

Race for House seat tough nut to crack

An open seat in the U.S. House of Representatives is a tough nut to crack. In a district like the Kansas First, when there's an open seat, no one likely candidate can step up and fill it. There's no one known across that massive area that everyone will recognize and want to vote for.

There really isn't anyone with statewide name recognition, so what you get is people with a little fame around their home town: state legislators, businessmen and women, city and county government officials, educators and others. With a district as large as the 69-county First, you'd be hard pressed to find someone who is really known across the district, which is what we've seen this year. Alan Jilka and Monte Shadwick might be well known in Salina, where they've both served on the city commission, but they are less well known or even unknown in Colby, Emporia or Liberal.

This problem was well illustrated at a candidate forum Monday on Smoky Hills Public Television. We had seven candidates in the Republican primary and one in the Democratic primary, all up on stage together. Unless the viewer really followed politics, he or she might recognize one or two of the names, but the rest would blur together.

So each candidate had to work to distinguish himself or herself from the rest. Tim Huelskamp, a state senator from Fowler, in southwest Kansas, even opened with that Monday night, trying to list the ways he is different from his competition.

So was anyone successful? Did any one of Snow White and the Seven Dwarves rise above the rest? The answer is: not really. The Republicans stuck to their Republican principals. They all talked down the national health care law, advocating health-care reform aimed at affordability and accessibility. Almost all of them put forward the attitude that Kansas knows better than Washington. Shadwick and Sue Boldra came out for term limits. They were against "cap and trade" limits on fossil fuel across the board. Rob Wasinger called that "nonsense."

Jilka, as the sole Democrat, distinguished himself somewhat by default. He portrayed himself as a centrist while the others held to the right. He supported his party's health care bill while opposing cap and trade. He joined the Republicans in several issues like the national debt and immigration, but said immigration needed to be handled delicately because much of the economy of southwest Kansas depends on immigrant labor. Everyone said they would balance the budget.

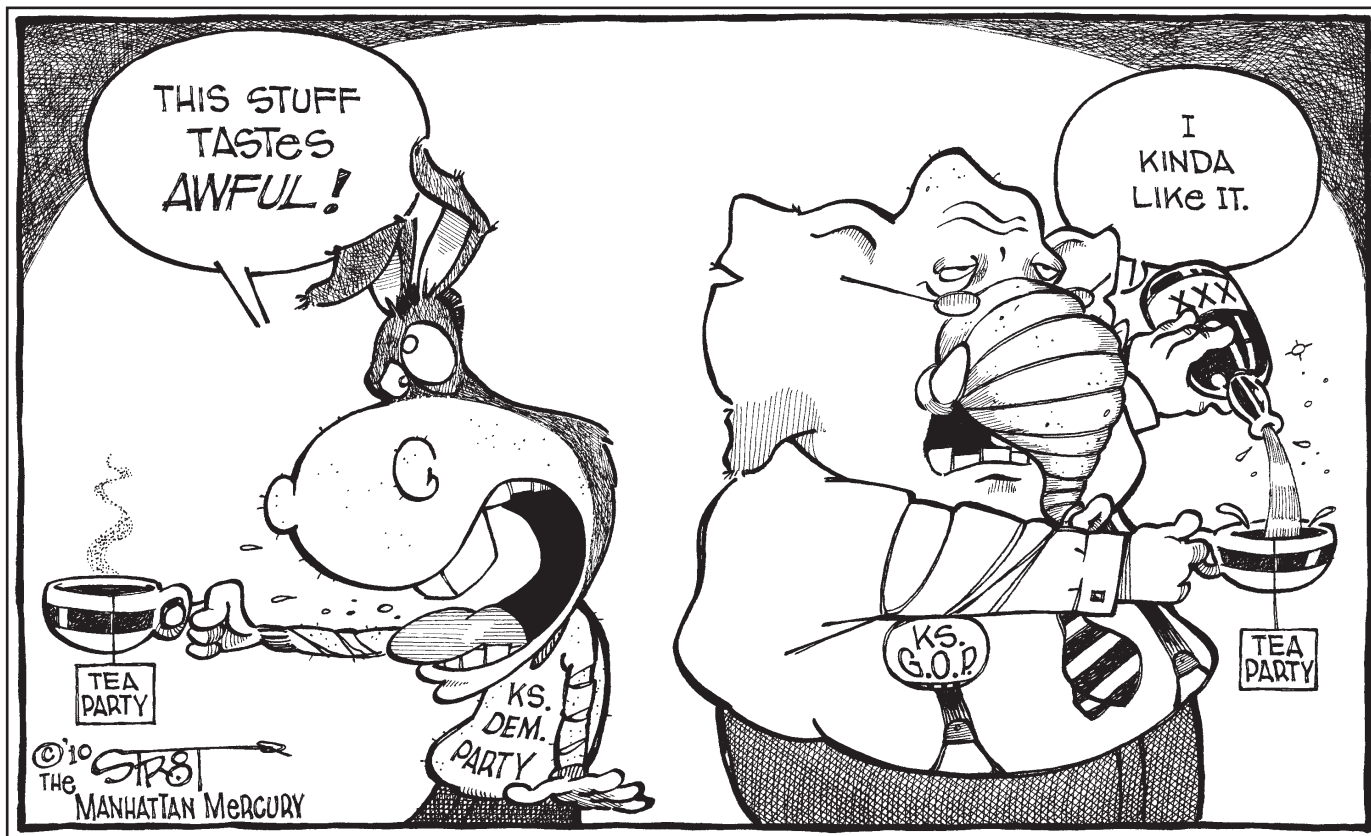
Were there any bold proposals? New ideas that make you think? Not many. But is it a good or bad thing to have many candidates so close in their attitudes? Both.

