

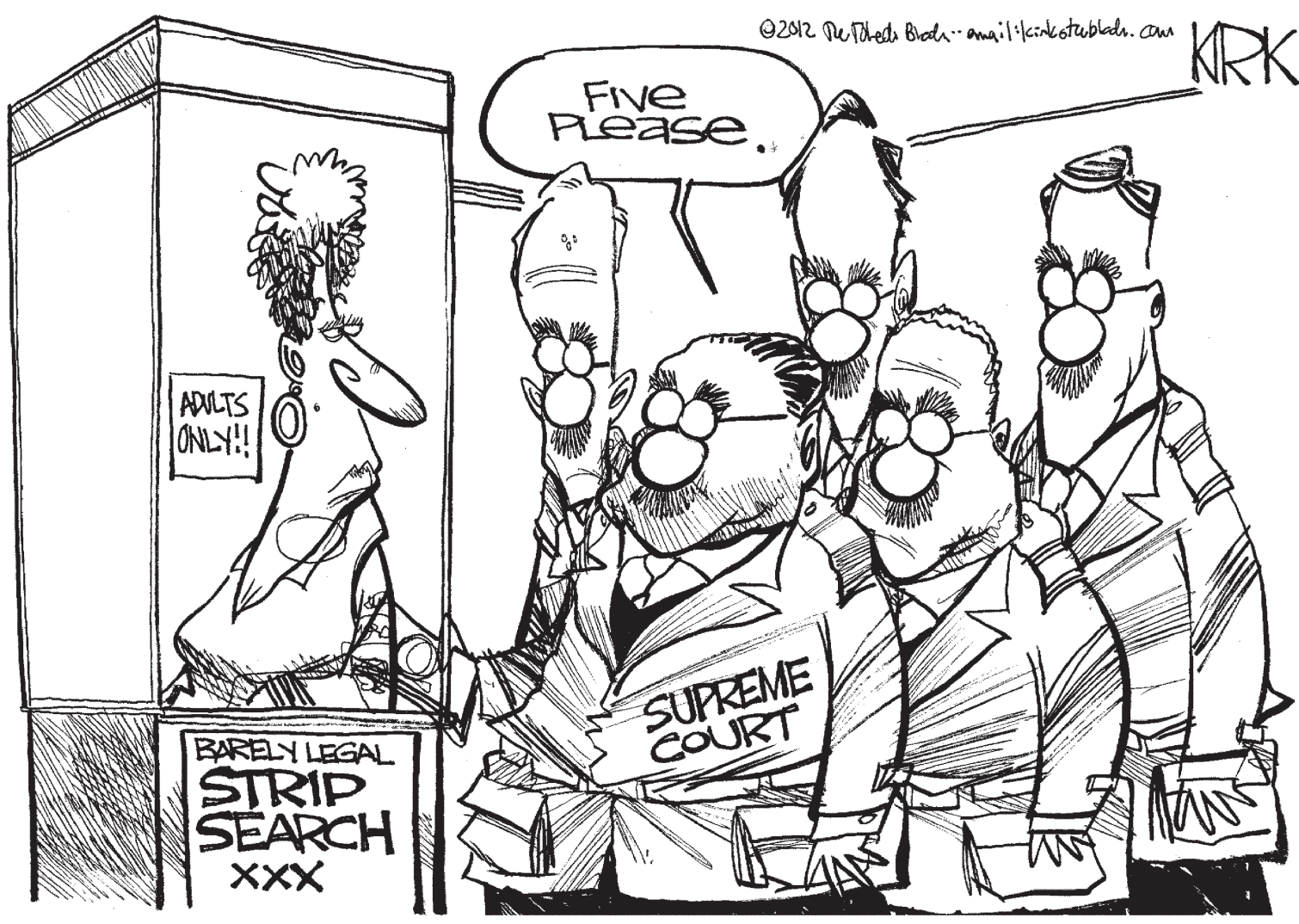


Other Viewpoints

Workers pay price for misinformation

More than 200 local plant workers are paying the price for a burning controversy over what they produced. Beef Products Inc. closed its Holcomb plant due to backlash over production of lean, finely textured beef used in hamburger, sausage, ground beef and other foods. Critics who dubbed the product "pink slime" waged a campaign of misinformation powered by television shows and social media. The unfortunate developments stemmed from controversy over BPI's use of ammonium hydroxide to kill harmful bacteria, including E. coli and salmonella. The process was wrongly depicted, leaving consumers understandably confused and concerned. Such unfounded fears aren't new. Years ago, for example, people fretted over the pasteurization of milk. And now we have an explosion of misinformation that has stoked more fear and hysteria, this time over a beef product consumed safely for many years. As a result, fast-food chains and grocers dropped food items with lean finely textured beef. Plus, the U.S. Department of Agriculture gave school districts an out regarding the purchase of beef with lean finely textured beef for school lunches, instead of defending the safety of a product that received a governmental stamp of approval. Proactive public education from BPI on the process and its part in food safety when the controversy first erupted would have helped, and perhaps even warded off the plant closings. After all, the same media tools used to spread misinformation also could be used to bombard consumers with the facts. Instead, the public relations nightmare cost BPI, as well as workers and their families caught in the middle. The lost business that led BPI to suspend operations in Holcomb put 236 employees out of work. Plants in Amarillo, Texas, and Waterloo, Iowa, also closed. The prospect of higher beef prices as plants seek alternative production methods, and consumers passing on beef entirely, also must be considered in the troubling fallout. Stepped-up efforts to help consumers better understand a process in place to keep them safe should help undo enough damage, hopefully, to allow the Holcomb facility and BPI as a whole to resume putting out a beef product long considered safe to eat.

— *The Garden City Telegram, via the Associated Press*



Cooper Hotel began with wild dream

This first part of the story of the Cooper Hotel is taken from a story written by Bill James and Vern Dimmit and published by Prairie Printers Inc. Permission to use this information was given by Arlene James. The Cooper Hotel was on the corner of Franklin Avenue and Fifth Street, where the Franklin Plaza Mall is now. The original hotel was the vision of James S. Warden in 1885, before the town of Colby had been surveyed or platted. Many people thought Warden was out of his mind when he talked about building a three-story hotel