

commentary

from other pens...

War planners operate in quartermaster shadow

The military planners supplying America's Afghan war with troops and arms probably haven't spared a thought for the Civil War career of Montgomery C. Meigs. But they are operating in his shadow.

As the Union Army's quartermaster general, dispatching men and equipment to the scattered battlefields of the war, Meigs was one of the few Union generals who proved his competence from beginning to end.

His intensity was fueled by a growing hatred of the Confederacy, an emotion that led him to place Arlington National Cemetery on the Virginia estate of the South's leading general, Robert E. Lee.

Meigs saw to the army's equipment and supplies as the force expanded from about 16,000 men to more than 700,000 in the first year alone. His office moved and housed the troops and supplied the guns and gear needed for battlefield success, all the while swatting at dishonest contractors and purveyors of shoddy goods.

Streams of uniforms, knapsacks, blankets, tents, rifles, cannon, ammunition, horses, wagons, tents, pontoon bridges, food and gear of every description flowed to the fighting armies. Railroads, ocean ships, river boats and horse-drawn wagons got it where it was needed.

Altogether, Meigs signed contracts worth \$1.5 billion — an immense sum in the 1860s.

"Perhaps in the history of the world there was never so large an amount of money disbursed upon the order of a single man," said Secretary of State William Seward. Without the services of this eminent soldier, the national cause must have been lost or deeply imperiled."

Over a long career as a military engineer Meigs had built the stone aqueduct that provided Washington with pure water and supervised construction of the Capitol's cast-iron dome. He served with leaders on both sides of the national conflict, a roster including Lee and Confederate President Jefferson Davis who had been U.S. Secretary of War.

"The country is in a flame," Meigs told his diary in May 1861 in the opening days of the war.

In something of a flame himself, the 44-year-old captain planned and helped execute a secret expedition which successfully relieved Fort Pickens in Florida, keeping it in Union hands.

Impressed, Lincoln put him to work organizing the efficient supply and logistics system a vastly increased army would need.

In 1862, when Gen. George McClellan, the commander of the Army of the Potomac, became ill and petulantly refused to tell the White House his plans for engaging the enemy, a despairing Lincoln turned to Meigs.

Meigs advised Lincoln to consult directly with McClellan's division commanders, a move which promptly brought the jealous and ego-driven general back to health and back to duty.

Author Joseph E. Stevens, writing in the April issue of "American History" magazine, said the incident led Lincoln to make Meigs one of his principal military advisers.

Meigs' "tough-minded optimism — his understanding of the north's overwhelming superiority in manpower and resources — helped dispel the gloom that often afflicted the president," Stevens wrote.

As the war dragged on Meigs became bitter against the Confederate leaders he blamed for dividing the nation and plunging it into war.

By June 1864, the list of war dead had created the need for a national cemetery. Meigs found the land for it at the Arlington, Va., estate and mansion of his Confederate nemesis, Robert E. Lee. Meigs himself would be interred there in a grave near that of his son, killed in action by Confederate soldiers.

Meigs built the enormous red-brick Pension Building, now the National Building Museum. He turned its artistic embellishments into a tribute to Union veterans and his own wartime service.

Meigs banded the building with a 1,200-foot frieze along which terracotta soldiers march, sailors tug at their oars, and horse-drawn supply wagons lumber toward the front. The former quartermaster general made sure they were all well armed and equipped.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Lawrence L. Knutson has reported on Congress, the White House and Washington's history for 34 years.



Mountain Time is the best!

No amount of arguing will ever change the fact that Mountain Time is better than Central Time. At least not for me.

That's because there are no logical reasons why one time zone is better than another. They all have their good and bad qualities.

For instance, living in Mountain Time in Goodland means you're on the same time as Denver, television shows and events start an hour earlier and you're that much closer to the mountains — all good things to me.

However, since most of Kansas is on Central Time, it's hard for a reporter to contact business people and officials in the evening and it's tough for the schools to schedule sports events.

