

commentary

from our viewpoint...

Closing records wasn't in anybody's interest

The county has been atwitter over the past week with the unsealing of the two records from the Kansas Bureau of Investigation and the attorney general's office from an investigation five years ago involving then-Sheriff Jack Armstrong.

The records were unsealed by Judge Jack Burr after receiving a formal request for a hearing arguments from the *Sherman County Star*.

The *Star* had asked for the records when they were first brought up four years ago, but was told by officials they were closed records under the Kansas Open Records Act. There would not be any heated debate today if Armstrong had not decided to run for sheriff again, or if the records had been released at the time they were first requested.

The argument for closing the files was that they were investigative, and therefore not releasable. That argument would work except for the fact only one of the two documents was investigative on its face. That was the four-page detailed examination of the sheriff's Vehicle Identification Fund by the KBI agent for a period of time prior to the cancellation of the contract by Sheriff Armstrong in April 1995.

The report seemed to indicate that over \$4,000 was not accounted for in the fund, but also said it was difficult to tell who might have had access to the money. The report made assumptions about how many inspections were done in the time period by full-time deputies.

The second document, which the author in the attorney general's office says should still be sealed, was a report to Sherman County on the results of the investigation. It is hard to understand how this document could be construed as being investigative, but if the idea was to somehow protect the people from the truth, it simply backfired.

True, there are some inflammatory words in the letter and there is the conclusion that there would not be any charges filed. However, the letter does not accuse Armstrong of theft. It does say as the elected official in charge he was "responsible" for the loss of the money. That is like saying the captain of the Titanic was responsible for the ship hitting the iceberg and sinking.

Hiding this behind the curtain of "secrecy," no matter how well intentioned, is what caused the furor.

In recent years, politicians at all levels of government have been investigated, and many unflattering reports have been released to the public. There has been a gnashing of teeth, and calls for action of various types including impeachment, indictments, resignations and recalls.

In two celebrated cases involving presidents, many historians have said both would not have had such a rough time if they had come clean in the beginning.

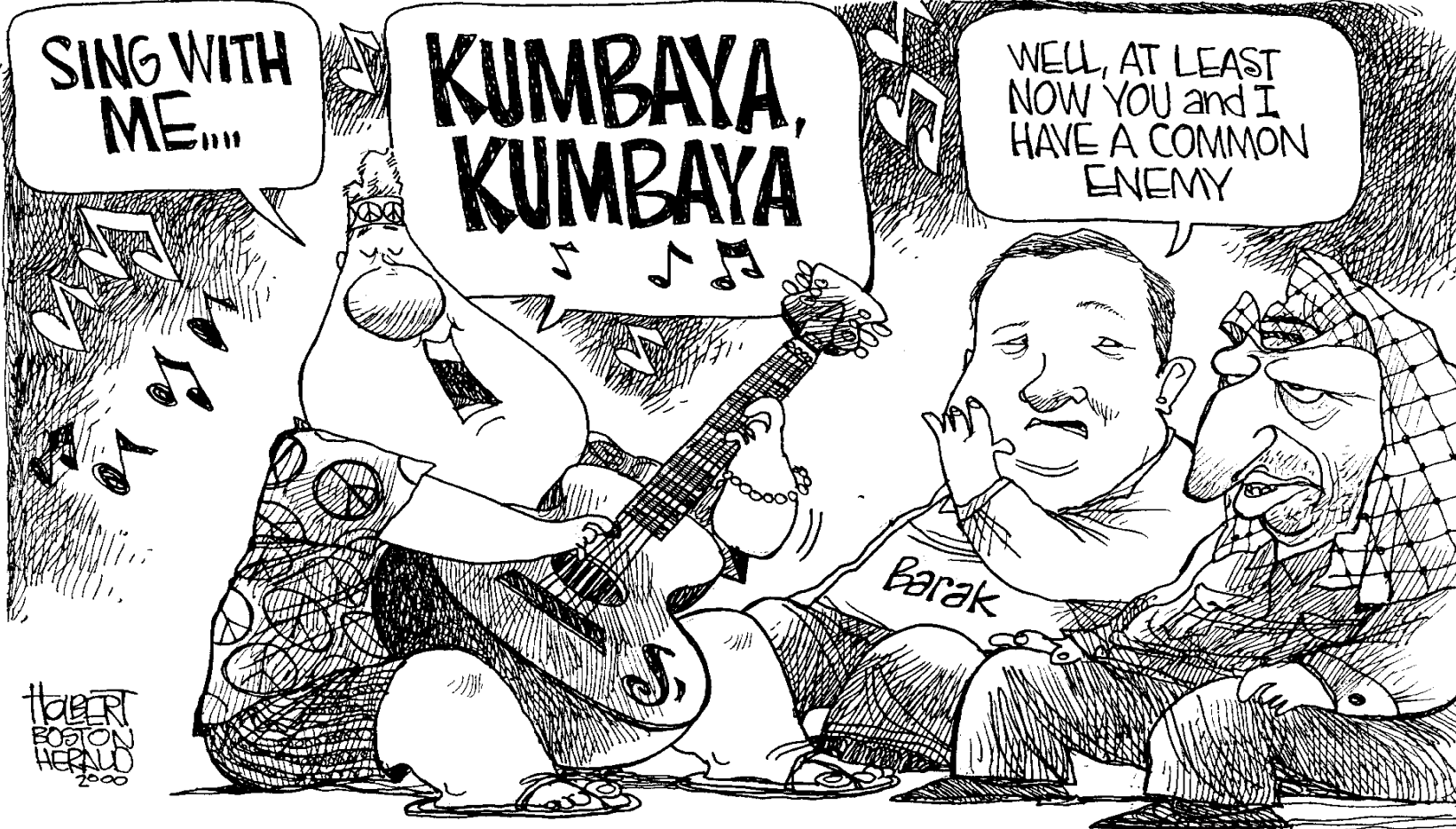
Gaps in tapes showing the cover-up were the downfall of one, and the inability to face a question of moral misconduct has left a permanent cloud over the current president.

