



## Other Viewpoints

# Observers needed to stop copper theft

Fans of spy movies and novels know all about “humint” – human intelligence.

The argument goes that information gathered from human beings often is better than that provided by electronic surveillance, satellite photos and other technology.

That appears to be the reasoning behind Westar Energy’s appeal for us human beings to report suspicious activities around its power substations.

The company does employ some technology to guard the substations, including locks, barbed wire, alarms, danger signs, yard lighting and security cameras. Understandably, Westar is reluctant to go into great detail about these measures, but it’s apparent some brazen thieves have found ways to get around them. It’s a risky way to make money, considering the high voltage flowing through a substation, but the thieves so far have been either smart or lucky.

An arrest has been made in a theft in May in Topeka, but not because the thief came in contact with the electricity. He was outed by a scrap metal dealer.

We all have a stake in this rash of copper thefts, so it’s appropriate that Westar is asking all of us to report any suspicious activity we see.

First, the thefts cost the company a lot of money, and we know where that money will have to come from – the customers.

One high-profile theft in Topeka in May resulted in the theft of \$50,000 worth of copper, plus \$450,000 in damage to the facility.

Secondly, the thefts sometimes cause power outages that affect hundreds or thousands of customers until Westar crews can repair the damage.

So those of you living near power substations are an important line of defense for the rest of us. Do your best.

– *The Topeka Capital-Journal, via the Associated Press*

## Where to write, call

**U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774  
roberts.senate.gov/public/

**U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966. Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/

**U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp**, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

**State Rep. Rick Billinger**, Docking Building, Room 754, Topeka Kan., 66612, (785) 296-7659 rick.billinger@house.ks.gov

## COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963  
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.

**Sharon Friedlander - Publisher**

sfriedlander @ nwkansas.com

### NEWS

**News Editor**

colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

**Kayla Cornett - Sports Reporter**

colby.sports @ nwkansas.com

**Marian Ballard - Copy Editor**

mballard @ nwkansas.com

**Christina Beringer - Society Reporter**

colby.society @ nwkansas.com

### ADVERTISING

colby.ads @ nwkansas.com

**Kathryn Ballard**

**Advertising Representative**

kballard @ nwkansas.com

**Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design**

khunter @ nwkansas.com

### BUSINESS OFFICE

**Ray Schindler - Office Manager**

rschindler @ nwkansas.com

**Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator**

support @ nwkansas.com

### NOR'WEST PRESS

**Richard Westfahl - General Manager**

Jim Jackson, Jim Bowker, Gary Meyer, Pressmen

Lana Westfahl, Judy McKnight, Kris McCool, Stacy Brashear,

Tracy Traxel, Mailing

**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

MARGULIES  
©2012 JimMarg@nol.com



# Don’t underestimate skills of harvesters

It’s a little like patting your head and rubbing your stomach – while driving huge and hugely expensive equipment across a field.

I’m referring to the photo of a combine unloading on the front page of Wednesday’s *Colby Free Press*, which brings back memories of one corn harvest years ago when I drove a grain cart for Ken Poland a few times. (Don’t ask – I think he was truly desperate for an extra hand that year. It happens.)

While I was underqualified for the job, it was not the first time I had ever sat on the seat of a tractor. Possibly the third time.

My previous agriculture experience had more to do with horses and cows and moving corn and hay with a pitchfork. The only tractor I ever drove had 360-degree air conditioning and a wind-powered dust filter – when the wind was in your face, the dust wasn’t.

When I agreed to help Ken out, though, the job consisted of sitting on a tractor with a cab – total luxury! – and matching speed and direction with a combine long enough for it to unload. It’s a job every farmer’s teenagers can do with no problem.

For me, it would have been easier on a bicycle.

I kept worrying about getting too close and crashing into the combine, or getting too far



**Marian Ballard**

• **Collection Connections**

away and letting the harvested corn spill out on the ground.

Of course, that’s probably the smallest risk of harvest time, unless you count boredom while sitting in line with a loaded truck at the elevator.

Dry weather is part and parcel of wheat harvest season. You want it dry, but not too dry. Too wet, and everything from moldy grain to clogged equipment and muddy fields threatens.

Too dry, and it’s hard to raise a crop, let alone harvest it – not to mention the threat of fire and the constant problem of dust in everything.

(Dust is one of the big differences between harvest now and harvest back in the day. When my brother spent the summer of 1971 harvesting hay in the Sand Hills, he would come home with every inch of exposed skin covered with fine dirt. When he took off his glasses, it was a

# I am grateful for a father who ...

## Other Opinions

• **Daris Howard Life’s Outtakes**

Searle was up for an advancement, and was supposed to stay after the meeting to have a scoutmaster conference with myself and my assistant. As our conference started, I handed Searle’s letter back to him. He blushed when he realized I had seen what he had written.

“So, Searle, do you have anything you want to tell us?” I asked.

“Well,” he said, “I missed scout meeting last week because it was the last day of school, and some friends talked me into some things.”

“What kind of things?” I asked.

“Well, it was one thing that led to another, and so on.” he answered, beating around the bush.

“And what were those things?” I asked.

“Well, at first we were just going to climb up on the water tower after dark. But then one of the guys decided it might be fun to put a goat or two up there. Then someone said it would be more memorable if it was a cow.”

He paused as my assistant was having trouble holding a straight face.

“Go on,” I encouraged.

real shock– between the dirt and the sunburn, he looked like a raccoon. His face and arms actually changed color as he washed. With closed, air-conditioned tractor cabs, drivers end the day looking like themselves. While it’s probably healthier, you have to admit it takes a bit of the drama out of field work.)

If the weather cooperates at harvest time, you then have equipment and equipment breakdowns to worry about. Whether you run your own combine or hire somebody else to run their combines, the key word is “run.” Murphy’s Law says that if anything can go wrong it will, and that seems to count double when you’re racing the weather to get a field cut. You never know when a hail storm will hit your field, sometimes wiping it out while leaving everything standing on either side.

Meanwhile, for everyone out there working around the clock to get it in before it gets done in, our best wishes for a fast, successful, safe harvest – and Happy Father’s Day.

All things considered, I’d rather be driving a desk than a combine.

*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.*

“Well, we got the cow to the base of the tower, and then we couldn’t figure out how to pull her up. I climbed up on top and rigged a pulley, and the guys on the ground started winching her up. We got her about half way up when she got nervous and started thrashing about. She started swinging back and forth like a pendulum in a hurricane.

“That was when the Sheriff showed up. All of my friends ran off, and there I was with that stupid cow tick-tocking along the water tower, and me unable to get down and get away.”

When he stopped, he looked at me. “So, do I not get the advancement?”

My assistant had tears pouring down his face, and was chortling so loud I could hardly talk.

“Well, Searle, part of your advancement is based on citizenship. How do you feel about your citizenship when you were trying to put a cow on the water tower?”

My assistant reached over and hit me in the shoulder. “Go easy on him. When I was his age, my father would have been glad to find out I was in jail just so he would know where I was.”

And with that, Searle got the advancement, but only after he promised there would be no more attempts at putting cows on the water tower.

*Daris Howard, award-winning, syndicated columnist, playwright, and author, can be contacted at daris@darishoward.com; or visit his website at www.darishoward.com.*

## 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.

## Mallard Fillmore

• **Bruce Tinsley**

