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**Capitol View
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**The Nebraska Press Association**

**Let’s Stop and Look at What it Means to be a Nebraskan**

Here we are, hours away from another University of Nebraska Cornhusker football season. Weeks away from another seasonal change as leaves start falling and the air gets crisper. The hot days will soon be behind us.

It’s a great time to look at what it means to be a Nebraskan, one of those “honestly it’s not for everyone” residents in one of those mostly square states out west that most people couldn’t find on an unmarked map … and we like it that way! Fly-over country where cows outnumber people.

What does it mean to be a Nebraskan? We’re largely and thankfully insulated from the rancor of national politics. Presidential candidates flock to our next-door neighbor, Iowa, but rarely cross the Missouri River – even when it isn’t in perpetual flood stage. There is minimal fuss about our U.S. Senators Fischer and Sasse, with the latter more often garnering national commentary than the former.

Nebraska is a mostly Republican state. Has been for most of the seven-plus decades I can remember. Exon, Kerrey, Morrison and Nelson were all Democrat governors who exhibited enough centrist qualities to win over sufficient Republican support to get elected. A few Republican governors have really pushed the party label, the last two being the most blatant to the point of “punishing” Republican senators and elected officials who dared stray from the national model, whatever that may be.

It comes as no surprise then that state Sen. John McCollister of Omaha, a Republican in the officially non-partisan Nebraska Legislature, has drawn the wrath of party loyalists and been featured in the national media for recently speaking up and saying his own party enables white supremacy. In short, this

**For Release Wednesday, August 28, 2019 – Page 2**

isn’t his father’s Republican Party. His dad, John Y. McCollister, was a beloved member of the U.S. House of Representatives for years.

The younger McCollister said he had to speak up because he didn’t want history to reflect that no one said anything. Good for him. That, my friends, is very Nebraskan of him… and quite appropriate given the national mess we call politics.

So, when do we learn to tolerate and when do we learn to speak up? This topic recently came up at coffee with a Chicano friend from my hometown. He was two years ahead of me in school. We lived in different areas of that western Nebraska town. We took separate career paths, but recently reconnected socially.

Our coffee conversation concluded that most people didn’t “hate” each other then, or now. “We knew who the rich kids were and where they lived and we rarely had contact with them,” my friend said.

That, we concluded, was more about class than race. Perhaps that’s still a problem in Nebraska. If so, let’s address it. Think about what John McCollister said.

Let’s take a hard look at our politics. Let’s take an even harder look at how we treat one another. Let’s establish and adopt a Nebraska way to do things … a non-judgmental, non-partisan way of dealing with people and solving problems.

We can do this. Let’s get on with it!

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