



Other Viewpoints

Drunken drivers face more limits

The Kansas Department of Transportation may literally be a life saver when it comes to legislation to rein in drunken driving on state roads and highways.

The department has committed \$2.5 million to a proposal to develop a system to track drunken driving offenses statewide, a key component of the legislation.

That commitment, which the department of transportation was able to make by delaying some information technology projects, could help proponents in the Legislature secure an additional \$2 million to get other parts of the driving under the influence reform package off the ground.

For that, the department deserves a big pat on the back. So does the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, which is working with transportation officials on the project.

The system, known as a central repository, is much needed.

Currently, law enforcement authorities and prosecutors face a hit-and-miss prospect in finding information about offenders from different jurisdictions. Offenders who have been convicted multiple times in one county may be treated like a first-time violator in another because of the lack of information available to officials. That's a problem, as it would allow repeat offenders to avoid stiffer penalties that come with multiple convictions.

Proponents of the driving under the influence reform package say the system is key to getting a handle on drunken driving in Kansas, a problem that has long needed some attention. Let's not forget that a study produced in late 2010 showed that Kansas was among just 16 states where alcohol-related fatalities had increased in 2008, the last full year for which statistics were available at that time. In 2009, 124 people were killed and nearly 2,000 were injured in accidents involving alcohol on state roads.

The reform package came after two years of study by a special commission of legislators, judges, law enforcement officers, attorneys and other officials. It is a strong piece of legislation - too strong for some, due to provisions that would remove sentencing discretion for judges and result in more offenders being sent to prison at a time when the state can ill afford adding to its inmate population.

Considering the need to trim the budget wherever possible and not take on more expenditures, the driving under the influence bill faced an uphill climb this year.

But it's to the credit of the Department of Transportation, the Kansas Bureau of Investigation and legislative officials that they're working to develop the repository, which could help keep drivers safe by getting chronic offenders off the road.

- Topeka Capital-Journal, via The Associated Press



New people bring new memories

It's a quiet day at the OK Corral. All right, that's probably a fairly dumb way to start a column, but I need time to work up to my real revelation.

The lilacs are starting to bloom. I'm visualizing your response. If you're a guy like my sons, you might think, "So?" Or even, "What's a lilac?"

If you're a flower and yard enthusiast, your responses probably reflect either acceptance or enthusiasm. If you've got allergies, well . . .

If you are a transplant to Colby, however, you have a chance of sharing my amazement. It's silly - after all, I've pretty much lived in Kansas for 20 years. But I still connect lilacs with my brother's birthday at the end of May and with Memorial Day.

Moving to a different climate, or even a different neighborhood, involves so much more than geography, you know.

The natives assume everyone knows when to plant, as well as when to watch for the first frost. The natives also often assume you know (and care about) the legend of Joe Bigshot, the star of the 1964 football, basketball and track teams.



Marian Ballard

• Collection Connections

OK, that's a bit of an exaggeration, but there's also a kernel of truth in there somewhere.

I was a native once - long, long ago and far away. I knew who was a second cousin to whom; often it was me, in fact. Certain names would make me think it was a relative, even if I had no idea how.

Not only that, but I knew which churches had split - and when - and which had reconciled. I knew which families ran to athletics and which ran to eggheads.

Then I moved. F&M Bootery became F&M Bank. Family names of ranchers became names of professors and endowment funds. Names of professors and generations of teachers became names of businesses and farmers.

Colby has no "Pill Hill," having missed the boat on both the hill and the doctor who chose to build a rather spooky house at the top of it. Thomas County seems to have a shortage of buttes and canyons, too, though all that great farm ground balances things out.

What Colby does have, though, is a changing population. There are a lot of you out there who never hear the names we trip over daily until you settled here. You never saw lilacs the first week of May until you moved here - they may have come in mid-April or June instead.

Kansas has a new law to encourage people with different backgrounds - different ideas of what is normal and usual and the way things have always been - to come to towns like Colby and Brewster, Menlo and Mingo and Rexford and Gem.

Whether you are a recent transplant or have roots here going back generations, I hope everyone who responds to the new law will find a warm welcome in their new homes.

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.

Write us

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COLBY FREE PRESS

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Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72

Candidate needs a makeover

For a while the other evening, I thought I was sitting on a bar stool here in Aurora (Colo.) enjoying a cold one, but unfortunately listening to some loud mouth talking about everything that's wrong with our country. He peppered his shallow vocabulary with a word or two or three or four or five or six that wouldn't be appreciated in any setting.

What I was actually doing the other evening was watching a replay on television of Donald Trump, the non-candidate candidate for President of the United States of America, address a crowd in Las Vegas.

Carried by C-SPAN, they felt a need to tack a caution on the screen that some of the language you hear might offend. They hit the nail on the head! How Mr. Trump figures he can get away with this kind of language as he tries to convince us he is presidential material, escapes all sense of reason.

I just shook my head in disbelief. This guy wants to be our president? He needs a complete make-over from head to toe and then to take advice from those who know what to say and what not to say. That's a tall order for a man who apparently feels his wealth allows him to use as much foul language as he wishes. You know, the First Amendment on which we hang stuff that it wasn't intended to hold.

This Man of the Plains would probably flunk Mr. Trump in delivery, in content, in thought and in behavior before two audiences - those who came out to hear him, and those watching on television. He's got a long way to go to convince me and I'm sure countless other Americans, including many Republicans, that he's the guy to put in the White House.



Tom Dreiling

• Man of the Plains

And despite your degrading assessment, Mr. Trump, this is still a great country. Mr. Trump, "You're fired!"

Well, thanks to a marriage, we now have a Blackhawk pilot in our relationship! And how proud we all are. Warrant Officer Michael Holland received his wings from the U.S. Army on April 21 at Ft. Rucker at Daleville, Ala. His wife, Mary Kay, pinned the wings. W.O. Holland will be serving in Honduras. Mary Kay is the daughter of Joe and Nancy Zerza. Nancy is the daughter of my sister JoAnn (Dreiling) and the late Joe Jayjack. JoAnn graduated from Girls Catholic High School and Joe from St. Joseph's College and Military Academy. For benefit of her classmates, JoAnn now lives in Florida.

The lady who walked away from the governorship of Alaska, was in our area out here in Colorado a few days ago on a fund raising mission to aid families of veterans. Sarah Palin, in her talk, was high in praise of former President George W. Bush's role in the capture and death of Osama bin Laden. She must have forgotten how to pronounce the current president's name because he was never mentioned.

Sarah! Sarah! Sarah! What are we going to do with you!

The Snippets all had to do with the killing of Osama bin Laden. Here's what you said:

"... Better late than never. Hats off to the commander-in-chief and the military personnel directly involved. Again, this is America at its best!"

"His body was tossed into the sea? Are we sure it was really him? No way now to know, right?"

"Three cheers, 10 beers, one for each of the years it took to do him in for good!"

"Our family's prayers were answered. Yes, there is a God!"

"...He may be dead, but I think we are at a risk level higher than we've ever been..."

"This capture and killing is another great example of what we can do when we come together as one. Congratulations to President Obama, the troops and all others involved in this 10-year hunt that has finally been concluded!"

Snippets to my e-mail address.

The Man of the Plains wishes you "a great day!"

Tom Dreiling of Aurora, Colo., is a former publisher of the Colby Free Press and The Norton Telegram, and a former long-time editor of the old Goodland Daily News. He is a life-long Democrat, a curmudgeon come lately and a newly minted Coloradan.

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