

## Candidates tell us what they hope to accomplish, if elected

Scenes from the meet-the-candidates day: For a bunch of glad-handers, the candidates don't seem too eager to meet new people. I have to collar the ones I haven't met. If they are reticent, though, it passes by the time they get on stage.

The thought strikes us that we might be able to make some observation that would make every candidate cringe. That should be popular. Norton's Doug Sebelius came across as the most liberal of the lot. That's no surprise. He's always been seen as a member of the GOP's "left" wing.

His ideas on taxation — adding a "super rate" to the current income tax to soak the rich, and "decoupling" the state income tax from the federal system so the state could decide its own deductions — would make a Democrat proud.

Mr. Sebelius made it pretty clear he thinks it will take a tax increase to solve the state's budget problems. His talk of making rural Kansas more attractive to families made sense, but he didn't really say how to do that.

By contrast, the Democrat in the race, Norcatur's Bob Strevey, focused on the philosophical issues of the school battle, not something most of us think about.

There are those rallying against a school tax increase, he said, who just don't like public education. They want private schools, church schools, home schools or no schools, but not public schools. He's right about that: some of these people have an agenda. Most of the conservatives just don't want to raise taxes, though.

The conservatives — Reps. John Faber, running against Sebelius and Strevey for re-election, and Rep. Ralph Ostmeyer, running for the Senate — pointed out that they voted for a House plan that would have added nearly \$200 per student to school districts' spending base. That would produce nearly \$100,000 a year in Oberlin.

Mr. Faber, a former school board member who traditionally is more generous on school spending than some conservatives, said it made him sad to come home without any money for schools.

Mr. Ostmeyer said at least they had "held education harmless" while cutting other programs.

Mr. Sebelius and Goodland's Dan Rasure, like the Senate and the governor, criticized the House plan as "smoke and mirrors," robbing one budget to pad another. Most likely, they are right.

Mr. Sebelius was well spoken and made his case clearly, as befits an experienced trial lawyer. (A prosecutor, though, and not one of those contingent-fee hucksters.) He was the best-spoken of the House candidates.

The Senate side did not win glory as orators. Mr. Rasure was nervous and halting, and he misspoke a couple of times. He said, for instance, there was an effort to bring a Veterans Administration hospital to the district, when he meant a clinic.

Several in the audience of 40 said later that they were impressed with his youth and his enthusiasm, however.

Rep. Ostmeyer rambled so long, the host, Mike Matson of the Farm Bureau, was ready to give him the hook. He made it clear that he wasn't going to push for a tax increase for schools. As the state's economy improves, he said, it will provide enough money to take care of necessities. That's a perceptive view: just wait, and the problem will go away, but he's probably right.

Rep. Faber was, well, Rep. Faber. He's held the seat for eight years now. He beat both his opponents last time, and unless one of them learns to knock on doors, there's no reason to believe he won't do it again.

Like the Senate race, though, it's too early to tell who will pull out ahead.

And that Senate scramble? Rep. Ostmeyer probably is better known and has better party connections. His experience is his main campaign plank.

Dan Rasure has his enthusiasm and, for a new college graduate, a great deal of political and government experience. His uncertainty before a crowd should fade. He impresses people as bright, dedicated and sincere.

Democrat Tim Peterson starts out behind, but he has farm connections. Still, it's a Republican seat to lose.

For now, though, it's a race. Now, have we missed anyone?

— Steve Haynes



## Summer camp is a great place for kids

Granddaughter Alexandria went to church camp two weeks ago, Angelia left Sunday for her week away, and Chantelle is "on deck" waiting her turn next Sunday.

— ob —

I think it does children so much good to have a time that is just theirs. It's important for them to make friends on their own. Angelia is 13 and a very self-confident young lady in most areas, but when it came to going to camp, she had some misgivings. "Grandma, I won't know anybody there."

Remembering how I felt going away to my first camp, I devised a plan to introduce her to some other girls going to camp. The Saturday night before they were to leave, I made some phone calls and in short order, we had a pizza party organized.

It didn't take long before the girls were talking and sharing stories about school like they had known each other for years. The next day, waiting to load the bus, I took their picture. They struck their "Rockette" pose and had their arms around each others' necks like kids always do when they're acting goofy for pictures.

Of course, there were boys going, too, a fact that was not lost on the girls. And, I'm not too old to notice that the boys were being pretty observant themselves. At this age, it's amusing how differently the two

### Out Back Carolyn Plotts



genders handle the same situation. Boys get quiet, shove their hands in their pockets and kind of shuffle along. Girls, on the other hand, get giggly, pushy and louder. How it all ever works is a miracle. But, somehow, it does.

