

Other Viewpoints

Rural areas hurt in broadcasting cuts

One trendy, conservative movement of the day is to slice funding for public broadcasting. The reasoning is simple: Public broadcasting is left-leaning and the government should stop helping to provide content when private companies can do the same thing.

Current efforts are under way in Washington and Topeka to cut government aid to public television and radio stations.

Proponents rationalize that, say, "Sesame Street," which receives 20 percent of its budget from federal funds, could find a commercial station willing to take it on and would probably be able to increase its merchandising revenue to boot. The same notion applies to NPR's "All Things Considered" and other popular shows.

But there's a huge flaw in this notion of budgetary justice. The ax is raised to penalize the left, but it's going to fall squarely on the center.

Consider the High Plains region, an area of dwindling population and resources, though still a vital piece of America's agricultural scene. In that area, which includes rural Kansas, High Plains Public Radio is as much a part of the landscape as the limitless horizon and brilliant night sky.

But, unlike national programs that would lose perhaps 5 percent of their funding if Congress and Kansas ended their subsidies, High Plains would lose 35 percent of its total funding — 20 percent from Kansas and 15 percent from Washington.

Unlike stations in urban areas, which have more options and deep-pocketed benefactors to recover from the proposed cuts, stations such as High Plains would be faced with doing without, if they could continue to operate at all. They would lose the ability to air some national news programs, and their local news and information programming would take a huge hit.

We mention High Plains because it embodies the very notion of public broadcasting — to serve those who would not otherwise be served.

Serious efforts to cut spending and reduce the deficit have our full support. However, the money saved from cutting all Corporation for Public Broadcasting funds — \$430 million — would be barely a rounding error in the federal budget. But the cost to rural America would be enormous.

— *The Kansas City Star, via the Associated Press*

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Moving on, it's hard to say goodbye

Well, I'm sad to say this will be my last column for the *Colby Free Press*.

I have accepted a general reporting job at the *Ottawa Herald*, a daily newspaper in a small town about 30 minutes from Lawrence. My last day at the *Colby Free Press* will be Friday.

It has been a privilege to cover sports at Colby. I have enjoyed getting to know the kids as well as the fans. I'm going to get a subscription to the paper just to see how the teams fare.

Working in Colby has been a wonderful experience, and I appreciate how well the people in town have treated me. Your generosity and friendliness has always been appreciated.

As is always the case, there are a few people who I will especially miss and I would feel guilty if I didn't acknowledge some of them.

A huge thank you to my editor, Kevin Bottrell, and my publisher, Steve Haynes, who were flexible enough to give me the freedom to have my own column and come up with some of my own story ideas.

Haynes taught me how to write more coherently and put up with my occasional liberal rants, and Bottrell is simply one of the most patient people on this earth. I doubt I will ever have another editor who is as enjoyable to work for.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to copy editor Marian Ballard and society editor Vera Sloan, who have both been sort of motherly figures in my life, albeit with different styles. They have both tried to take care of me in their own way, and have tried to improve my admittedly wretched cooking skills.

I also will be forever indebted to Evan Barnum, systems administrator at the paper, for patiently helping me understand the basic skills



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

needed to design pages. A quick study, I certainly was not.

I will never forget the generosity of my neighbors, Orvella and W.G. Romine. They, more than anybody else, went out of their way to make sure I had something to do during the weekend or during holidays. Whether it was taking me fishing, inviting me to their Super Bowl party or having me over for Thanksgiving Day, they always made sure I wasn't sitting home alone, and for that I will forever be grateful. Good friends make life tolerable, and they certainly made my life a lot more pleasant.

Colby High girls basketball coach Parker McKee is a tremendous coach with a super-cool goatee, but he's also a good guy. He went out of his way to invite me to play in a couple of pick-up basketball games during a time when my life mostly consisted of working, sleeping and eating. While I'm still a little grumpy about how badly I played, I appreciated the gesture.