If you live in Central Time in Colby, you're in sync with the rest of the state and the sun sets an hour later, but you're ahead of neighboring Goodland and Colorado, which can screw up day trips and make scheduling events hard.

No, a time zone preference isn't an idea that's



rachel miscall

• unraveling

formed in your head. It's something that's etched in your heart.

I was born and raised in Mountain Time and most of my family lives within the zone.

It's something I spent 22 years growing accustomed to, and now that I live on the edge of another time zone, I feel a strange sort of loyalty for it.

Central Time just seems inferior. I never thought about the difference until I moved from Denver to Oberlin about three years ago.

It was my first real newspaper job out of college and it was a bit disturbing moving from a big city to a small town.

I was lonely and I remember how excited I was every time I headed out to visit my family in Denver.

The time change was in my favor going home because I would gain an extra hour when I crossed over into Colorado, but it was a nuisance when I was coming back.

First of all, I didn't want to be returning and I would delay my departure as long as possible.

Second, I had to work most Sunday nights, so I had nothing to look forward to at the end of the trip but an empty office. Losing an hour was just an added annoyance.

There's nothing like that to make you prejudice against a time zone.

I could list a bunch of other little reasons why Mountain Time is better than Central Time — like it simply sets Sherman County a part from other Kansas counties — but I won't bother.

I would just be wasting my words on people who love Central Time for their own personal reasons.

Does education pay?

By Paul Chaffin

Counselor at Northwest Kansas Technical College
When an individual is considering the question, "What do I want to be when I grow up?" many factors enter into making a good decision.

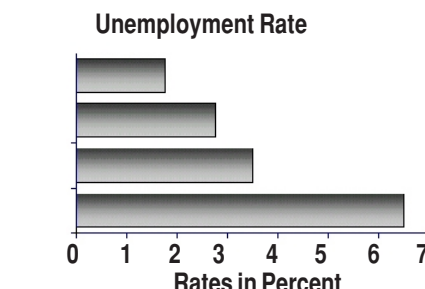
One has to be aware of their interests and select a career that brings fulfillment and a sense of satisfaction.

Ability to perform tasks required of an occupation is another important element in career selection. Every individual has unique skills and abilities that make them more suited for a career. Individuals who has good hand-eye coordination and mechanical reasoning ability may find enjoyment working as a technician in a mechanics related



for our readers

• tech college



career, such as diesel mechanic or auto body.

Many individuals consider the earning potential provided by a career that will allow them to live a particular lifestyle. Research completed by the United States Department of Labor indicates education does pay both in the earning power and the employability of the individual. The graph shows the results of this research.

College graduates age 25 and over earn nearly

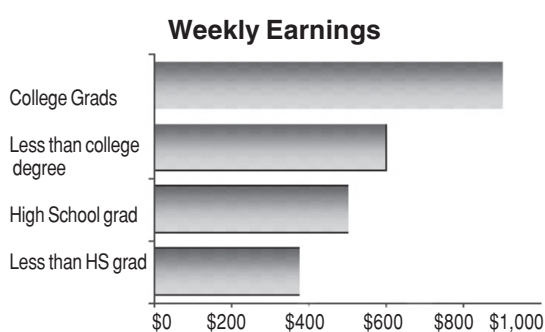
twice as much as workers who stopped with a high school diploma. The unemployment rate for workers who dropped out of high school is nearly four times the rate for college graduates.

Does it pay to attend a technical college? A review of the average salary of the graduates from Northwest Kansas Technical College graduates indicates it does.

The investment of time and money expended to earn a degree from a technical college is reflected in the average salaries of our graduates over the past 5 years.

AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME	
2000	\$1,898
1999	\$1,811
1998	\$1,696
1997	\$1,629
1996	\$1,392

Do you need to increase your earning power or employability skills? Additional education can be beneficial in making a career change and enhancing your future.



Tours have changed my mind about education

At this time it appears public K-12 education may realize a slight increase in the base state aid per pupil. Budget discussions are awaiting revenue estimates, due about April 3rd, before beginning discussions.

