



Other Viewpoints

Concealed carry needs second look

The elimination of certain requirements to obtain or renew a license to carry a concealed firearm in Kansas simply defies common sense.

When the state's concealed carry law was passed in 2006, many Kansans had concerns about its impact. Those concerns have only been heightened by various changes that have taken place in the law since it went into effect. The original law, for instance, banned concealed firearms from bars, schools, churches and libraries. A change in the law allows concealed firearms in those places unless a "no guns" sign is posted. Another change removed the requirement that concealed carry license holders take a Breathalyzer test if a law enforcement officer had reason to suspect the person was intoxicated.

It also has come to light that most of the provisions that ensure a person is physically able to handle a firearm have been eliminated. The state no longer can deny a license to applicants based on their physical condition and, once a license is issued, it can be renewed without having a vision or shooting accuracy test. There is no provision to address declines in physical abilities that accompany the natural aging process...

A comparison with the state's driver's license laws seems apt. We would like to think that every aging driver in the state would have the sense to know when to quit driving. However, Kansas doesn't leave that to chance. Drivers under 65 must pass an eye exam every six years to renew their licenses. Those over 65 must pass an exam every four years.

Kansas has that law because people who can't see or have obvious physical disabilities are a danger not only to themselves but to everyone else with whom they share the road. Is it not obvious that the same principle applies to someone who legally carries a concealed firearm into a public place? Even if that weapon is used legitimately as protection from someone posing an imminent threat, the chances that innocent bystanders will be hurt expands greatly if the person holding the gun has a visual or physical impairment.

Although all of these changes went into effect last year, there was little or no effort to undo any of the provisions in the 2011 legislative session. Maybe legislators didn't want to appear anti-concealed carry, but, as we noted at the outset, some of these provisions are anti-common sense. They certainly deserve a second look by state lawmakers.

- The Lawrence Journal-World, via the Associated Press

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COLBY FREE PRESS

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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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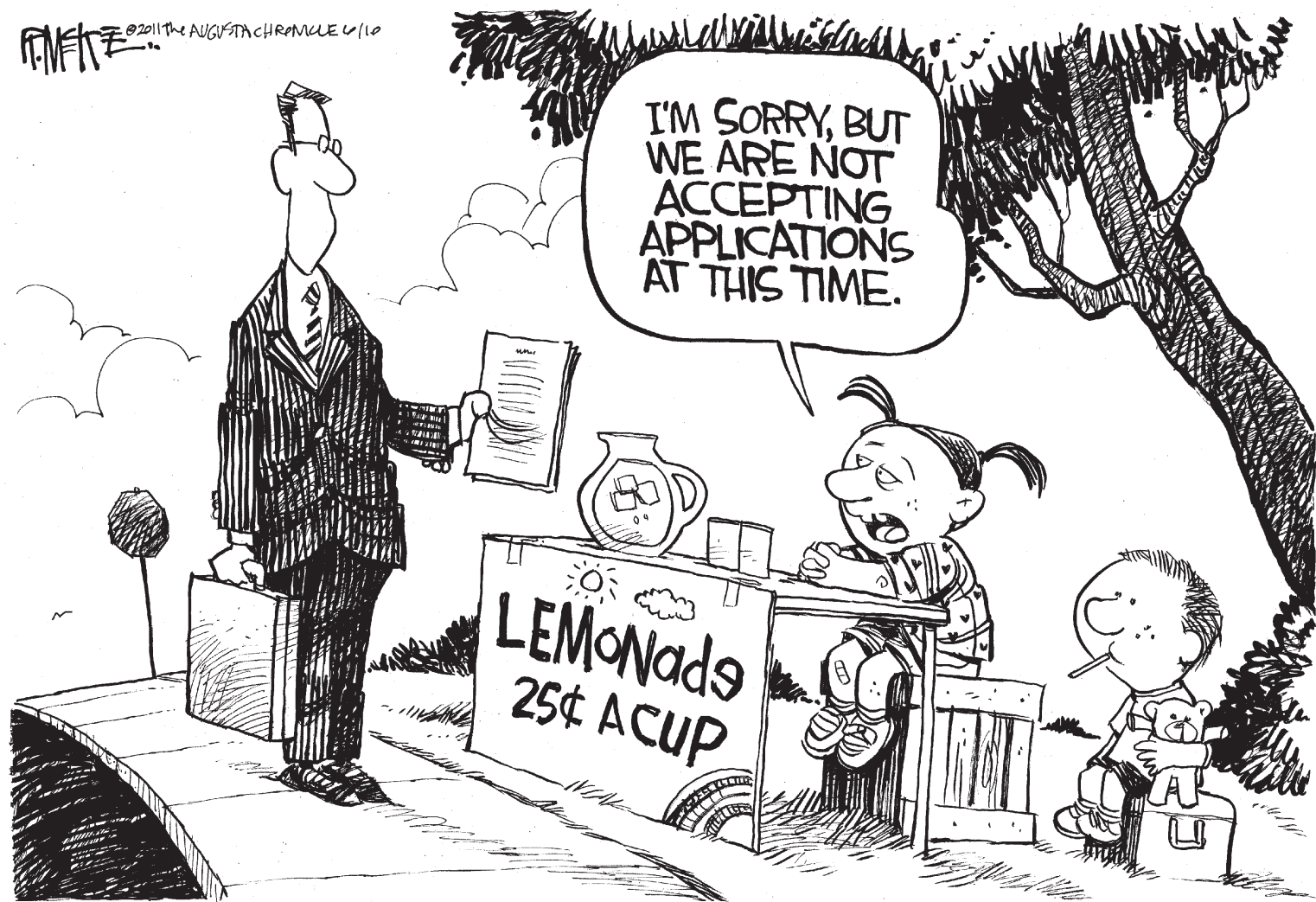
THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by NorWest Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

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

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Stay in that plane, please

Every once in a while, someone asks, "What do you hear from Andy?" That's Andy Heintz, our former sports reporter and all-around good guy, for those of you who may be new on the scene.

