



Free Press
Viewpoint

Drug war message
carried by traveler

Every summer, groups and individuals travel across the United States to spread the word on messages ranging from healthy living to civil rights to veterans affairs. Many come through Goodland, as Interstate 70 is one of the nation’s major east-west conduits.

One person we should hope to see is Javier Sicilia, a Mexican poet who is traveling the country to speak out against the war on drugs. His message is personal: his son was kidnapped, tortured and killed by a one of the Mexican drug cartels, just one of the 60,000 deaths and 20,000 disappearances in the 40 years since President Richard Nixon declared the War on Drugs.

The war is not just being fought in Mexico, but right here in Sherman County. Just as I-70 brings us advocates of one issue or another, it also brings drug trafficking.

During the Republican Candidate Forum earlier this summer, both current Sheriff Kevin Butts and challenger Burton Pianalto spoke about the drug problem in Sherman County. Butts told the audience that his department could make a drug arrest almost every day. There have been meth labs found in Kanorado and area rest stops, and drug traffickers are routinely stopped on I-70 by both the sheriff’s department and the Kansas Highway Patrol.

In Mexico the problem is not the drugs themselves, but the violence that accompanies the criminal cartels that have grown up around drug production and distribution.

How should we combat this epidemic? It is a question that has vexed leaders of both the United States and Mexico for decades. Should we increase security, build up massive armies of law enforcement officers and border patrol agents? Should we continue to allow weapons to fall into the hands of the cartels in failed sting operations? We’ve been doing that for 40 years, and the problem hasn’t gotten better.

Enforcement of existing laws has its place, to be sure. Our law enforcement professionals are doing what we need them to do, trying to keep our streets safe, but it is time to end the war on drugs. It is time to stop thinking of it as a war and start thinking of it as a disease. To fight a disease, you do not attack the symptoms, you attack the disease itself. Attacking the symptoms of the American drug problem, arresting the narco-traffickers and drug users and assassinating cartel big-shots, only leaves the root problem in place and festering.

What we need to do is better educate the nation’s youth and spend more on drug treatment. If we eliminate the demand for drugs, the supply will no longer be necessary.

Mexico and the United States need to work together to bring a peaceful resolution to the war raging on our border. It can no longer be about eliminating the “enemy” by force. That strategy has failed. We must find unconventional ways to bring about peace and save some of those lives in both countries.

— Kevin Bottrell

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/

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

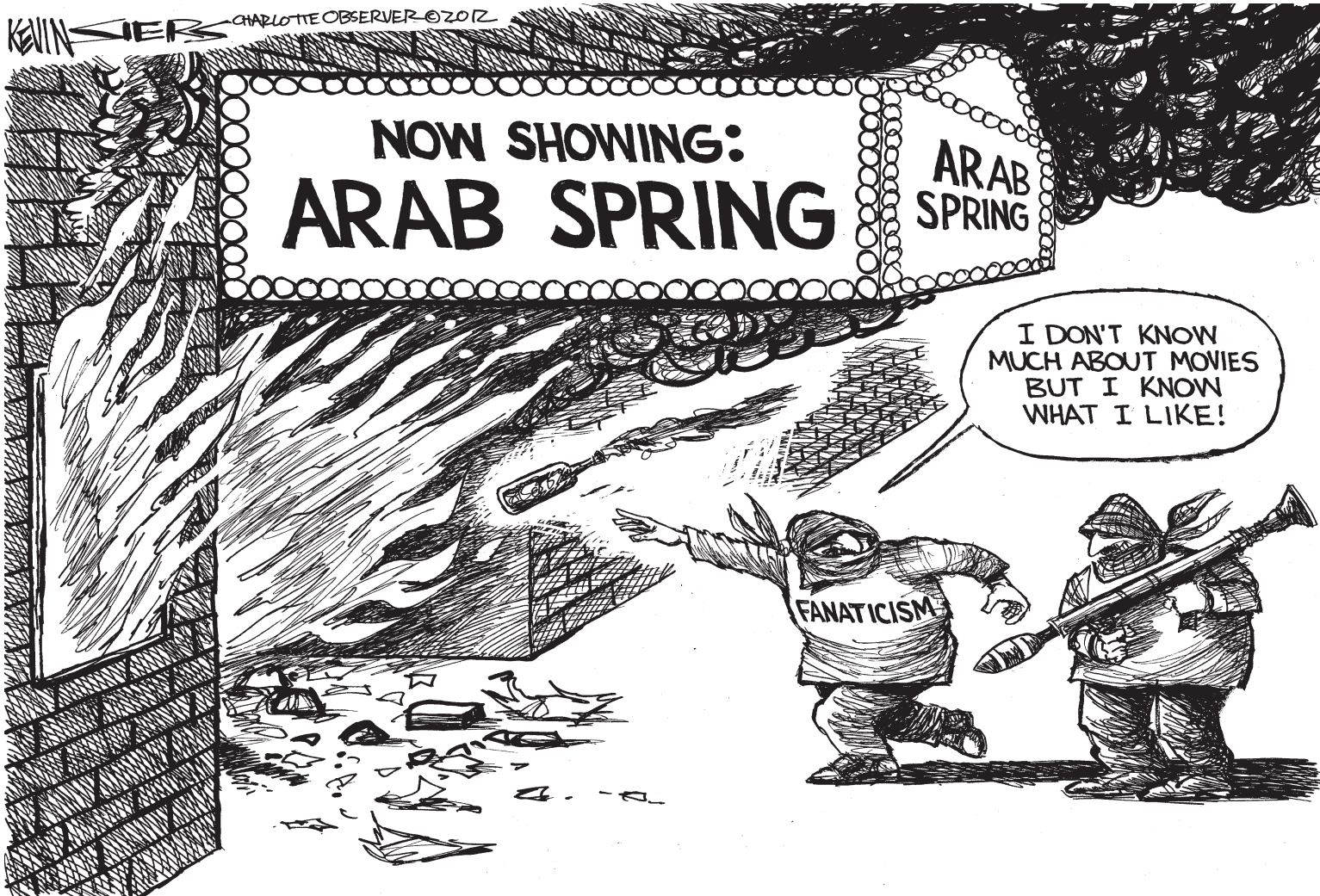
Lana Westfahl, Judy McKnight, Kris McCool, Sheri Arroyo, Tracy Traxel, Mailing