Colby college men's basketball coach Dustin Pfeifer is simply a good dude who I feel lucky to have gotten to know. Pfeifer went out of his way to make me feel welcome here. He and his family have been kind to me, and I wish them nothing but the best.

City Manager Carolyn Armstrong has my

respect. She never lost patience with me, even when I would call her several times a day in a desperate attempt to grasp the intricacies of some issue involving land acquisitions, bonds or loans. Members of the City Council and Mayor Ken Bieber were gentle with me when I would call them two or three times over an issue I was confused about.

I'm grateful for all the help I received from Debbie Schwanke, public information director at the college. She has always been helpful and pleasant to work with and her good sense of humor usually made my day a little better.

Colby High football coach Chris Gardner and cross country coach Bob Mannebach were nice enough to treat me like a friend when I was new and unknown to most people. You really appreciate that sort of thing when you're a shy person in a new town six hours away from your family.

Colby High Principal Larry Gabel always worked hard to give me the latest sports information. He is just a classy guy who is hard not to like. There are several people that I don't have the space to mention or who I feel wouldn't want the public attention, but you know who you are and you will be missed.

I truly love and care about a lot of people in this town. Thinking about my time in Colby will always conjure up some happy memories. As corny and cliché as it might sound, a piece of my heart will always be in Colby.

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.

History shows farmers protect land

There's an old saying that goes something like this: Sometimes you have to look back on where you've been to know where you're going. While I'm not a fanatic about history, I believe it certainly has its place in our society today.

Whenever I take a road trip across Kansas or some other destination across our great land, I often stop along the way to read historical markers. They include details about battles, pestilence and devastation, as well as discovery, success and progress.

When Mom and Dad were alive, we sometimes visited a handful of cemeteries in rural Kansas and Missouri to pay homage to our relatives and friends. Below the headstones rested the remains of men in our family who spent their lives planting and harvesting behind sweating teams of horses, butchering hogs on bitterly cold days and teaching their sons about the soil.

Also down there were the remains of women who collected eggs, washed clothes by hand, cooked skillet full of fried chicken and managed to be good wives and mothers under sometimes impossible conditions.

They are the ones who wove the fabric that serves as the yardstick for our new and dynamic future. What happened with these early pioneers has a direct bearing on our present successes and failures.

One such winning story revolves around the strides agriculture and its people have made in the interests of conservation. Not everything



John Schlageck

• Insights
Kansas Farm Bureau

that has happened in conservation came about in the last 10 or 20 years. Many of the innovations in conservation began taking shape in the years after the "Dirty '30s," nearly 80 years ago.

Thousands of shelter belts, or windbreaks, were planted in Kansas and other Great Plains states. After years of drought, when rain finally began falling again, ponds dotted the landscape holding this precious resource. Landowners learned to make the water walk and not run, conserving it for livestock and sometimes for thirsty crops.

Terraces snaked their way across thousands of miles of farmland, holding soil and water in place where it belonged. Soil-stopping strip cropping created patterns and reduced wind erosion.

Slowly but surely, conservation measures continued to slow the soil erosion gorilla that had stomped across the High Plains, leaving in its wake gullies the size of automobiles, drifts of soil as high as fence posts, withered lifeless wheat and corn and starving livestock on barren pastures.

Yes, with knowledge, education, patience, understanding and hard work and Mother Nature's ability to heal herself, the rich, fertile land recovered. Throughout this renaissance of the land, farmers and ranchers learned that stewardship of the soil, water and other resources is in the best interest of us all.

Without question, agriculture has yet to receive credit for what it has done to protect and to enhance the landscape and for its willingness to change and improve on the few mistakes it has made.

It is important for all of us to understand what has happened in the past so we can place present events and future needs in their proper perspectives. To avoid doing so will blind us to involvement and participation in much larger efforts extending throughout a long span of time.

Incidentally, a new, modern twist may be nothing more than an old theme, something coming around after having gone around. After all, history comprises the sum of human ideas. And nearly all ideas are timeless, just waiting to be dusted off, reshaped and used again.

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

