

from other pens...

Getting hard to find high school referees

We were reading a while back where it is getting more difficult to find referees for high school sports. This is a generalization, but it's a demanding job; no debate there. Most of the people you see with the whistles hanging around their necks love sports — otherwise they wouldn't be doing it. So, what could be driving them away from sports officiating? Maybe the following Letter to the Editor might shed some light on the problem.

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Dear Editor,

After attending several boys' varsity basketball games this season, I feel obligated to write this letter. I have never before written a letter to the editor. Not being a prolific writer, please excuse any grammar mistakes and try to just feel my message.

We have such leaders in our community such as school board members, past referees, spouses of coaching staff, and parents or relatives of players ridiculing referees. Every call a referee makes can't possibly be the "worst call I've ever seen!"

This behavior is not only rude and disrespectful to the people around you, it serves no purpose to better the game. Please support your team and community without all the drama, negativity and rudeness.

I doubt in my 40 years that I have been the perfect sportsman, but somewhere along the way I grew up. I challenge you to do the same.

Wade Ambrosier
Rural Norton

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We applaud Mr. Ambrosier's comments.

As editor/publisher of this newspaper, I am going to share a little personal story that deals with the situation today's letter addresses.

I remember my mother telling me, later in life, about an incident at a basketball game in Hays that involved my father. It seems he could get very vocal at games — a couple of my older brothers were involved in sports — and when he thought a referee was wrong, he would let him know in no uncertain terms. The night in question, Dad was unhappy from the get-go with the refereeing. He picked on them time and again.

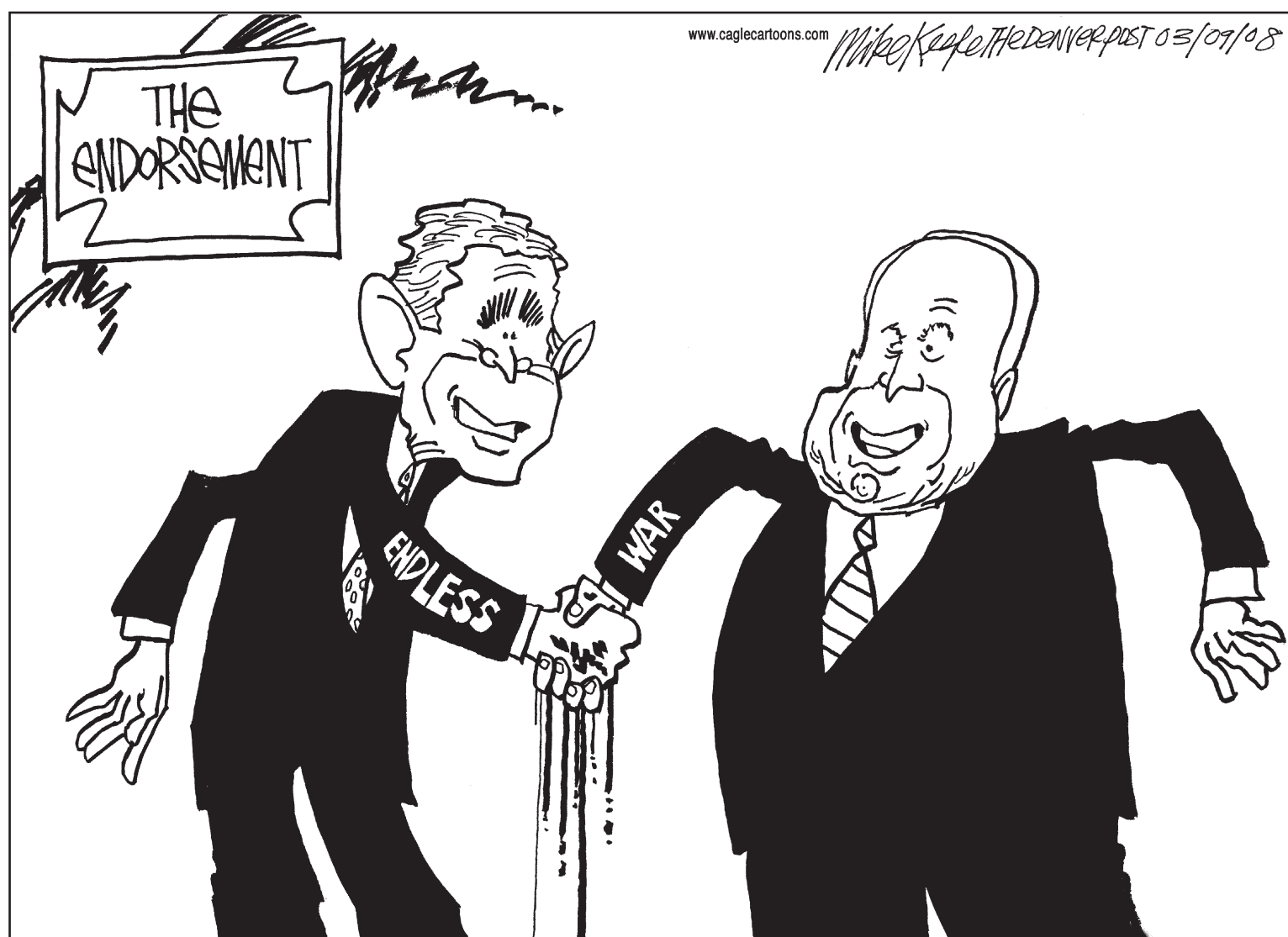
Finally, one of the officials had all he could take. He whistled for a time out. He walked over to the bleachers where my Dad and Mom were seated, took the whistle off from around his neck, handed it to my Dad and said, "If you can do a better job, here's your chance."