While the sheriff's case is not as large as either of these examples the principal is the same — the truth will set you free. How many times did our parents say, "No matter how tough, it is always better to face the truth. It may hurt for a while, but if you lie and try to cover up, things just continue to snowball and become impossible to handle."

If these records had been made public at the time they were first requested, there would have been some eyebrows raised, and probably some editorials and stories. However, it is certain that the release would not have caused the stir it did last week.

We all have secrets, are told secrets or know secrets. Secrecy has its place, but it is not a good excuse for hiding the truth. This is especially true when an elected public official is involved.

This is not an endorsement of Armstrong, nor is it an indictment of him. Rather it is another example of people trying to do the right thing for the wrong reasons and stamping it "closed." — *Tom Betz*



THE CAMP DAVID MIDEAST PEACE SUMMIT

Fiber and whole grains move up in importance

I have often emphasized the benefits of eating lots of fiber and whole grains. However, last week I heard some statistics that drove me back into the research game.

The statement that started me on this trek, "Just one serving of whole grains per day will make a major difference in your risk of several diseases." Among the diseases were heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer and breast cancer.

I have always extolled the benefits of fiber. I speak often of the many advantages of adding fiber to your diet. In fact, I am a firm believer that one can remain fairly healthy and in good shape with a main diet consisting of vegetables, fiber and complex carbohydrates.

I have often touched on eating whole grains, but maybe not to the extent I should have. I am finding out that most of the complex carbs we are eating have been made from refined grains, stripped of their nutritious bran and germ, instead of whole grains packed with nutrients as nature made them.

In 1994, the average American ate 199 pounds of grains, but only 10 pounds of that were whole grains. So in essence, I have not been clear enough on eating whole grains. White bread, pasta, crackers, and pretzels are all made from stripped grains.

Yes it is true, white bread is fortified with vitamins and minerals and contain a small amount of protein and fiber. But for the most part these foods, even though they are low-fat, are not adding anything of substance to your diet. In fact studies show that these refined carbohydrates can be harmful to



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- freedom in eating

you. They are rapidly absorbed by the body and offer a source of calories for energy, but not much else.

Now this stuff began to intrigue me!

Compared to refined carbs, whole grains carry nutrients by the truckload. That's because they retain invaluable parts of the grain kernel called the bran and the germ. It's these "extra" nutrients that may protect you from illness.