So here's the news. He went skydiving last weekend. And loved it.

Now that's great; I'm happy for him. Why anyone would want to jump out of a perfectly good plane, I don't understand, but to each his own.

You'll probably never catch me jumping out of an airplane. I say probably, because it's never possible to say with 100 percent certainty that some wildly improbably emergency - or simply totally losing my sanity - won't find me jumping out of a plane.

But reality compels me to say this would go against a lifelong trend.

I never like going off the high dive at the pool. That distance of a second or two between stepping off the board and landing in the water was just too long for me; it's amazing what imagination can accomplish in a second or two. And forget diving off the high board. I tried that once with the low board, with painful results, and decided cannonballs were more fun. But a cannonball off the high board? I'd probably hit my head, knock myself out and drown while the lifeguards ogled the girls who were old enough to ogle.

Butte climbing lasted longer. This is not re-



Marian Ballard

• Collection Connections

ally like rock climbing, because most buttes have some sort of trail that gets you very near the top. Then, with 10 or 15 feet of pretty simple climbing, you're at the top, with that glorious view spread out before you.

Understand, I have no problem with heights. I love getting up high where I can see forever. That's my biggest complaint about Thomas County, I guess. You can see forever - but it's so flat you never get the bird's-eye view.

Some buttes have such good trails you can really almost walk to the top. Flag Butte, in Dawes County, Neb., is one of those. Our 4-H club has a flag-raising ceremony there every Fourth of July, followed by breakfast in the old Flag Butte School at its base.

Some buttes I never tried to climb, just enjoyed from a distance as familiar landmarks.

Anyway, I guess I was in my 30s when it dawned on me that, as much fun as it was to get on top of a butte, you then had to figure out how to get off it. Without a parachute. That was the time a group of cousins and their kids

at a family reunion decided to climb up Lover's Leap north Fort Robinson State Park. This butte, at the end of a ridge called the Seven Sisters, is naturally named after star-crossed lovers. It's a pretty steep climb to get there, we found with lots of scrambling involved. Mostly I remember my son walking right into the middle of a patch of prickly pear - and me having to go after him, and get spines out of his shoes and comfort him.

When we got to the top of the trail, there were too many of us to go the rest of the way together. At that point I realized I could see just fine from where I was. And, all the "Mom" duty on the way up had taken a bit of the adventure out of it. My kid climbed to the top; I stood on the trail and waited for him.

There have been other hikes since then, but I kept that mindset. "Am I going to want to come back down as much as I want to go up?"

Going up was always a lot more fun than coming down, when I couldn't see where to put my feet. I never thought about falling on the way up, oddly enough - only on the way down.

Call it age, call it maturity. I'd still jump at the chance to go flying.

Just don't ask me to step out of the plane.

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.

Field feast shows off farm delights

Mary Mertz raised her hands to her face as she watched the party of 57 sit down at the long row of tables covered with white tablecloths set perfectly with china and glasses in the middle of her family's corn field. A broad smile spread across her face.

"It's a dream come true," she said. "It's what I always envisioned. Happy people in our For Mary, this "Feast of the Fields" was something she'd always wanted to do. On the afternoon of June 5, her vision became reality. She and husband Bob held this inaugural dinner at their River Creek Farms, east of Zeandale in Riley County.

While a bit on the warm side, a gentle southerly breeze tussled the tops of the corn nestled next to the Kansas River. Temperatures topped out at 90-degrees.

But no one complained. They were too busy sipping Kansas red and white wines, learning a bit about agriculture and looking forward to the upcoming culinary delights.

Betty Cunningham had driven two hours from Lenexa to dine in the country cornfield. Being a former farm girl from Hornell, N.Y., she's lived in Kansas since 1954.

"I came here to eat some really good food from the farm and that's the best," Betty said. "Being back in the country and seeing corn fields and eating in one with good food and



John Schlageck

• Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

good people."

Many of the urban guests voiced their pleasure with the quiet, country setting. They laughed, visited and looked forward to the upcoming feast.

About 5:30, appetizers were served in the form of lamb and pheasant. In addition to the lamb raised on the Mertz farm, pork and other locally grown foods followed throughout the evening. Manhattan chef, Scott Benjamin, and his staff prepared the food.

Yes, it was a long-awaited opportunity to raise interest in locally-produced foods and a way to engage urban people in a rural setting. Husband, Bob, was ready and more than able to provide the guests a short history of the fourth-generation farm and present a short-course in Agriculture 101.

"We wanted to tell the story of what we do in a way that would connect with those unfamiliar with farming," Mary explained. "We

wanted to provide a new experience. Serving a dinner of local fare in a field where crops are growing seemed to be a great venue and the perfect way to bring it all together."

The natural backdrop complete with farm machinery, crops, big round bales and field art helped fill the bill. Incidentally, the field art was an irrigation pivot system directly to the north of the dinner table. Bob had purposely positioned the tall water towers at this location as a point of interest for their guests.

Throughout the evening the Mertz provided a running commentary for guests interested in learning more about their food and farming and ranching.

Many of the guests enjoyed the party so much they vowed to attend the next "Feast of the Fields." And the Mertz family relishes the idea of Mary's dream becoming a reality.

"I couldn't be more pleased with the turnout," Mary said. "So many people, so much interest in coming to something like this and their willingness to come to dinner out in a corn field. I can't think of a better setting."

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.

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

