

Other Viewpoints

Olympians should pay taxes like others

A bill has been introduced in Congress – with bipartisan support, if you can imagine that – that would exempt from federal income taxes the cash awards to this country’s athletes who won medals at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. Gold medal winners receive \$25,000 from the U.S. Olympic Committee. Silver medalists receive \$15,000 and bronze medalists get \$10,000. We recently praised as heroes all this country’s Olympic participants and recognized the hard work they had undertaken to represent the United States, which they did in exemplary fashion. We still laud their accomplishments and think the money medal winners stand to collect from the U.S. Olympic Committee has been well-earned.

But it should be taxed. The movement afoot to exempt the direct financial reward that accompanies a medal is one of those things that feels good as we still bask in the glow of the athletes’ triumphs. But the athletes who traveled to England for the 2012 Olympics aren’t the first to bring back medals or receive cash for doing so. Why should such feats now be worthy of a tax break that wasn’t bestowed upon their predecessors?

Our country has other heroes, lots of them, and they pay taxes on their income.

The men and women serving in our armed forces pay taxes. Law enforcement officers and firefighters pay taxes. Emergency preparedness personnel and others who respond when needed – whether it be to assist tornado survivors or rescue people from floodwaters – also pay taxes.

Granted, comparing Olympic medal winners to everyday heroes is an apples-and-oranges argument. But it does lend some perspective to the issue of rewarding specific groups of people with income tax favors.

Proponents of the federal tax break for Olympic medalists contend the winner of a gold medal would pay \$8,986 of the \$25,000 cash award in income taxes.

Perhaps, if that is the athlete’s only income for a year and he or she has no deductions to offset part or all of the tax bill.

Many Olympic athletes earn money from sponsors and train at facilities supported by the Olympic Committee or other organizations. But surely most of them have incurred out-of-pocket expenses related to their training that could be included on a tax form to reduce the amount owed.

We also should note that several members of the U.S. Olympic team are in a position to parlay their medals into endorsements, personal appearance deals or careers that will make \$25,000 seem like pocket change.

Others won’t be so fortunate, but they shouldn’t find their final tax bill overbearing. And Congress shouldn’t now rush to create tax breaks simply to reward athletic performance.

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

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.

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

Kayla Cornett - Sports Reporter
colby.sports@nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard@nwkansas.com

Sam Dieter - News Reporter
colby.editor@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

Office Manager

Melissa Edmondson - Office Manager
medmondson@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, Sheri Arroyo, 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.



Raising chickens a mixed blessing

My mom always liked to raise chickens. As soon as we moved from downtown Oklahoma City to the residential area, Mom had Dad build her a chicken coop west of the big barn in our back yard.

Building a coop involves a whole lot more than just fencing in an area with chicken wire. You have to build a shed with an open front the chickens can easily get in and out of. The building has to have a row of nesting boxes on a shelf along the back wall; at least that’s what my dad did. Then, above the nesting boxes, he put a long rod he called a roost. For some strange reason, hens don’t want to sleep in the nice straw-filled nesting boxes. They want to sleep sitting up on a rod where they can poop without having to sit in it.

Because of that, it became my job to clean the poop off the top of the nesting boxes, sprinkle lime on the tops of the boxes to keep down the odor and then put fresh wood shavings up there. Because Dad worked in construction, we always had plenty of wood shavings.

The floor of the coop had to be taken care of in that same way. Mom also used some kind of an insecticide to prevent lice and other insects from getting on the chickens.

The reason this was my job and my job only, was because my older sister, Shirley, claimed she was afraid of chickens. We had a rather vicious rooster that jumped up on her one time and after that she would have nothing to do with chickens.

Ann and my brother Dick were both too young, so that left me all by myself. Actually, I really didn’t mind because I liked to do things outside rather than in the house and I loved animals.

In order to get back at Shirley for getting out of work, I would pick up a chicken and chase



Marj Brown

• Marj’s Snippets

her around the yard with it. That was great fun.

It so happens that hens are rather stupid birds. Even though they have a nice nesting box with soft hay, they will still lay eggs in the outside pen or on the floor of the coop. Therefore, everyday was an egg hunt. Mom finally acquired some golf balls from one of our neighbors and started putting them in the nesting boxes in order to give them a clue as to where they should lay their eggs. That actually worked.

I was 8 or 9 years old, but I became quite proficient at wringing a chicken’s neck, dipping the chicken in a bucket of boiling water and then picking its feathers off. Not only could I singe off the pin feathers, but I could clean it and cut the chicken up to fry. Shirley didn’t get out of the feather picking, but she wouldn’t wring their necks.

