

Other Viewpoints

Voter registration a computer casualty

This is not the seamless voter registration process the Kansas secretary of state promised to Kansas legislators. When Kansas legislators were considering a law that would require new Kansas voters to document their citizenship, Secretary of State Kris Kobach assured them that a new computer system being installed by the Division of Motor Vehicles could seamlessly provide citizenship information to county election officials across the state. Over Kobach's objections, lawmakers even delayed the start of the proof-of-citizenship requirement for six months to ensure the computer system would be working properly. Unfortunately, some numbers reported in last Monday's *Journal-World* confirm that an additional six months – even an additional year – was not sufficient to solve this problem. And thousands of potential Kansas voters are paying the price. According to the law, which took effect Jan. 1, people are supposed to be able to show proof of citizenship and register to vote when they renew or obtain new drivers licenses through the DMV. Both their registration and citizenship documentation would automatically be sent to the county in which they were registering.

Easy, right? Except it isn't working. The DMV says it is sending the documentation to the Secretary of State's Office, but most of it isn't finding its way to county election officials. More than 11,000 people – about a third of the applicants who have attempted to use this system – have had their applications placed "in suspense" because the counties received the applications but not the proof-of-citizenship documentation. Douglas County Clerk Jamie Shew said his office had received about 1,000 registration applications so far this year from sources including walk-ins to the office and the DMV. In spite of the fact that Shew's staff has worked to contact potential voters to verify their citizenship, 370 registration applications are in suspense. Of those, 310 were from the DMV. Kobach acknowledged that the system isn't working as intended but said citizenship documents were being forwarded by e-mail. Shew said that simply is not the case. He estimated that only about 20 percent of the registrations forwarded to his office from the DMV have the proper citizenship verification. Shew and other county election officials worry about following up on the large number of in-suspense registrations, especially before next year's general election. Shew said his office typically receives 4,000 to 5,000 new registrations between an August primary and a November general election. He's included money in next year's budget request to hire extra staff to follow up on voter registration applications.

The state law has no provision for that follow-up, and it's up to individual counties how vigorously they pursue potential voters. Registrants who don't provide – in many cases, for the second time – their proof of citizenship to county officials may or may not be eligible to cast even a provisional ballot. Whether this is a technical problem or a human problem, this is not the system that Kobach promised to Kansas legislators who approved the citizenship requirement for voter registration, and the ongoing issues leave the secretary of state vulnerable to allegations that the new requirement will suppress rather than encourage voter participation. Legislators must hold Kobach to account for these problems and make sure they are resolved well before the 2014 elections.

— Lawrence Journal-World, via the Associated Press

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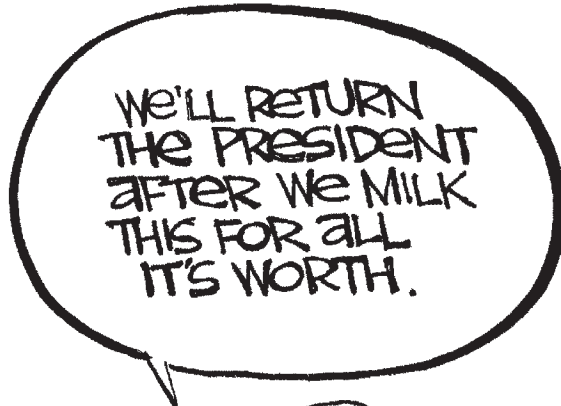
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The Hostage

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Local author's book series a good read

I'm just about to finish the fourth book in Nancy Larson-Sanders' *Earth's Memories* series, a collection of five books. I am excited to hear that book No. 5 will be out soon, but sad to know that it will be the last in this series.

Colby is fortunate to have an author of Sanders' ability living in our area. She and her husband John live just a ways north of Colby along K-25.

Sanders taught composition and literature, creative writing and English as a second language to college students. Later, the majority of her teaching career was spent in northwest Kansas in the Colby secondary schools, working with learning-disabled students.

Raised on a farm in Thomas County in a family of five girls and four boys, Sanders was a child during the 1930s, but her author's mind appears to have recorded all of the early-day stories of the 1920s and early 1930s told to her by her parents, siblings and friends. She must have known, even as a child, that she would someday be a writer. She has used all of that early information and her own knowledge of farming and farm machinery in her writings.

Her first book, "All Stubborned Up," isn't a part of her *Earth's Memories* series. It is about a woman who lost her husband to Alzheimer's



Marj Brown

• Marj's Snippets

disease, a problem that was felt in Sander's own family with two of her brothers. Don't get the idea it is a boring book about a disease. It is an exciting book filled with adventures, including a dangerous man who is brutalizing innocent people and killing animals – even raping a young girl.

Sanders' style of writing makes her descriptions so vivid you feel you are right there experiencing the adventures with the protagonist.