with 32 rooms, especially when he said he wanted to build it out of brick. That's because there was no brick or even any lumber in Colby at that time. Those building materials would have to be shipped by rail to Oberlin or Wallace and then hauled by wagon to Colby. In April 1885, after W.C. McGonagal completed surveying and platting the town, the Colby Townsite Co. selected a site and received a charter from the Kansas secretary of the state. Members of the townsite board were D.M. Dunn, president; M. Donelan, vice-president; J.B. McGonagal, secretary; S.C. Mills, treasurer; and Winfield Freeman, the company's lawyer. H. Wallace Miller and D.D. Hoag were also on the board. As soon as the plat was recorded, the transfer of lots began. Anyone who would construct a business building was given a lot, and several



Marj Brown
• Marj's Snippets

businesses were planned. Donelan and Charles Page went to Kansas City and bought lumber for Donelan to build a store and for Page to start a lumber yard. Warden was joined by R.S. Newell, a hotel man, and they told the townsite board that a brickyard could be brought to Colby to make brick for Warden's dream hotel. The townsite company and the First National Bank Association formed a stock company and started selling stock for the hotel. According to James and Dimmit, it was to be called the Newell Hotel, and would be 50 feet by 80 feet. The plans called for a full basement, a ground floor and two additional floors for sleeping rooms. There would be a dining room, wash rooms and a large sample room where salesmen could display their merchandise. The kitchen would be in the basement, where there would also be large rooms for meetings, dances and other activities. The building was estimated to cost \$20,000, and the fixtures would cost another \$6,000. Joseph Brown soon came to Colby and built a brickyard for the purpose of making brick to build the hotel, south of Prairie Dog Creek where the creek makes a bend and where there was plenty of flat land for brick-making equipment. In early 1886, the money for the hotel was raised. The building began just before Colby was incorporated as a third-class city. Just before the 32-room hotel was to be completed in 1887, all the money was spent, and people feared it would never be finished. As a result, the Colby Townsite Co. and the First National Bank Association, which controlled the stock company building the hotel, turned all of the stock over to Warden. Warden went to Kansas City to try to raise money to complete the hotel. He met with George Arthur, president of the Bradford Saving Bank and Trust Co., of Bradford, Vt. He put up the hotel stock as collateral and borrowed \$5,000. Warden returned to Colby and the hotel was soon finished. Later, other bank officials examined the stock and found it to be worthless. A short time after that, the Bradford Saving Bank went into receivership and eventually was closed.