It's good in that Republican voters have a lot of choice, but instead of coming down to issues it'll come down to the person. Do they want a fighter or a negotiator? Do they want a man or a woman? Do they want someone who lives closer to them?

But when the general election rolls around, the Republicans will be running a candidate who probably got less than 30 percent of the party's votes. More competition lessens the chance that the GOP candidate will have a mandate.

As for the Democrats, having one voice articulating that side of the debate can either set him apart — or allow him to be drowned out. We'll have to wait and see what happens.

— Kevin Bottrell



Parents growing up

I thought I had it all figured out. I thought that my morals, my walk with God and my determination, especially my love, along with my husband's would ensure that our five teenagers would escape the perils and problems of post-modern teenage life.

I was wrong. Very wrong. We thought if we sheltered them well we would protect them from the evil influences that plague our society. Like the movie, "The Village" (which I highly recommend), you can run away, but you can't hide from your own humanity.

I believe we've been pretty good parents. But, we've also made some mistakes. The bottom line is that we love them and want them to become fulfilled adults as they discover all their unique personalities, giftings and purposes that God has given them.

My husband and I are just emerging from two years of fear and frustration, grief and heartache as we watched and tried to help our teens as they struggled with over-whelming emotions, suicidal thoughts, cutting, being hurt and hurting others, relationships and 'coming of age' confusion and . . . a very acute sense of . . . hopelessness. The suicide of a teen



friend in this community exemplified and amplified the grief and sorrow they were already feeling. Many of our teens in this community were feeling this grave sense of hopelessness before and after that tragedy. We still grieve his loss and we still wonder why and how could we have stopped it. All the while wondering if my own would follow in his footsteps.

I had never experienced hopelessness . . . ushered in by helplessness. We didn't seem able to help them . . . to stop the onslaught of 'drama' that seemed to engulf the whole family. We sought outside help and counsel. We prayed, and we cried. I thought God didn't exist or didn't care . . . for a whole half hour. I had never experienced that before. I still remember the day my husband and I were driving home,

silent tears streaming down our faces, wondering if we could hang on.

We did. And they are. Though the intensity has died down, and a sense of purpose and hope is coming back, we still pray and we still cry. I still read, I still ask for help. I still examine my parenting and my purpose.

When my children were young they were ours. It's a safe world of family, friends and church. But as they got older we realized they were their own person. They would have to go through the pain and agony of emerging into adulthood in this very ill society. And we have to go through it with them.

I am sorry for my arrogance to myself and toward others in believing that I had all the right answers and was doing all the right things so we would escape this trial in our lives.

My purpose in submitting this article is to encourage parents of teens that are experiencing what we have that there is hope, that tho' weeping may endure for the evening, joy comes in the morning'. Please don't give up on them or you. I'm not, and I won't.

Robin Somers Norton

A small herd

We have gone from having one lonely calf into an entire herd. If you can call four calves a herd.

Jim headed to the sale barn last week to find a pen-mate for the calf our friend, Dave, brought to us. Instead, he came home with three calves.

The first two he bought at regular price, but the third was a sick, little runt that didn't draw a single bid. When the auctioneer asked if anyone would give ten dollars, Jim's hand went up and he said, "Yeah, I'll take a chance on him."

