

from our viewpoint...

Open proceedings are the best course in school abuse case

A federal judge did the right thing the other day, and refused to issue a "gag" order in the trial of a suit by four families against the venerable St. John's military school in Salina.

Lawyers for the school argued that the plaintiffs' attorney had granted "media interviews" after filing the suit. One told the judge the motion was necessary "to keep the lawsuit from being tried in a public forum."

"This case has drawn a significant amount of media attention already," the lawyer, Derek Johannsen, said.

Parents of the four boys said that amounted to a request to violate their First Amendment right to free speech.

U.S. District Judge John Lungstrum sided with the parents, refusing to grant the order. That was the wise thing to do.

A gag order in such a case seldom has much impact. If the case has a high profile, it'll lead the evening news and land on Page 1 as it will.

What a gag order does is prohibit those who know the case best, the lawyers and principals, from explaining it to reporters. And to that end, it means the press likely will have stories that reflect the case with less accuracy.

American courts are open by tradition, and for important reasons. In this country, we don't allow people to disappear into the government's judicial system. We expect charges, trials, evidence and sentences to be out in the open, where the world can judge them. There is simply no other way, in a democracy, that the people can watch the system.

Defense lawyers in particular make a show of wanting to close records, close hearings, close courtrooms and gag witnesses. But a court system that goes behind closed doors is a danger to a free society.

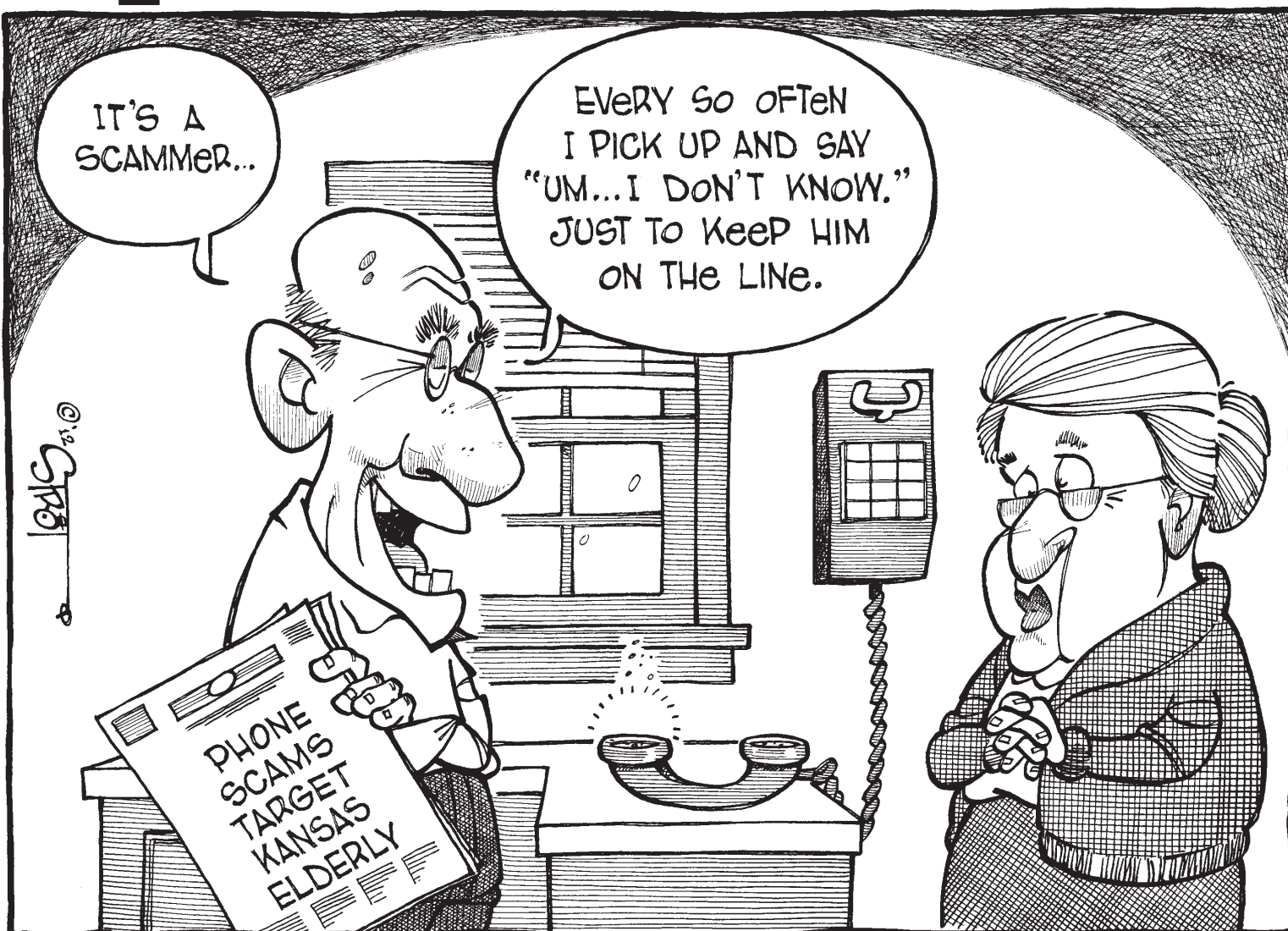
In this case, St. John's denies charges that it fosters "a culture of abuse, lack of institutional control, failure to supervise or any kind of coverup" in charges of abusive punishment and hazing by upperclassmen.

