

## How one gets to where they are going

How did I end up in Aurora, Colo.? Fair question. After all, it took me 44 years to get here. Hint: Hand fed press. Typewriter. Camera with flash bulbs. And so it goes. Or should I say, and so it went.

Those were the ingredients for producing a newspaper when I decided, way back when, to move into this thing called journalism, nudged partly by one of my professors at then Fort Hays Kansas State Teachers College (or something like that). She, Mrs. Rogers, saw something in me I didn't.

So, armed with a college educational experience and just knowing the world was awaiting my arrival, I set out to make a name for myself, not giving any thought to the 'names' I would sometimes be called.

I was hired by The Ellis County Farmer, a Hays-based weekly newspaper which, during my tenure, was renamed The Ellis County Star. I did a little bit of everything and due to my love of sports, I covered a lot of high school football and basketball. During the summer months, thanks in large part to a friend, Arlen Walters, I became associated with the Hays Larks passing along information on the team to a couple of area news outlets. Arlen was a member of the team, and I should say a gifted and talented member.

Games were played at the baseball field in south Hays. Early in my reporting I began using the name Larks Park. That was a lot shorter to write than the name it then had which was something like the Hays City Municipal Baseball Field. I had stationery and envelopes printed carrying that name, which caught on and is being used even today.

Whatever I was doing at The Star caught the attention of Bob McFarlin, editor of The Hays Daily News. So one day we talked. A few days later I was on the staff of Bob's newspaper. Wow! A daily newspaper. Of course the responsibilities were greater. I started as sports reporter and photographer. The slow hand-fed press operation I was used to at The Star, was replaced by a press at The Daily News I never imagined existed. Big, fast and yes, noisy.

But boy did it ever turn out the papers! During my tenure at the daily, I eventually moved up to the position of city editor.

Who was it that said, "Go West, young man, go West!" Well I did. I went to the six-day a week daily paper at Goodland, The Goodland Daily News which also had a companion weekly called The Sherman County Herald. I edited both papers while serving as a general assignment reporter and photographer. Whew!

I stayed out 'West' for the remainder of my 44-year career, at newspapers in Sheridan, Wyoming and in Kansas at Colby and Norton.

I often think back at the beginning of my career when the ingredients consisted of a typewriter, a hand-fed press, and a camera with flash bulbs. Today the technology used to put out a newspaper causes me to shake my head in disbelief. And I wonder where that technology will go in the years ahead.

Without question, the most unforgettable day of my career was the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas. I was on the desk at The Hays Daily News finalizing the front page. Suddenly, the Associated Press machine in my office rang out five bells. That signals a bulletin. I pushed my chair back to the machine and it said, "President shot." I shook my head to make sure what I just read was what I just read. Minutes later, another five bells, and another brief note. "President rushed to hospital." Then the final bells, three in number indicating a flash, the AP's top priority: "President Kennedy is dead."

The hours after that announcement were spent reshaping that day's front page. That issue of the paper was put out in silence. We were all in shock. That unforgettable day remains with me as though it just happened yesterday.

So, back to the opening question, how did Aurora, Colo. figure in my retirement decision? Well, choosing a place to live out the remaining years, was a challenge. I had two kids living in Centennial, Colo., and one in Spokane, Wash., at Fairchild AFB.

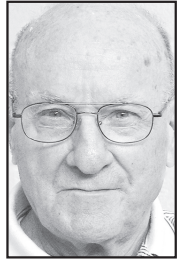
I was at Norton when that topic was being tossed around, so I decided I'd go back to the community I spent more time in than any other, Goodland. My sons, Lance (the Air Force guy) and Todd, in business in Centennial, moved me to Goodland from Norton.

But a strange thing happened during that move. Lance, a master sergeant, received a phone call from his base at Fairchild to inform him he was being transferred to - guess where? Buckley AFB at Aurora! Can you believe that? Needless to say that phone call changed everything. I knew then that I would be retiring in that vicinity. Aurora and Centennial are adjoining communities (all three kids and 5 grandkids live in Centennial).

So here I sit writing this column from a truly great location, Aurora. And each day I ask myself the same question: Why did it take me this long to find this place? If you are a believer like me, I think it was the guy 'upstairs' who gave me the patience to endure while he was putting everything together.

Your comments on anything that appears in your favorite newspaper coming from my computer, are always appreciated, regardless of the tone. Simply give me a call at 720 570-6197 or email me at <mailto:milehitom@hotmail.com>milehitom@hotmail.com

Stop  
Look  
Listen  
Tom Dreiling



## Preservation of wildlife or livelihood

### Insight

John Schlageck

In a conflict that has escalated during the last half dozen years, a handful of property owners are cooperating with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service trying to restore wildlife in and around Logan County. They are pitted against local ranchers and governments who see such actions as a threat to their way of life and economic livelihood.

This confrontation reflects the long-held belief - more than 100 years - on the great High Plains that prairie dogs remain an unwanted varmint that eats grass needed to fatten cattle. Left unchecked, prairie dogs can be carriers of the plague and have turned some pastureland into barren wastelands that resemble a moonscape.

When the wind blows hard, and it always does, some of these pastures blow, resulting in dust storms that resemble the "Dirty '30s" according to some inhabitants of this region of the state. This results in wind erosion of our valuable topsoil.

The majority of the people living here would like to continue to see enforcement of a century-old state law allowing the county to send exterminators onto their land, and even some of their neighbors where large prairie dog populations reside. If they can't control these fast-breeding critters they'll soon destroy even more grassland and diminish local property values.

