row: President John Kennedy, Sen. Robert Kennedy and civil rights giant Martin Luther King Jr. The Vietnam War worsened. As a national malaise set in.

Since that time, the test has been "renormed," but we have never returned to those high scores.

It had been an "Era of Camelot." Beatles music was in the background. We were determined to go the moon. As a teenager of that generation, I saw the spirit that NASA challenge gave to us.

All of America was glued to the television set as Walter Cronkite described each launch. There was the elation of watching the first moon walk. And the patching of Apollo 13 to safely return from a fuel-cell explosion in distant space — that was heroic!

My generation was inspired. We may not



John Richard Schrock

- Education Frontlines

have all wanted to be astronauts, but we all bathed in a national atmosphere of striving for something great. We were a country united for a common higher purpose.

America had spirit. Not everyone's life was getting better year-by-year, but we believed our children would have a better life because we were reaching for greater things.

But in the decades since, house-to-house surveys showed that Americans slowly lost that dream. Today, the majority of Americans do not believe that our children will have a better life. Some politicians are crying that President Obama is leading the U.S. into decline. But this decline began way before the 2001 stock market downturn or today's "Great Recession."

After the last space shuttle lands, American astronauts will have to hitch-hike on a Russian rocket. President Obama has ditched NASA plans to return to the moon or go to Mars, and the U.S. can no longer afford it. It will be a blow to the American spirit. I expect SAT scores to drop again.

But when I travel to China each summer to work with their science-teacher trainers, I again see this spirit that the U.S. had in the 1960s.

The Chinese look forward to a tomorrow that will be better than today, because today is better than yesterday, and measurably so, even in the midst of this economic downturn.

The Chinese have bridged this Great Recession not only due to a massive financial stimulus from Beijing, but also because the populace is riding high on spirit. They launched their first astronaut in October 2003 with their own design of rocket and a Russian capsule. They launched a two-man mission in 2005. They conducted a space walk on their 2008 mission.

While we mothball our shuttles, China is hyped about heading into space. Maybe they will see a 49-point increase on their college tests.

Meanwhile in the parade of life, the band playing "U.S.A. We're No. One!" is fading around the bend, while a new band playing "P.R.C. We're No. One" is appearing up the street.

I would hold out hope of turning this around if there were any positive signs of a renewed spirit. But with Washington deadlocked, parties polarizing and everyone pointing fingers and blaming others, there is nothing at the national level for our students to believe in.

The landing of that last space shuttle — scheduled for October 2011 — will be a sad moment indeed.

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