According to mother, Dad began slumping down in his seat, embarrassed, knowing not how to react. After several seconds — Mom said it seemed like hours — the referee put the whistle back around his neck and the game resumed. Mom said from that time on, Dad never again challenged a referee's call.

If we have a problem here with taunting referees, perhaps they need to handle the situation in the same fashion it was handled in my Dad's case. Nothing like being embarrassed in front of the hometown crowd. My Dad, too, in his earlier years, served as county clerk in Ellis County, served as mayor of Hays, owned his own hardware business, and was somewhat involved in politics. He was no stranger to the onlooking crowd that night.

Let's make our children, on the playing field or court, proud of our actions in the stands.

—Tom Dreiling, The Norton Telegram



Short thoughts about Ralph Nader

Ralph Nader. Officially threw his hat in the ring for president. Again. His fourth attempt. Shouldn't "three strikes" apply here?

Ralph Nader. The Dr. Kevorkian of presidential politics.

Ralph Nader. Like a lefter Dennis Kucinich minus the hot wife and massive groundswell of public support.

Ralph Nader. Liberal response: Good message. Bad delivery. Awful timing.

Ralph Nader. Conservative response: If you need any help with ballot access, let us know.

Ralph Nader. A retired, two-term ex-president if hippies ruled the world.

Ralph Nader. Still serving life without parole if General Motors ruled the world.

Ralph Nader. First name is colloquial synonym for the rapid expulsion of stomach contents as a result of a series of involuntary muscle spasms whose appearance generally signals the host is sick or drunk. Not that that means anything.

Ralph Nader. Surname is homonym of nadir: which means lowest point possible. The opposite of zenith. Not that that means anything.

Ralph Nader. Makes Barack Hussein Obama look like a centrist

Ralph Nader. Makes John Sidney McCain look vivacious.

Ralph Nader. Middle name is Moral Victory.

Ralph Nader. In '00, saw no difference be-



will
durst

• raging moderate

tween Al Gore and George Bush. Still denies missing repeated optometrist appointments.

Ralph Nader. Fervently believes the truth can affect change. Has yet to learn the American electorate would rather drink unfiltered haggis juice straight from the tap with their hands tied behind their backs with live copperhead snakes than confront the truth.

Ralph Nader. A Pisces.

Ralph Nader. Born in a Year of the Dog.

Ralph Nader. Not a Socialist. But not unlike one either.

Ralph Nader. Older than John McCain. Whiter than Barack Obama. More Y chromosomes than Hillary Clinton. But all three were close.

Ralph Nader. Three time recipient of the "Tony Orlando Coasting on Your Decades-Old Reputation" Award.

Ralph Nader. Michael Moore -- 19 years and 10 months hence.

Ralph Nader. When Bad Things Happen to Good People in Sears and Roebuck Suits.

Ralph Nader. Made the cars we drive safer

and George Bush president. That's what you call your trade-off.

Ralph Nader. Yet to hold electoral office. Apparently not complicit with that whole "presidency should not be an entry-level position" cabal.

Ralph Nader. Like a scowling Ross Perot with a Harvard Law degree.

Ralph Nader. A saint, a visionary and a genius.

Ralph Nader. A fool with the same common sense that god gave a bucket of claw hammers.