And if that isn't enough, the Environmental Protection Agency has taken another stab at reducing the usage of Rozol, probably the most effective and efficient product for controlling prairie dogs.

The practice of using mechanical baiters to apply Rozol in prairie dog mounds is being denied. The Environmental Protection Agency has decided to adhere to the strict labeling on Rozol that states, hand application of bait at least six inches down prairie dog burrows.

Used to be in Kansas, farmers/stockmen and county employees could use mechanical means in their attempts to control prairie dogs. They were never limited to "hands only."

Such limitations on western Kansas cattlemen would be economically devastating. Application of Rozol with a bucket and ladle is a no-win situation for livestock producers who want to keep the prairie dogs out of their pastures so they can keep the grassland for their cattle.

"It becomes a matter of efficiency," says Mike Irvin, Kansas Farm Bureau Legal Foundation director. "Hand application is too time consuming and will result in far fewer acres being covered."

Denny Mackley works as Logan County director for noxious weeds and prairie dogs. Using a mechanical applicator attached to a four-wheel SUV, Mackley can cover approximately five acres or 250 holes in 45 minutes. That amounts to between 50-60 acres a day. By hand this would take nearly seven days.

Fewer acres treated means more prairie

dog infestation. More prairie dogs means less grass, less gain on livestock, lower land values and less money in the local coffers.

This battle pits the economic interests of ranchers versus benefits to a species that is not a designated threatened or endangered species and is still thriving on the High Plains of western Kansas. The issue is complicated even further by the private property rights of landowners.

Licensed individuals have been using mechanical baiters without incidence of off-label use or secondary hazard to wildlife for years, according to Steve Swaffar, Kansas Farm Bureau Natural Resources director. These mechanical devices provide a reliable and precise application method that ensures application is performed in a safe manner specific to label requirements.

"Mechanical baiters reduce the chances of exposure to humans by compartmentalizing the bait and reduce the chances of accidental human error during application," Swaffar says.

Landowners, livestock producers and farm organizations have requested a "Special Local Need" registration be issued to allow these farmers and ranchers to continue to manage their land in a time-honored fashion.

The Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) has indicated it will negotiate on behalf of livestock producers on the requested special local need. Swaffar believes KDA supports the use of the mechanical device.

Stay tuned.

## Leaving a lasting impression on those around us

It doesn't seem right that the weather was so bad on the day of Jim's dad's funeral. But, it was. We had it all: snow, wind and cold. The good news is: it was a wonderful celebration of his long life.

Jim conducted the service in accordance with Dad's wishes that a family member say the last words and sing his favorite songs. At the end of the service, Jim opened the floor to anyone who wanted to share memories of his father. Most of the grandchildren spoke, offering remembrances of their grandpa revolving around him and his dog, old tractors or their mischievous antics at his home. A common thread mentioned by several was the example of Christian manhood he set. What a testimony!

So, when you think no one is paying attention, remember it's the way you live your life that makes an impression on people. Your children, grandchildren, friends and family are all watching.

-ob-

Ever notice how children will sometimes mis-interpret a word to mean something entirely different than what it was meant to?

I had invited a friend to share Christmas dinner with us. She was far from family and would have spent the day alone. She came early to help get the meal on the table and saw I had prepared a pan of what I call "scaloped" potatoes. Jim calls them "scalped" potatoes but, that's

## Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



not what I'm referring to.

Kassiday said her mother always called them "au gratin" potatoes but, her little brother called them "all rotten" potatoes. She went on to say that one year her brother asked if they needed to buy the potatoes early for Christmas dinner so they would have plenty of time to get rotten.

I about gagged at the thought of eating a rotten potato. As would anyone who has ever stuck their finger into a "ripe" potato, forgotten in the bottom of the spud bin. The smell alone would stop a clock and no amount of butter, flour, salt, pepper, cheese or milk could make it palatable.

-ob-

Last week could best be called "The Week of the Dog". Two sets of transplanted Colorado friends were set to be out of town over the holidays and asked if I could watch their dogs. Not only do I like my friends but, I like their dogs as well. Feed them, water them, let them out. What could go wrong?

Our friend Wayne's dog, Dottie, was the perfect resident. But, my friend Babe's three dogs, Fiona, Mollie and Asa, were escape artists.

Two times I was met at the front door with three wet noses. They had managed to open the gate intended to keep them in the vinyl-floored kitchen and out of the rest of the house. Not only was the gate opened, it was pulled off its hinges. I had to have Jim come down and reattach it to the door jam with his screw gun. After that, additional security included double tying a dish towel around the latch.

Fiona and Mollie are full-sized boxers but, little Asa is a diminutive terrier of some kind. A midget, compared to his bigger pen mates. When his owners left, Asa went on a hunger strike refusing to eat his 3/4 cup ration of dog chow. Unless, I fed him by hand. Do you know how long it takes to feed 3/4 cup of kibble, one kibble at a time. Asa and I spent a good deal of time together this past week.

When the water pipes froze at Babe's house, we barely averted a disaster. I couldn't find access to get under the house but, a phone call led me to a hidden trap door in a closet. An hour after lowering a small heater into the crawl space water was freely flowing again. You can bet I left a trickle running after that.

I was plenty glad to see Babe and her husband, Paul, return home. Probably not half as glad as Fiona, Mollie and Asa.

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