The *Earth's Memories* series is about the life of Deborah Jorgenson. Deborah's parents are Swedish, but Deborah has black hair and a dark complexion. Because of this, hatred is directed at her when fellow students accuse her of being an Indian.

When she asks her mother about her coloring, her mother tells her there were dark-haired relatives among her ancestors. As the

story unfolds, the reader begins to feel there is more to this situation.

Deborah eventually marries her childhood boyfriend, Christian Nelson. After living on her parents' farm and starting a family of two boys, the couple decides to buy a farm in northwest Kansas. As bad luck would have it, after they settle on their new farm, Christian disappears and can't be found. This leaves Deborah to run the farm and raise the boys on her own.

The book titles in the series are: "The Morning Dove's Message," "Women with Backbone," "The Marrow of Life," "For the Duration" and the last will be "Sky Bird." There are many exciting adventures I would like to tell you about in these books, but I must stop for lack of space.

All I can say is, I wish Sander's stories were a television series I could watch every day.

Call Nancy and John Sanders if you want a book. They are in the phone book.

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.

Cyberwarfare starts with citizen hackers

It was 2001 and I was preparing to leave for a war zone.

Most summers I spend working with teacher-training colleagues at China's normal universities, but barely two months into the George W. Bush presidency, a mid-air collision between a Chinese Navy J-811 interceptor jet and a U.S. Navy spy plane flying 70 miles off the coast of China's Hainan Island caused an international dispute.

Our president's failure to issue an immediate apology (the China pilot lost his life; none of our crew were hurt) and his further threat to withdraw diplomats and cancel a visit to Beijing escalated tensions between the two governments.

This happened April 1, 2001, but it was no joke.

I contacted my university colleagues in China to see if I should call off my visit. They assured me that this was a government-to-government dust up and regular citizens were not caught up in any nationalistic fervor. And indeed, I had another friendly and productive summer.

So where was the "war"?

It was online.

On April 3, self-styled Chinese "cyber-patriots" attacked American websites, including the U.S. Navy's. I would never have known this cyberwarfare was underway if not for an April 24, 2001, report in *Allgemeine Zeitung*. Reporter Zhou Derong in Frankfurt, Germany, detailed the extensive online battles.

Was this a Chinese government-sponsored offense? Not at all. These were citizen hackers which Zhou described as "... spoiled only children, successful yuppies in China's New Economy."

And was China the world center for this civilian warfare? Again, no. Zhou discovered that the blueprint for early hacking was laid down by Internet denizens mostly from Taiwan. He traced authorship of the major guide to hacking to a Taiwan hacker named "Cool-



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

fire."

With China's Internet use expanding dramatically in the decade since this event, Taiwan has lost its preeminence in citizen cyberwarfare. Now everyone is doing it.

That includes Americans. Even in 2001, when the Chinese citizen hackers "Green Brigade" attacked the American sites, an immediate counterattack came from American citizen hackers led by "Poisonbox."

Zhou was able to document this battle because a German site kept track of the online warfare. None of these were government-led efforts.

It should be no surprise to most of us that the vast bulk of hacking comes from nongovernment entities. At home and at work, we are under daily attack from hackers trying to steal passwords or freeze our systems. Malware in its many forms is primarily civilian-generated. And the constant virus-antivirus one-upmanship is primarily a civilian battleground.

So why are we today considering any hacking into our vital institutions, from government and military to our power grid, to be primarily the actions of foreign governments? Why does Richard Clarke define cyberwarfare as "actions by a nation-state to penetrate another nation's computers or networks for the purposes of causing damage or disruption" in his book "Cyber War?"

Is it not cyberwarfare when done by civilians? Most cyberwarriors do not wear uniforms.

The Pentagon established a U.S. Cyber Command in 2010 with both defensive and

offensive capabilities. Yes, you have to develop hacking techniques to defend against those techniques. But that also compromises our squeaky-clean position and puts us in the questionable ethnocentric position where our spyplane is good but their plane is bad.

I am no cybersecurity expert. I am a teacher. I know students and have dealt with hacking since I taught in British Hong Kong. Most hackers are male. Although they use many of the same techniques as the Internet scammers, they love gaming. And when that grows old, there is no greater challenge than the ultimate game: hacking into real, supposedly "secure" government and military systems. The more challenging, the more thrilling the game.

International disputes serve as rationale to cloak their destructive actions with patriotism. But for us, whether they are really patriotic or just using it as an excuse does not matter.

When some vital national system gets hacked, if we immediately knee-jerk and blame the Chinese or Russian government, we are ignoring the reality that the vast majority of hacking is civilian. And if the kid can get us to take military action because of their spoofed attack – wow, what a high!

They will "win."

And we will all lose.

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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