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.



Arrival of autumn heralded by sound

It’s fall.

Not according to the calendar. That stuffy statistical system says autumn begins on Sept. 22 this year – that’s this coming Saturday, in case you are among the date-challenged.

Remember when every season, every year, started on the 21st of the month, and you just had to remember September, December, March and June? Then the astronomers and scientists got into the act and now you never know when a season begins without looking at a calendar.

Seasons, of course, can’t read, so calendars are really a futile exercise in trying to contain them.

Take fall. When I lived in Nebraska, I knew that fall started the day after Labor Day. Summer was when you went to the pool, went hiking and canned green beans. Summer was when you had a summer job. After school started, summer jobs ended – therefore summer was over.

Now that I live in Kansas, the beginning of fall is a little more iffy. Summer is when air conditioners are on, and I wouldn’t be much good, even sitting here at my desk, without air conditioning in September. Summer is shorts season, and I’m not ready to give up on that quite yet.

But I walked out the door of the office the other day and got hit by a blast of sound that told me unequivocally that it’s fall.

If you’re new to northwest Kansas, or an import like me, you might not know what that



Marian Ballard

• Collection
Connections

enormous noise is. You narrow it down and discover it’s coming from the grain elevators (not silos, that’s a different animal entirely) but you still may not be able to imagine why what is essentially a large box for containing grain should emit such a blast of sound.

No, I’m not an expert. Having said that, I’ve picked up a few bits and pieces over the years, so I can say without fear of serious contradiction that what you are hearing is the sound of blowers, used to dry the grain so it won’t mold.

I don’t suppose we’ll be hearing a great deal from them this fall, all things considered. As dry as the weather has been, the harvest is unlikely to be wet. And the harvest is unlikely to be a bumper crop, either, so it won’t be tough to get it cut and get it stored.

I don’t remember the elevators of my childhood making all that much noise. Maybe I just didn’t pay attention, or maybe they are built in a different way. I also didn’t grow up in corn country. The fields that were planted to corn were more for local use – when we had cattle,

we bought a truckload or two as a winter supplement when the pastures were snowed in, but that seemed to be about all the corn around.

So fall had a different sound when I was young. It was the sound of football games – my house was about halfway between the high school stadium and the college stadium. It was the sound of marching band practice, because both high school and college treated their bands as important; the college was also a teacher of future marching band instructors, some of them very good indeed.

Fall was the sound of raking leaves. Fall was the muffling of sound as the storm windows went up and shut out the ever-chillier breezes.

It all goes to show, I guess, that no matter where you are, the seasons each have their character. We are having cooler days, now, and even a little rain – though not enough. I heard someone say this weekend they thought fall was earlier than usual this year, but I have to disagree. It isn’t earlier. It’s just such a shock to the system to have cool nights and pleasant days that we don’t know how to adapt.

Since autumn is my favorite season, I guess I’ll just have to work it out.

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.

Customer care informs meat consumer

While farmers and ranchers have always adhered to sound principles of animal husbandry and livestock care, society’s views on animal welfare continue to evolve.

Today, there is a heightened awareness of the animal’s quality of life. While there are extreme fringe groups, “activists” if you will, many people have honest questions and concerns about the quality of life for animals while they are in the production environment.

Who are these people?

These people are average individuals. They’re you; they’re me.

Today’s informed consumer wants to know that while that sow is going through the production cycle she has a reasonable quality of life.

Consumers want to know that animals are not abused or subjected to inhumane conditions, that they are well cared for and that the people who care for them honestly care for them.

Agriculture cannot afford to seek out a “culprit” or “scapegoat” for the animal welfare issue. Agriculture cannot afford to blame anyone. Those in the livestock industry must view



John Schlageck

• Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

this as our culture and society, continually evolving and coming to terms with new types of social issues. It just so happens that animals have become integrated into this process.

One reason for this interest in animal welfare may be that agriculture has become so highly regarded, so productive throughout the world. Today, Western European, Japanese and U.S. consumers do not have to worry about where their next meal comes from.

Whether we like it or not, farmers and ranchers are going to have to accept and ensure that sound animal husbandry practices are used.

If agricultural producers honestly show they are putting effort into meeting a certain standard of care that is conducive to a healthy animal, the public will accept and embrace those

who raise and care for livestock.

Livestock producers must listen to societal and consumer concerns and be responsive. We must continue to enhance animal well-being throughout the life cycle of our food-producing animals. And we must be willing to listen to and have conversations with those that enjoy eating meat.

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.

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.

Mallard
Fillmore

• Bruce
Tinsley

