

from our viewpoint...

There’s a time ‘not to’ interview

Sometimes we scratch our head in disbelief
The other morning, while watching part of “Good Morning America” on ABC-TV, was one of those times.
Jason Williams, who sports enthusiasts know, is standing trial for the murder of his chauffeur. Of course he pleaded not guilty; nobody is ever guilty of anything. His trial is underway.
Enter: “Good Morning America.” They gave Williams’ wife a pulpit on which to spin the innocence of her husband. The network puppet who did the interview made note of the fact Mrs. Williams is pregnant with her second child and that she is an attorney. Mrs. Williams is not on trial; her husband is.
We thought it inappropriate to give his wife this venue to do all she could to sway the jury who, undoubtedly, were watching the interview. There’s a time to interview and a time not to. This was a “not to” day.
ABC-TV, in all fairness, should take its cameras to the homes of every person in the country on trial for murder and interview their families while their trials are in progress. But Williams is a man of note, worth millions, and people of that stature always find a way to get their message out to the widest possible “jury” — the public. While swaying the public of one’s innocence, the “swayer” knows that among the public are members of the jury.

Bingo! Don’t even need a card to win this game.
How often have we been exposed to members of Michael and Janet Jackson’s family? We can’t count that high. But at every turn their mug or the mug of brother Jermaine Jackson and family friends are shoved into our faces by the fair and balanced, the unfair and unbalanced and other media with too much time on their hands.
Criticize us as you may, but those who practice community journalism seldom need to downgrade their newspapers with stories about the Jacksons’ questionable kids, or wealthy and famous people charged with murder. We would rather print club notes, deaths, weddings, engagements, columns from community correspondents like Jean Lowe of Winona, Sally Michael of Brewster, Zula Horinek of Rexford and Lula Thieler of Fairview Estates. We print local sports, local front page stories that inform and sometimes call us into question, and couple all that with local photographs.
We don’t run to the courthouse to shove a microphone in the face of family, while a member is being tried for whatever, to get their views on why the defendant is innocent. That’s up to the judge, the jury and attorneys.
Not “Good Morning America.”

— Tom A. Dreiling

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nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(nbetz@nwkanssas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin.(support@nwkanssas.com)

