



# Gun issue starts with right questions

By Sam Dieter

Colby Free Press  
sdieter@nwkans.com

A former gun lobbyist gave his take on the gun issue to members of the community Tuesday night. "We don't ask the right questions," Richard Feldman said, "we don't even give a lot of thought to the language we use when we ask the questions." Feldman was a regional director for the National

Rifle Association and a high-ranking lobbyist for the American Shooting Sports Council. He wrote the book "Ricochet, Confessions of a Gun Lobbyist" about his experiences as a firearms industry lobbyist. Feldman spoke to a group in the Frahm Theatre at Colby Community College as part of the college's Max Pickerell lecture series.

Several times throughout his lecture, Feldman repeated that Americans should not worry about how

to take guns away from law-abiding people so much as where criminals get their guns. He insisted on not talking about gun rights or gun control, but instead on what he called "the gun issue."

"It's a symbolic issue, as much as its' a real issue," he added.

That issue brings up strong feelings that have divided the country several times, he said, and were an important factor in the 2000 and 2004 presidential

elections.

Shootings make headlines when a lone shooter, who is often mentally disturbed, kills a lot of people in public. But he said people, often kids, also shoot others accidentally, and perfectly sane criminals shoot each other. If anyone in the theatre were asked if guns should be kept away from these people, he

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# County jail study underway

By Heather Alwin

Colby Free Press  
colby.society@nwkans.com

An assessment to determine Thomas County's future jail needs got underway this week with a series of interviews.

"We know that we have to have something done about our jail," said Commissioner Paul Steele at the commissioners' Monday meeting.

Dr. Allen Beck's company, Justice Concepts Inc., was hired to advise the county on current and future jail needs. Beck will be in Colby for several days interviewing "stakeholders" to develop his recommendations.

Beck said he has been doing similar studies for about 30 years, developing expertise in many areas of jail operations.

"There are conventions about how we build jails," he said, citing examples like knowing what rules apply to different types of inmates and knowing what sizes work best. Beck said increasing a jail's size at certain increments helps with staffing costs and an appropriate building footprint.

After analyzing Thomas County's current jail and future needs, he will identify appropriate square footage for each jail area for an architect to use when designing the project, called architectural programming.

Beck does not design jails or create architectural sketches. Instead, he works with a programming expert to create a jail plan for another architect to use to create the actual building design.

Beck intends to help the public understand where the jail's "money pit" breaking points are: what needs to be done right now, what should be done in the short term and how much the building will cost over its life.

"We're not going to build just for today's population," Beck said. "We're going to build for the future."

Though criminal justice expenses are the biggest in any county, he said, there are ways to reduce the costs to taxpayers, like filling empty bed space in the new jail with inmates from other counties.

Beck has several suggestions in mind for the county, but he wants to talk to the people here who have "oars in the water" before going public with his thoughts.

"I like to look through other people's eyes to see what's been going on," he said.

Beck has already collected some data on the county's needs, such as arrest statistics.

From his research, Beck will develop a jail needs forecast, reasons and explanations for the public, delivered in a way that is easy for the taxpayers to understand.

"Communication is very important," he said, adding that not everyone will agree but it helps when the public understands the reasons and justifications for a new jail project.

Beck added that he would like to address any specific areas that are of concern to Thomas County residents.

"This is what the public deserves," he said. "I feel my responsibility is to the public."

"It's important that the public have faith that we're doing the right thing," Steele said.

"I'm concerned about the safety and security of our staff," said Steele, calling the current jail "deficient."

Other discussions at the commissioners' meeting highlighted the security concerns of some employees who might have to work alone with offenders or in isolated areas of the courthouse building.

Steele said these other discussions had brought concerns to light that had not been adequately considered when the county and architect Glen Strait had made the original design proposal for a jail and administrative complex.

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# Kids start on world tour



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press  
Area kids are getting the chance to learn after class time is over, thanks to Colby Grade School's after school program. Last week, grade school teachers dressed up to welcome students to different continents (above left), Laura Schmid, a paraprofessional with the program, taught kids to count their steps (top right). The students filled out paper passports before visiting different parts of the school (right), or used more high-tech equipment (below).



# Documentary brings together chiefs of staff

By David Bauder

AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The only man to hold both jobs says in a Discovery documentary that airs Wednesday that the White House chief of staff generally has more power than the vice president.

"I was speaking from an historical perspective," Dick Cheney is quick to clarify in an interview. Cheney, chief of staff under President Gerald Ford, was widely perceived as an involved and influential vice president under George W. Bush.

Discovery's film, "The Presidents' Gatekeepers," airs for two hours each on Wednesday and Thursday. Dozens of little-known stories about historical events big and small are told while outlining the duties of the appointed official most responsible for seeing

whether a president's agenda succeeds or fails.

Joshua Bolten and Rahm Emanuel discuss the terrorist threat that kept them in the White House situation room as Barack Obama was inaugurated to replace Bush. Assistant chief Larry Higby reveals that the voice-activated tape recorder that led to Richard Nixon's downfall was installed because the president was too clumsy to figure out a manual one. Lyndon Johnson's fear that he wouldn't survive a second term because of his health was a big factor in his decision not to run in 1968, Marvin Watson explains; Johnson died two days after a second term would have ended.

All 20 of the presidential aides sought for interviews agreed to participate, along with former presidents Jimmy Carter and George H.W. Bush, said film-

maker Gedeon Naudet, who made the documentary with his brother Jules and executive producer Chris Whipple.

They enlisted former Ford aide David Hume Kennerly to win the cooperation of Cheney, who sat for seven hours of interviews, and his one-time boss Donald Rumsfeld. When former Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush aide James Baker, considered the "gold standard" of modern chiefs, became the third interview, the rest fell into place.

"The chiefs love the fact that for the first time, it's about them and not about their presidents," Naudet said.

To a man, they agreed it was a meat grinder of a job, with constant pressure and endless hours. The typical chief lasts less than two years. It's miserable to go through, Emanuel concludes, but

every chief would do it again if asked.

Before being brought down like his boss in Watergate, H.R. Halde- man set the modern standard for a strong, centralized authority at the White House, said Cheney, a low-level Nixon aide then in his 20s.

"He spent a lot of time thinking about it," Cheney said, "and quite frankly I think most of us subsequently, without ever saying that's what we were doing, sort of gravitated to (his) model."

Ford initially supported a "spokes in a wheel" management theory where several aides report directly to the president. That may have worked in a congressional office, but not in the White House, Cheney said. Somebody needs to set the president's schedule, make certain he sees all the necessary correspondence and has everything on hand when a decision is

to be made.

"You have to have somebody disciplined running the calendar because the president's time is the most valuable thing there is," Cheney said. "If you don't have anybody in charge, none of that happens."

Then there are the duties no one

can anticipate: When Ford lost his voice in the last days of the 1976 campaign, it was Cheney who had to read the president's concession over the phone to Carter the morning after the election.

"It was sort of the nadir of my career," he said.

## Power out today

Power went out near the middle of town this morning after an underground wire burned out.

Assistant Public Works Director Gordon Gilbert said the outage was caused by an underground primary wire burning out at about 5:30 a.m. City workers had to dig up the original wire and splice it to stop the

outage, he said. The power was out for about an hour and a half along Court Avenue north of Pine Street. The outage lasted closer to two hours between E. Walnut and E. Cherry streets.