To be continued in my next column.

Marj Brown has lived in Colby for 62 years and has spent a good deal of that time writing about people and places here. She says it's one of her favorite things to do.

Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author. We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk. Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue. Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate) will not be published after the Thursday before the polls open.

What?! No laptop!



John Richard Schrock
• Education Frontlines

Today I write to you from an agricultural university in Western China. Students are back to campus where classes will continue through the month of June. Chinese university students face the same challenges American students face. In high school, they have been watched over. Teachers push them to complete their studies and do well on tests. Then in college, the students find themselves on their own — "free" to fail. Having spent their childhood cramming for the all-important high school leaving exam, they now have the opportunity to "sleep in." Over nine million students took the college entrance exams last June. Fewer than six million passed and were admitted. Unlike the U.S., the academic lower 40 percent that failed cannot attend tertiary schools. But those who scored high enough to enter college are at risk of failure if they do not keep up their studies. And in China, a student cannot shop around for majors. They must complete their four-year program with their classmates. Nor can they exercise their newfound opportunity to "sleep in." Students who abandon their 12 years of work and study ethic will fail. For this reason, some Chinese universities have hired adjuncts to oversee their freshman class and serve as coaches and surrogate parents to try to ensure they do not fail. In the

U.S., we call this "freshman year experience" and try to provide students with academic activities, perhaps a common floor in the dormitory where the resident assistants watch over first-year students. In China, this program comes with pressure to get out of bed, help with studies and plenty of shame if a student doesn't work hard. For many students, there are four grandparents and two parents relying on the student for their future support. The burden of responsibility can be heavy. But there is one new experimental policy at some universities that I did not expect. Freshmen are prohibited from bringing laptop computers their first year. They have plentiful access to computers on campus. But those computers do not have access to any video games. Chinese teachers are very aware that many freshmen, especially boys, come to college and soon spend all of their time playing video games. This is an easy policy to enforce in the remote university where I am located because there are not large numbers of computer cafes downtown. This policy would not work in Beijing or Shanghai. The disastrous effect of video games on boys' academics is a problem that has dramatically decreased the proportion of boys in college worldwide. In the U.S., we continue to be in denial despite observing the many male students flunking out after their first semesters of nonattendance. China cannot lose that much talent and has decided to take action. In the United States, the computer-corporate complex prevails in indoctrinating us that all of our electronics can do no wrong. Some state universities, pressed by state defunding to attract as many warm bodies as possible, become laptop or tablet universities in an effort to appear techie, and ignore the academic implications. The research on computer addiction is clear. China "gets it." But in the U.S., we just do not seem to care.

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.

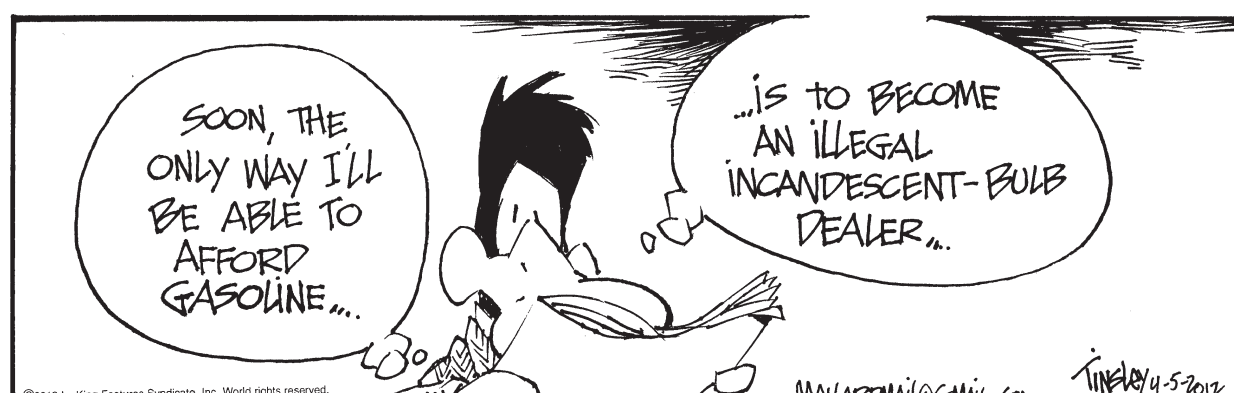
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