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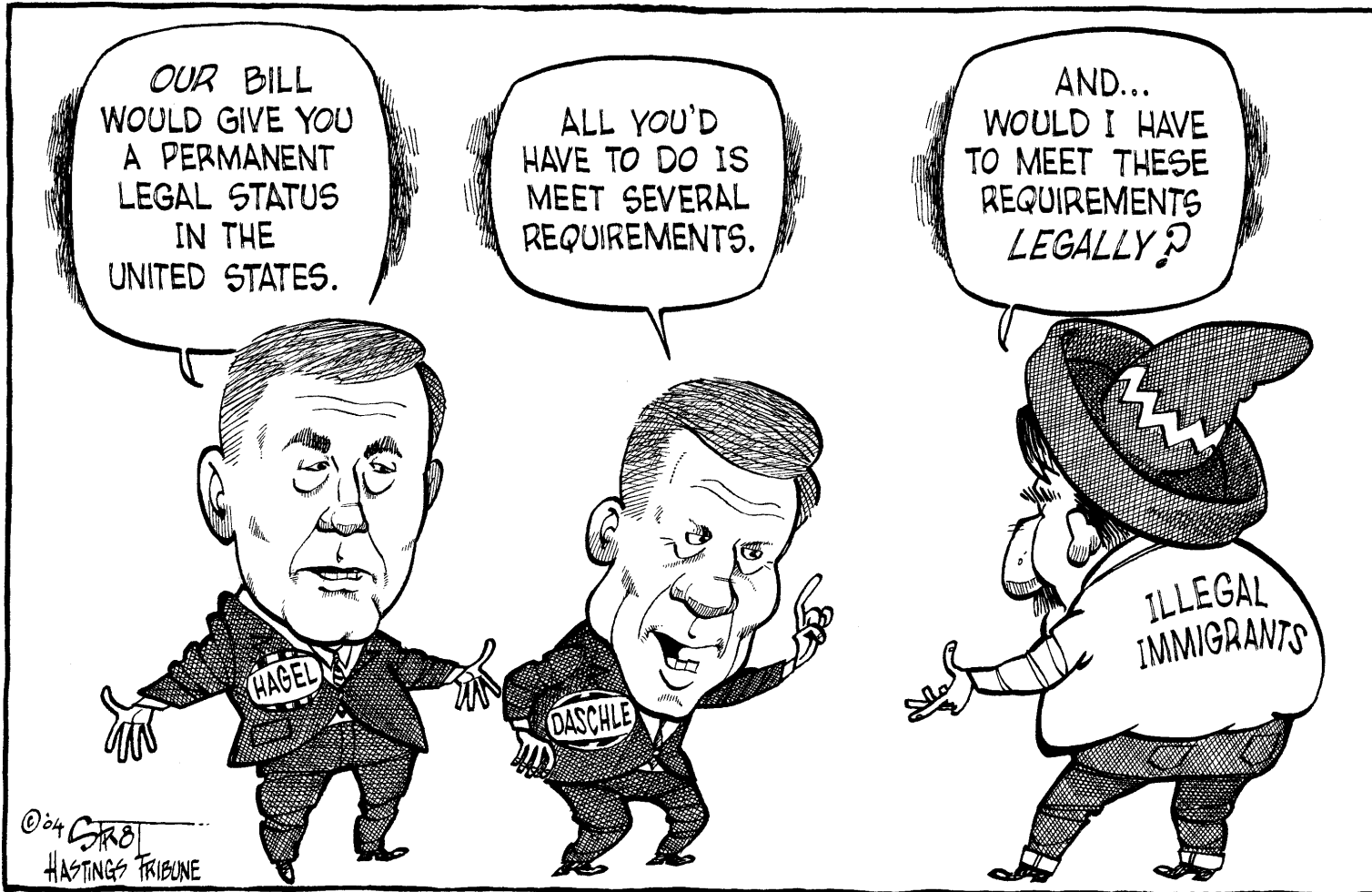
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I’m glad I missed the Super Bowl scandal

I don’t know about you, but I didn’t watch the Super Bowl.

I haven’t for years.

The times I did, the game was worse than a high school game.

It distresses me to think of professional players playing so poorly and getting paid so much, while they seem to see themselves above the rules and laws of society.

And the games are so long. With all the pre-game and post-game shows, they just stretch out forever.

I never was that interested in football in the first place.

All the hype about the commercials doesn’t entice me.

I shudder at the money spent on them, money that could help people who need help.

Some people say they watch just for the commercials. They need to get a life (in my opinion).



lorna
gt

• commentary

So I missed the big scandal created by Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake. (I have to admit I don’t even know who Justin is.)

I had heard the half-time show was going to be “shocking,” so I can’t believe for a minute the whole thing was a “costume failure.”

How do I feel about it all?

1) It couldn’t have been much worse than things I’ve seen on prime-time shows and/or daytime soap operas.

2) Why was anyone surprised when the words to the song they were performing went something like “I’ll have you naked by the end of this song”?

3) Why would anyone have stayed tuned to see the end of it anyway?

4) Why is a bare breast any worse than the obvious implications of the whole performance?

5) Did Janet have anything to show anyway?

6) Who even expected good taste or manners from MTV? MTV should be outlawed completely.

Maybe something good will come out of the whole fiasco.

For once, the game was better than the half-time show.

Maybe it woke people (and Congress) up to the downward spiral this country’s morals are taking.

Maybe the pendulum will begin swinging back to respect for others, good taste and good manners.

I used to be proud of our country; I’d like to be again.

Carthage view stretches for 3,000 years

From the hill at Carthage, you can see 3,000 years of history.