Court records show, however, that the school has settled nine similar suits since 2006, including one where a federal judge found that the school knew about the potential for hazing and yet allowed ranking cadets to stay in control of discipline.

One lawsuit settled last year involved a cadet who had been branded with a star-shaped medal in an initiation. At least 10 others were similarly disfigured. Other charges in the current case include "saber swatting" and other types of beatings.

It's an unsavory case to be sure for the school, an institution of the Episcopal Church, but a gag order is not called for. The tradition of open courts is too precious to risk.

Unlike its cadets, the school will have to take its beating out in the open. - Steve Haynes



Sad goodbye to son's pet

It was one of those phone calls you hate to make.

I had to call our son, Lacy. "Frank isn't doing so well," I said. "The vet says his kidneys are shutting down and he doesn't think he'll make it."

Frank just didn't look too perky on Tuesday night. He vomited some green liquid, but he's a cat. It seems like the cats spend their life leaving us wads of hair and barf.

But Steve and I agreed, he didn't look well. So, first thing Wednesday morning before heading off to work, I dropped him off at the clinic. The vet said that he looked dehydrated and suggested a blood test. I agreed and headed off.

About mid-afternoon the call came. He's getting worse. He's not holding anything down, and when we give him fluids under the skin, the liquid just comes right back out the nether end. It looks like he's shutting down.

The vet met me at his office at 7 p.m., even though they close at 5.

Frank just lay there. His eyes were open and he didn't seem to be in any pain, but he obviously couldn't stand and he had messed his



cynthia haynes

• open season

cage even though the vet said he had just changed the papers minutes before I arrived.

I decided to take him home. The vet gave me an old towel to carry him in, a bag of fluids and a syringe you could use on a horse to inject him with fluids.

At home, I laid the poor kitty down in the bathroom and covered him with another old towel. I gave him 60 cc of the lactated Ringers solution and scratched him behind the ears.

He liked the scratching, didn't complain about the injection and just laid there.

I checked on him every now and then until bedtime, and Steve checked about 1 a.m.

At 4 a.m. I checked once more. He was gone.

It was the spring of 1992, I recalled, and Lacy wanted a cat. We heard there was one in a barn near the football practice field but that cat was

too wild to get near.

However, a pretty little female jumped in my arms and started to purr.

My husband pointed out that the cat was pregnant.

Lacy said he'd take one of the kittens. So in May, the female we named April Alice gave birth to five kittens in one of our closets.

Lacy took one of the males and named him Frank. He was a kind of light yellow, just like his mother. He grew to look like a slightly larger version of her, except with really big eyes.

The vet called the color butterscotch. We called them sand cats.

Lacy and Frank lived in Lawrence for about eight years, moving from apartment to apartment and roommate to roommate until the day came when the landlord said "no pets."