Here's how some of them work:

Fiber fights constipation, which arrests the growth of colon cancer cells. Wheat fiber lowers levels of estrogen in women, which may reduce breast cancer risk. Then soluble fiber such as oat bran lowers cholesterol.

In just one grain of wheat, 80 to 90% of all micro-nutrients are located in the bran and germ.

Here's what happens when these parts are stripped away to make white flour. Whole Wheat has: 4 times more fiber, 2 times more copper, 6 times more magnesium, 3 times more potassium, 2 times more selenium, 4 times more zinc and 20 times more vitamin E.

I have never been very interested in all this technical stuff. It has seemed to confuse me just a bit.

However, this time I am happy to say that these new studies have gotten through to me. It just makes sense that we need to drastically increase our whole grains, doesn't it?

We will go into this more next week. I want to offer suggestions for increasing these whole grains in our diets. This is just one other thing we can do to experience our freedom in healthy eating. After all, we do want to do whatever we can to ensure a quality life.

One way to inject some natural whole grain into our diet is to eat wild rice. It is really good and tastes kinda nutty. I ran across this recipe and wanted to pass it on. Try to have it at least once this week and enjoy your dose of health.

Tennie's Wild Rice

- 3 boxes of Uncle Ben's original wild rice & seasoning
 - 1 pkg. Sliced fresh mushrooms (optional)
 - 1 Medium chopped onion
 - 6 c. water (3/4 c. more water if no mushrooms & cook 45 min.)
 - 1 pkg. Grill Mates (Herb)
 - 2 tsp. Soy Sauce
- Mix together with a large fork and place in glass Pyrex dish and cover. Bake at 425 for 45 minutes to an hour. We make this in such large quantities so we can have it for a side dish for several days.
- You can reach me by writing to Sally Mosier, 400 10th. St., Canyon, Texas. Or e-mail me at gosally@netwest.com.

Long day's journey into weekend

We went up to a friend's cottage last weekend. We all went up there in a huge pack, going about 10 miles an hour. Then when the stress of traffic was too much, we all pulled into the service area and had a large coffee.

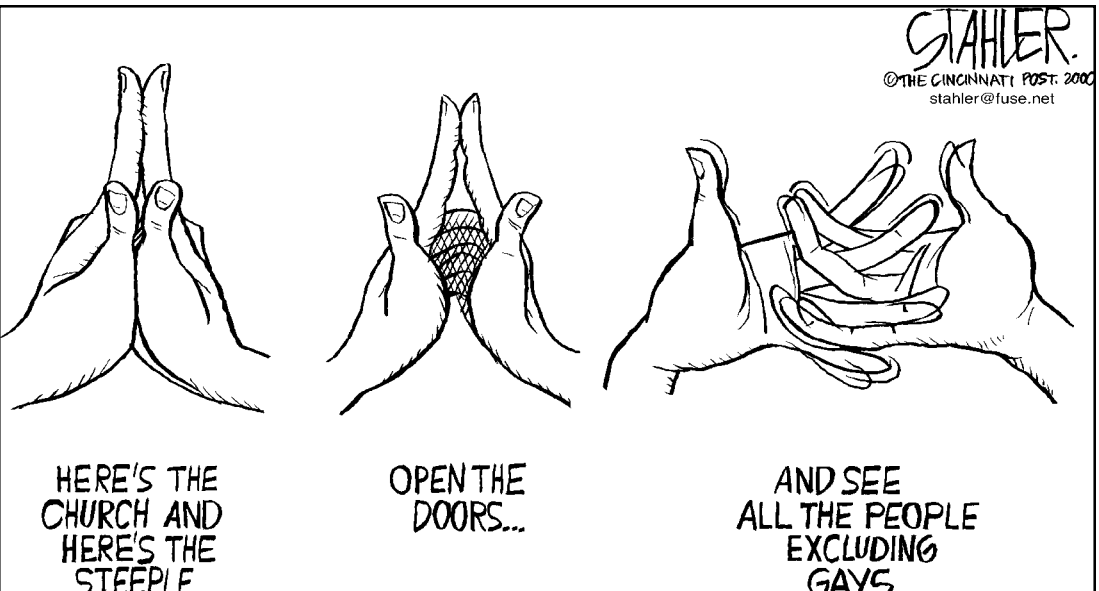
We arrived late Friday night and then on Sunday night did the whole trip in reverse, reuniting with many of the other cars we'd met on the way up. This gave me lots of time to think about why people have cottages. I'd rather work weekends than do that commute.