When we moved to Bethany, Okla., just outside of Oklahoma City, Mom had to have another chicken coop.

The chickens were pretty good sized when we also acquired a little cocker spaniel dog. He was so black Mom said he looked like a Kansas dust storm, so we named him Kansas.

The first time we all left the house and left Kansas there by himself, we came back to find that Kansas had found his way into the chicken coop and killed a couple of chickens. Mom

was furious. We didn’t want her to make us get rid of our dog, so we begged her to give Kansas another chance.

Mom had heard somewhere that if you tie a dead chicken onto the collar of a chicken-killing dog and make the dog drag that chicken around with him for a long time he would stop killing chickens. That’s what she did. Kansas ran around with that dead chicken fastened to his collar for a long time. He took it all in stride, just like it was a part of his body. It didn’t seem to bother him, but he didn’t kill any more chickens.

After Kansas dragged that chicken around until it had fallen completely apart and there was very little left of it, Mom decided that Kansas had learned his lesson. She removed the little bit that was left and Kansas went on his merry way.

One Saturday, Mom and Dad took us into Oklahoma City to visit friends. We were gone most of the day.

When we got back, the first thing that greeted us was Kansas. That stupid little dog was jumping up and down with a big smile on his face, like he was so happy to see us. Then we drove back to the garage where we could see the chicken pen. That was when we saw 28 dead chickens. Kansas, who had come back there so excited and happy to show us what he had accomplished that day, was running around as happy as if he had good sense.

Needless to say, we had to get rid of the dog. He had failed his second chance.

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.

Desperation ends band career

My son, Scott, found a trumpet in a second-hand store. The sign on it said that it didn’t work, and it was priced low accordingly. He pulled it out of its case and looked it over. It was a top-name brand, and looked to be in almost new condition. He is an excellent trumpet player, so he tried it, but, indeed, no sound came out. Still, considering the shape it was in, and knowing that his mother owned a band instrument repair shop, he decided to buy it, hoping he could fix it.

Once the trumpet was home, my wife, Donna, checked it over. There was nothing outwardly wrong with it. In fact, from all appearances, it was in mint condition, and looked barely used. But with a more in-depth check, she quickly knew that air was not flowing through it at all. It was totally plugged internally, and that was why it didn’t work. But what could be blocking it that tightly? We have found everything from marbles and chalk to potatoes and sandwiches inside instruments, but they still allowed some air flow.

Taking this particular trumpet apart, Scott soon found the problem. While shining a light into the very deepest part of it, the corner of a piece of paper could barely be seen. He could not grasp the paper with anything, so he had to resort to other methods.

One of the many tools my wife has for repairing instruments is a long wire, coated with plastic, with a brush on the end. Scott worked that through the pipe, but the jam was too tight to push it on through. He had to push on the

Other Opinions

• Daris Howard Life’s Outtakes

brush from one end while lightly tapping the trumpet on a rubber mat. Gradually the corner of the paper moved down to where he was finally able grasp it with a long pair of needle nosed pliers.

He didn’t want it to tear, so he continued pushing from one end while carefully pulling from the other. Finally, when it had loosened enough, he was able to slowly pull it out. But when he blew through the trumpet, he could tell that the air flow was still partially blocked. Two more times he followed the same procedure, each time removing another piece of paper.

Once he had the three pieces of paper out, he put the trumpet back together and found it played beautifully.

He also found that the three pieces of paper he had pulled out fit together like a puzzle into a single, normal sheet of paper. When he connected them, he found one side of the paper had the instructions for proper care and handling for each instrument in the band, the type of paper a teacher passes out on the first day of

class. But what was more interesting was what was hand written on the back. It said:

“Mr. G, I don’t want to take band this year. I only wanted to take it one year and decide from there. Well, I took it one year, but my parents are forcing me to take it again. So I was wondering if you could kick me out. It’s not you, you’re a great teacher, it’s just that I’m not the band type, and besides, this year I was hoping to take Spanish. Sorry, Sheri. PS Could you please not tell my parents about this, so I can tell them on my own turf? Thanx”

After reading the paper, we realized what was the likely scenario. If her school was like most, the teacher couldn’t kick her out of class unless she committed a major infraction of rules. Reading her letter told us that she probably wasn’t that type of girl. So, we guessed that she decided to take matters into her own hands and make sure the trumpet wasn’t playable.

After all, a person can’t be in band when her instrument won’t play, can she?

Daris Howard, award-winning, syndicated columnist, playwright, and author, can be contacted at daris@darishoward.com; or go to www.darishoward.com

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