Lacy sent Frank home with us and started looking for a place to buy so that he and Frank would have a permanent home.

Lacy will surely find that permanent home but Frank, the big-eyed butterscotch cat he loved so much, won't get to join him.

Bracket going OK for first-timer

So my first foray into the world of NCAA tournament bracketing is going better than I expected, which is to say I've gotten about half the games right.

Not bad for a first timer. As I understand there was actual madness this March, with a lot of unexpected upsets, and some expected upsets that didn't materialize. That's pretty much how my bracket went. As we head into the final four, I've still got Kentucky and Ohio State, which I'm sure is a lot better than some folks brackets.

Things started off pretty good in the second round. The first day I only had three losses. Colorado State looked like a winner at first, but I guess they didn't realize that in basketball you have to play well in both halves to win. My loyalty to my school got the better of me there. The hated Boulder Buffalos also messed up my bracket, though not by much. Thankfully they got knocked off by Baylor in the third round.

Actually Wichita State's loss to VCU hurt me worse, as I had Wichita also winning in the third round. All in all though, with 13 wins out of 16, I had a good first day.

Day two, wasn't so good. The San Diego State upset threw off about half of my Midwest bracket. I had them going to the Sweet 16. But as long as North Carolina beat whomever did get there, I was still OK for the Final Four... but that didn't pan out either.

Then there was Duke. I didn't actually have Duke going very far, just to the Sweet 16 and then losing to Baylor, but still that was two losses for me. That whole corner my bracket was completely off since I had Notre Dame over Xavier.

The real shocker was Missouri losing to Norfolk State. I had Missouri going all the way to the Final Four, as I'm sure a lot of people



kevin bottrell

• simple tricks and nonsense

did. So that was four losses on my bracket after just one game. I was over in Burlington during that game to cover the Cowboys baseball game against the Cougars, but I was checking ESPN on my phone in between every inning.

Needless to say my West bracket is a mess. At least Marquette and Michigan State got me some wins, but then Michigan State got knocked off too.

That seemed to be the theme for me. With my research, I wasn't able to get a handle on upsets. The one's I picked, like Virginia over Florida or Belmont over Georgetown, didn't happen. At the same time, I didn't correctly predict the upsets that did happen, like Missouri losing to Norfolk State or Duke losing to Xavier.

Thankfully I also got a lot of good wins, like Kentucky, whom I have winning the Championship, and Syracuse. I had Syracuse advancing two rounds, which a lot of people didn't. A lot of people dismissed Syracuse after Fab Melo being declared ineligible, but I still had them beating UNC-Asheville and K-State. I had them losing to Vanderbilt in the Sweet 16, but that didn't exactly go as planned. Vanderbilt didn't make it to that game.

I got 100 percent of the Second Round games in the East bracket right. Then Vanderbilt and

Florida State lost, messing that one up.

So there we are. Going into the final four I have 34 wins out of 60 games, or 57 percent. That should really have been 35, as I only picked Colorado State out of loyalty. I really did expect them to lose. But all in all, I'm pretty pleased with it actually. I think it's decent for someone who had no real knowledge of college basketball and who only spent a few hours doing research online.

It's been fun watching the games as well. I, and several of my coworkers, spent a few bucks to get the NCAA tournament app, which allows us to watch all the games live. During the first few rounds we had a game or two on almost constantly at the office.

So what have I learned from all this? Well first thing is that you can expect the unexpected... to a point. There's still going to be a lot of no-brainers, like the fact that most times a No. 2 seed will beat a No. 15. Obviously that only happened three out of four times this year, so you have to introduce an element of whimsy into your bracket somewhere. Figuring out where that radical departure from the expected will occur is the really difficult part.

I doubt I'm still in the running for the contest, but that doesn't bother me so much. I just like knowing I did reasonably well without any background in "bracketology." And actually I'm doing better than the president. He had North Carolina to win the Championship. He should have picked Kansas again.

The Final Four is Saturday and I'm anxious to know if my Wildcats and Buckeyes can beat the Cardinals and Jayhawks. We'll just have to wait and see.

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