And then it struck me. Being there is fine. It's just getting there and getting back that's so awful. So the trick is to go to the cottage once and then never come back. You have to make a commitment. Having a cottage is like being married. If you can live with the low convenience and high maintenance, it can be a satisfying lifestyle. But it's not something you only do on the weekends.

KNOW ONE THING

Sometimes young people ask me for advice. Or at least I wish they would. Because I would say to them that no matter what you do in your life or where you go or who you become, try to have at least one piece of useful information. Something other people need to know at the time you're telling them.

Most people think it's better to have an unlimited supply of meaningless trivia that they insist on sharing with you at every opportunity rather than bringing you one pertinent tidbit that would have some relevance to your life or current situation. This is a very dangerous approach to social interaction in a country that has somewhat ambiguous gun laws.



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So the best way for you to make a contribution in this world is to seek out one piece of vital information that applies to whatever situation presents itself to you. For example, when I come into your service station, I don't need to know that this is the wettest summer we've had in 64 years. I need to know where the restroom key is. And I need to know right now.

WAYS TO DOMINATE A CONVERSATION

- Conversation is often an adversarial engagement, like a game of chess. It is important for you to control the pace and content of a conversation, especially if you're talking to a known bore.
- Here are a few things to say that will shift the power your way:
- Do you think I should go to prison if I kill a guy?
- Which one of these sexy women is your wife?
- Do you know anyone who sells plastic explosives?
- I was shocked at how heavy an ATM is.
- I have to go soon. Full moon tonight.
- Are there any blood spots on the back of my shirt?
- That guy in the corner has a gun. Don't let him see me.

YOU CAN'T FORCE ANYONE TO DO THAT

I was watching some kids skateboarding down an iron railing the other day. They kept falling off, onto the concrete steps, injuring themselves badly and putting their ability to procreate in extreme jeopardy.

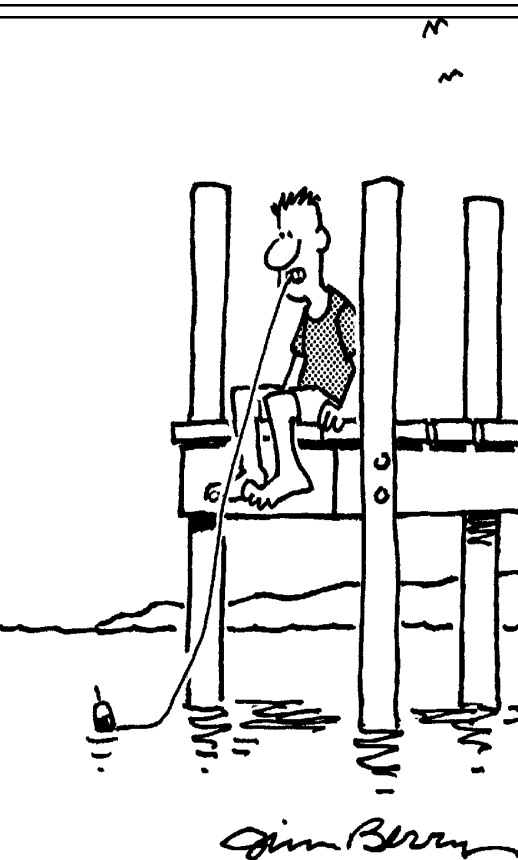
And it occurred to me that if they were forced to do that activity for not having their homework done, the principal and the teachers would all be fired for assigning such a cruel punishment.

Two hours of skateboarding on a metal bar and, while you're at it, you have to have a few metal rings put through your nose and eyebrows. It would never happen. Some punishments are so cruel they can only be self-inflicted. Like golf.

Quote of the Day: "Time may be a great healer, but it's a lousy beautician." — Red Green


Red Green is the star of "The Red Green Show," a television series seen in the U.S. on PBS and in Canada on the CBC Network, and the author of "The Red Green Book" and "Red Green Talks Cars: A Love Story."

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