I'm afraid the little guy didn't make it. But, it wasn't for lack of our trying to save him. He had antibiotics, electrolytes and round-the-clock feedings. He was just too far "gone" when we got him. However, the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. No sooner had I told Jim about the little calf dying than the phone rang. It was our friend, Dave. Did we have room for one more calf? He had a calf whose mother wasn't producing enough milk for it. So, the "herd" remains at four.

Guess what we've named them? Because the calf was born in the month of April, a friend suggested "April" for the heifer we got first. We liked that and named the next heifer "May" and the little bull calf, "Junior." If the new calf is a bull he will be "Julio," if a heifer, "Julie."

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



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I've really "torn into" cleaning out the basement. That means unpacking boxes I put down there about eight years ago when we started the addition. I've found a few things I want to keep, but, for the most part, it's going to the thrift store. If I haven't needed it for eight years, I certainly don't need it now.

Imagine my excitement when I found the pan I use for Chinese cooking. I set it on the floor of the kitchen while I continued to unpack other boxes. It needed to be washed before taking its place in the cabinet with the other pots and pans. And, there it sat. For days. Son, James, was helping carry in groceries and as he turned around in the kitchen his foot caught the pan and he almost went down. I apologized for leaving it out and said, "Oh, dear. Do you think I could have left that in a worse place?" James answered, "That's okay. I was caught between a "wok" and a hard place."

Office hours:

8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (785) 877-3361
Fax: (785) 877-3732
E-mail:
nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

STAFF

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Hope springs eternal

Insight

John Schlageck

Mother Nature has broken into full bloom once again shedding her brown winter coat and replacing it with green garments featuring corn, soybeans and milo. With the arrival of longer days, brilliant sunshine and warmer temperatures, hope springs eternal and enthusiasm for a future harvest reaches a fever pitch.

The "Old Girl" has cooperated this spring and Kansas farmers had been logging long hours in their fields preparing for next fall's crops.

Looking at the three major fall crops, 32 percent of the corn has been planted as of the end of April. This is right on target and approximately 4.7 million acres of corn will be planted. That amounts to a 15 percent increase in corn acreage from one year ago.

Kansas farmers began planting soybeans the last week of April and will continue through the first couple weeks of May. Projected planting acres total 4.1 million. That figure represents an additional 11 percent from last year.

Generally grain sorghum goes in the Kansas soil last. Farmers usually start planting during the first week of May. Approximately 1 percent is planted and 2.7 million acres are projected to be planted across Kansas. This is the same as last year.

April and May are busy months across the Sunflower State. Red and green tractors, some sporting large egg-shaped

saddle tanks, are rolling across the Kansas countryside. Filled with herbicides, these tanks slowly empty or spray crop protectants so corn, milo and soybeans can grow without competition from weeds.

Insecticides will be applied in fields from southeastern Kansas to the far northwest. Application of these pesticides should result in clean fields of corn, milo and beans. Farmers apply these crop protectants to control nibbling critters in an attempt to raise yields at harvest.

Today's farmers take seriously safe usage and application of herbicides and pesticides. To apply these crop protectants, agricultural producers must attend classes and pass tests to become certified as applicators.

Farmers work closely with crop consultants and local extension service specialists when applying herbicides, insecticides and fertilizers. They've cut their usage significantly in recent years.

With the price of agricultural inputs, they cannot afford to put on more than needed. Some farmers believe they have cut chemical usage by nearly 40 percent in the last decade.

Farmers work diligently to safely apply pesticides within guidelines set by the

federal government and manufacturers. Unfortunately they are sometimes blamed or singled out as the cause of pollution, especially in our state's waterways.

Without question, pesticides must continually be tested. It is important to update all pesticide registrations, to ensure their effectiveness and safety. New regulations should take into consideration the needs of the people who handle and apply them as well as the safety of those products.

Farmers understand the use of chemicals and treat them with care. After all, they are the first ones to come in contact with them.

From planting through harvest, farmers do their best to provide nutritious, safe food. They battle weather, weeds, insects and disease. Their own efficiency is their best defense against unstable world markets, political barriers and fringe groups who attack their farming methods, yet know little about their profession.

While spring signals the arrival of life and a new beginning in farm country, Americans should always remember that this time of year also signifies the wonder that starts in the fields and finishes on the dining room table.

John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Your political connection

- ★ **Governor Mark Parkinson**, 300 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-3232
- ★ **U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; fax (202) 224-3514
- ★ **U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521
- ★ **U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2443 Rayburn HOB,

Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; fax (202) 225-5124

★ **State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, Room 262-E, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7399

★ **State Rep. John Faber**, 181 W. Capitol Building, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7500

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