I just completed touring a couple of Topeka's schools. One was Lowman Hill Elementary another was Topeka High. The reason for the "tour" was to see for myself what differences exist in the "atmosphere" in large schools and urban areas as compared with my experiences touring our schools in Western Kansas. In previous years I have made a point to visit schools in Lawrence and Manhattan. Soon I will be in Kansas City to tour some of their HUGE schools.

We have problems with declining enrollment that places demands on us for money. Larger schools are involved with considerable diversity of programs and needing to actually function as a "parent" to many of their students. Those demands create a very strong need for more money as well. Both urban and rural need for increased funding are real and needed.

Many of us have criticized schools for acting too much like a "parent" to our children. All day kindergarten, preschool programs and meal programs are essential in this area. Many students I talked with, and observed, in elementary schools are fed by the school because they do not receive proper or sufficient meals at home. I do not exaggerate. As many as 20 to 40 percent of the elementary students with whom I had contact were dependent on the teachers and schools for their social guidance, meals and what we call "parenting."

Urban areas seem to have greater drug and poverty issues than we have in rural Kansas. It never really occurred to me the problem of parentless



jim morrison

• capitol review

children was in such large numbers. Not because they do not have parents but because the parent(s) are working and do not have time for their children, mentally ill or strung out on drugs.

My school tours are changing my attitudes toward education. As a nation we are being forced into making the schools take on the role of a parent. This is not good. Not because we are enabling the schools to take on parenting responsibilities (they really don't want to do that, teachers would rather be educating than parenting), but because the schools must take on that role or many students would be too starved or mis-behaved to learn.

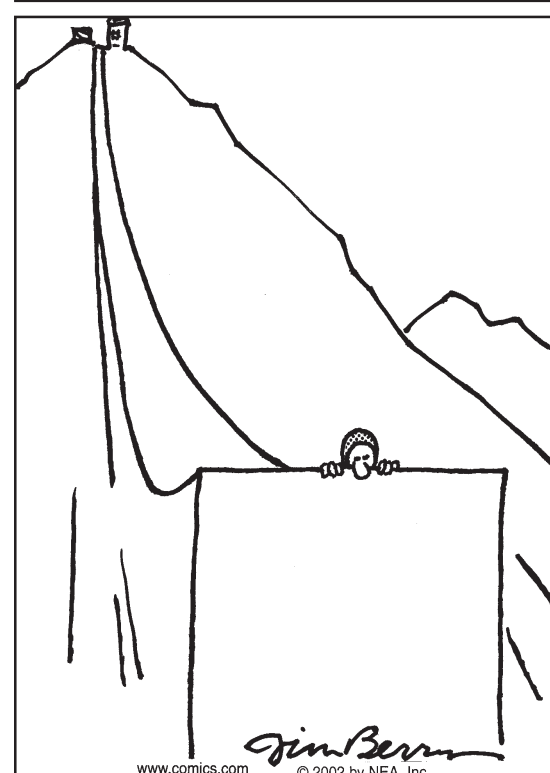
Many do not believe education needs any more money, just to spend it more wisely and reduce the sports programs (I know because I was one of them). Those may be incorrect thoughts. We are asking way more of the schools than many realize. Lack of money in education will result (my opinion) in direct harm to children and society that will cost us considerably more than money we spend for education.

The problem is not money. The problem is how we have set priorities. To "fix" education requires a basic change in how all of us are thinking. Tour your schools, talk to the teachers and then tour other schools that differ from yours and you will notice that money needs are the same but not the real problem. We, as a society, really need to get better focused and see the real difficulties educators and

society face. Increased funding is a band-aid helping us legislators and maybe the public in general; avoid the really hard decisions that must be made to fix the core problem.

Please contact me if I can be of any assistance with your State needs or bureaucratic "red tape." It appears that I will be serving all of Graham County after reapportionment rather than three townships in western Graham County.

berry's world



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