— ob —

Driving to town the other day, Jim said, "This rain has just ruined that little corn." "Are you nuts?" I asked in my most demure manner.

"Well, look at it," he said, "It's gone and made big corn out of it."

It's true. The corn has, literally, shot up, and seemingly overnight. I would imagine if you had the patience to sit and watch a single corn stalk for a day, you could actually see it grow. Pastures are green, farm ponds are filling up, terraces stand full, lawns don't need much watering, and farmers seem to have a little bounce in their step again.

It's too late for the wheat, of course, but the moisture will help the corn, milo and alfalfa. Too soon to say the drought has

been broken, but nobody would give a drop back.

— ob —

When my mother died, I heard from more than one person that the trait they most admired in her was that she never said anything negative about anyone. I was taking a little break this morning and ran across an excerpt from her book that spells out her philosophy. She wrote this Oct. 16, 1941:

"A lot of people spend a lot of time discussing the faults of the rest of the people. I imagine almost any one of you, if you will just stop and think, will realize that you have heard something not quite complimentary about every single person you know. It's a shame, instead of discussing the shade of hair Mrs. Whatsername is wearing now, we don't just speak of the beautiful fancywork she does. Instead of telling how Mr. Doe, from over north, spends all he makes and then some, and never keeps his harness repaired, or takes such poor care of his tools, we might remark that he thinks the world of his children, and carries the wash water for his wife. I think we're all of us overworked, overtired, overnervous, and oversensitive. We're forever letting little things worry us, and the trouble is, we're all so alike we can't see that."

I needed to be reminded of that. Thanks, Mom.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

### Almena man thinks local candidate is the right choice

Letter to the Editor: Elections. Are they hindrances and the stuff from which an irritation is made? Or are they truly the sustaining lifeblood of freedom — both the ideal and the reality?

I like to think that our expressions of disillusionment and disgust during election time is a natural part of the dynamics that formed the American culture and shaped our government. Despite recent events that have prompted some at home and abroad to decry that our society is cruel and colonizing, most of the world still hears and sings America's song of freedom, understands the hope it represents and the compassion it feels.

Let me make one thing clear. On our soil, the people are a disaffected and subservient group separated from their government.

The government is a body of collective servants of the people. Our image, however, is often shaped by what elected leaders accomplish, or fail to accomplish, as the case may be. More importantly, the future and the well-being of the people are shaped by leaders.

This brings me to my point. I have a friend seeking the office of state representative, Doug Sebelius, who is the person I feel we need in public office. Over the years I've come to know him as a principled and dedicated public servant of high integrity. As a County Attorney for more than 23 years, he has earned a reputation as both tough and fair-minded, commanding the respect and confidence

of his colleagues.

I believe that we need someone like Doug in the Kansas Legislature who will be dedicated to providing the children of this state with a high quality public education. He knows that the people are tired of a bickering, do-nothing legislature, which only pays lip service to the notion of a good education system. Rural schools need protection and he'll fight for their future.

Doug wants to push lawmakers to confront the challenges of finding a responsible and fair method of balancing the state's budget, without more gimmicks. As he puts it, a commitment to working for a livable balance between administering essential government services, a revenue policy and no-frills efficiency. He also has his eye on pushing state government to place more of the state's government services delivery system in Northwest Kansas, where an equitable share of it and its jobs belong.

I also know that Doug is keenly aware of the needs of our society's most vulnerable citizens; the elderly, the disabled and our youth. I know that he will work to see that adult care homes, assisted living facilities and home health care providers get the support that's required. And one of the best ways to protect our children, he believes, is to strike back at the serious substance abuse problem we have, particularly methamphetamine, by providing the best enforcement training, forensic science, equipment and public education

system we can.

Doug's love and concern for the beauty and natural resources of Kansas has led him to his present service on the state's Wildlife & Parks Commission. He is firmly committed to conservation, public recreation, wildlife habitat, parks and promoting tourism. I noted a sense of urgency when we talked about water issues. Believe me, Doug clearly understands the serious need to establish a water policy that emphasizes sustainability; that means, he says, practicing the stewardship God intends. His work on the new pool agreement between the State and the Almena Irrigation District was key to its success. The agreement may become the template for other conservation projects across Kansas.

Now I know there are those out there who would consider me some kind of political extremist. However, quite the contrary, I am just a concerned citizen who wants only the very best for our state and all of Northwest Kansas inclusive.

You see, I know Doug Sebelius, his values and his vision for making things better in the lives of the average Kansan. He's a man of faith and deep convictions, living a calling to public service.

The choice to vote in this great land, as well as to what candidate to vote for, is personal. But as for me, I shall cast my vote for the man I feel will help build a better Kansas—Doug Sebelius.

Abner E. Williams  
Almena

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