Ralph Nader. Harold Stassen for the MTV generation.

Ralph Nader. "Unsafe at Any Speed" is now him in a crosswalk.

Ralph Nader. Possesses the sense of humor of an end table.

Ralph Nader. Would rather be right in public than left at home.

Ralph Nader. People's lobbyist or Judas Goat?

Ralph Nader. Dramatically intones that if America is to become better, it first has to get worse. NEWS FLASH. It's worse! We don't want worse. This is worstest we can stand.

Will Durst is a political comedian who has performed around the world. E-mail Will at durst@caglecartoons.com.

Anger on immigration not a solution

By HELEN KRIEBLE
and GIL CISNEROS

The emperor and philosopher Marcus Aurelius wrote 2000 years ago, "How much more grievous are the consequences of anger than the causes of it."

That could well be said of today's anger about illegal immigration, felt by people on both sides of our borders.

Americans are angry about changes in our culture, what many say is the use of tax dollars to subsidize illegal activity and a general breakdown in the rule of law.

Many people in Latin America are irate about what they see as the hypocrisy of Americans, who criticize foreign workers while continuing to hire them. They see the "demonization" of a class of people who provide badly needed services Americans are clearly willing to pay for.

Latin America also fears losing its most risk-taking entrepreneurial people, who might otherwise form the middle-class small-business society needed to transform their own countries' economies. Clearly they have a problem, too.

It seems ironic that people on two sides of an international border can be so angry about a situation that seems fairly uncomplicated. Yet the emotion continues to build, bringing historic allies and trading partners ever closer to separation by a modern-day Berlin Wall.

Most Americans understand the futility of such a dramatic rise in tensions, having watched the same issue divide our own people. Our leaders are bitterly divided: law and order advocates who want the border sealed; unions worried about illegals depressing wages; and a small-business economy that depends on this workforce.

Objective observers know all sides have to be satisfied for any solution to work, because to some extent all of them are right. The border must be controlled; needed workers must be provided by a legal and safe system; and the program must be administered in a way that protects local workers.

Unfortunately, the anger has grown to the point where objective observers are scarce.

The same is unfortunately true of our deteriorating relationships with our friends in Latin America.

These are disagreements that can be worked out, because there are solutions that would solve both sides of problems. But any such solution



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has to begin with a conversation, not a colossal hemisphere-wide shouting match. Just as politicians in the U.S. must stop the partisan political rhetoric before any solution can pass, so Mexican and American business and government leaders must begin a serious dialogue on the issues.

We are working to build this dialogue, and it represents an important part of solving the problem for people on both sides of the border. Mexican officials tell us they badly want to work with U.S. officials on border control and law enforcement, while also providing a legal means for legitimate workers to be matched with jobs. Yet the conventional wisdom in the U.S. is that Mexico is part of the problem, that it actually wants its people to break down the border and come in mass to the U.S. That is because others have defined the issue while Mexican government and business leaders have not been adequately involved in the debate. That must change.

Our proposal is fairly simple: Separate immigrants from temporary guest workers — they are not the same and should not be. Nonimmigrants who want work in U.S. should undergo background checks and be issued "smart cards" that make tracking easy for both employers and law enforcement.

Amnesty cannot be part of the deal. Illegals already in the U.S. should leave and obtain legal

status outside the U.S. The program can be practical and reverse the current incentives only if it works quickly and efficiently, so implementation should be contracted to companies that know how to link specific workers to specific jobs (employment agencies) and how to make smart cards with embedded tracking information that can fit be copied (credit card companies).

No government bureaucracy can handle millions of cases in a reasonable time. Most illegals know the system doesn't work, because it didn't work for them. But if they knew they could get legal quickly and efficiently, employers and employees alike would not only jump at the chance, they would gladly pay for it. Taxpayers wouldn't have to.

Controlling the border would be easier and cheaper because 90 percent of the problem would be gone. The economy could get the workers it needs without subjecting our country to the threats posed by a porous border. Workers could come out of the shadows, pay taxes and be treated like all other workers. We could have both border control and a strong economy.

The devil, as always, is in the details. Like any other good idea, though, people can only figure it out through a calm and rational discussion. That requires both sides to talk to each other, and keep talking. Otherwise, the consequences of our anger and bitterness may be even worse than the cause.

Helen Kriebel is president of the Vernon K. Kriebel Foundation and Gil Cisneros is president of the Chamber of the Americas, a Denver group which promotes business ties to Latin America.

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