The cathedral built by the French stands barely above the bare floors and broken columns of Roman temples.

Over the crest of the hill, toward the sea, archeologists have unearthed the walls of Phoenician houses. The round harbor where the great Punic war boats were shedded lies off in the distance.

The cathedral, abandoned when the French left in 1956, is a cultural center now. A new mosque rises down the slope to the north, amidst more Roman columns and tall pines.

Across the bay rises the modern city of Tunis and the old, walled city, with its ancient mosque, and the wonderful intricate alleys of the souk, where merchants herd visitors into their stalls.

From the hill at Carthage, you can see for miles — the mountains to the west, where German defenders dug in during World War II, the bay, the electric trains speeding commuters home for the evening across a causeway.

The Tunisians wish a lot more of us would come take in this view, which is one reason why they invited a delegation of American editors to spend a week in their land.

By all accounts, Tunisians are fond of Americans, though they do not see many of us. Only about 10,000 Americans a year venture to Tunisia, most of them on cruise ships plying the Mediterranean. That compares to nearly a million visitors each from Germany, France and Italy and a total of 5 million tourists a year.

Tunisians are among the world’s greatest traders, and they know a good market when they see one. 300 million Americans looks like a tourism bonanza, and tourism is vital to economic growth. The problem is getting Americans here when nearby resorts offer the same palm trees and blue water.

Like many nations, Tunisia is building resorts and harbors as fast as it can. Few Americans come, probably because few Americans



steve
haynes

• along the sappa



Broken Columns line the site of a Roman temple atop the hill of Carthage. The view out to sea is spectacular.

know much about Tunisia.

I knew only a little more when I was invited on this trip. I knew that Tunisia was the site of Carthage, the great trading city-state of pre-Christian times. I knew that it was in North Africa, and that it had been the site of one of the bloodiest battles of the early days of World War II. I knew that it was a Moslem, Arab country of moderate size and moderate views.

I had a lot to learn, but from his office downtown, Oussama Romdhani paints you a picture of modern Tunisia. American-educated, Mr. Romdhani is director general of the Tunisian External Communication Agency. The morning after our arrival, he welcomes us in his conference room.

The picture he paints is astounding, but the statistics are easily verified with outside sources. About the size of Georgia, and slightly farther north, Tunisia has about 17 million people. Independent only since 1956, Tunisia has built a society that is prosperous and literate.

Economic growth averages 5 percent, nearly all children go to school and 31 percent go to college, with the goal set at half. While few homes have telephones, most now have electricity, running water — and television dishes. The country is considered 80 percent middle class and only 4 percent live in poverty. Women have equal rights with men, a rarity in the Arab world, and moderation is the national heritage.

Nearly everyone speaks at least two languages, and three or four are common. Children learn Arabic, then start French in first or second grade. English is added by fifth grade. It’s only 70 miles from Tunis to Sicily, and Italian television has taught many to speak another tongue.

On the street, most women walk uncovered. Dress is western, with a touch of Tunisian class and a strong undercurrent of more traditional attire.

Tunisians, Mr. Romdhani says, have a split image of the United States: We stand for social progress, technology, education, art, culture, and music. Our foreign policy raises questions, especially our support of Israel.

The north half of Tunisia is green and subtropical, with pine-covered mountains to the west and hundreds of miles of sandy beaches along the Mediterranean, though Tunis is almost as far north as Wichita. The country produces olives, oranges and oil. The southern half shades into the trackless and thinly inhabited Sahara.

Tunisians are intensely proud of all this. They have been dealing with the world since Princess Elissa-Dido sailed here from Tyre in 814 B.C. Their country has been conquered or ruled by Phoenicians, Romans, Vandals and Visigoths, Greeks and Turks, the French, who held colonial sway in this century, and of course, the Arabs, who swept out of their homeland in the 7th century all the way to Spain.

All those who came left their mark, and their heritage. We must go and see.

garfield

