



## Hays seems to be capital of northwestern Kansas

How do you suppose people back east ever came to consider Hays the "capital" city of northwest Kansas?

It's true that Hays is the "big city" out here, with a county population of 27,000. Thomas County is next-most populous with 8,000.

But Hays is pretty much in the center of the state, barely in northwest Kansas at all.

Look at the map.

Hays is as far south as you can get and still be in the northwest. Almost as far east as you can get, if you figure the halfway point is somewhere between Russell and Ellsworth.

The problem, as usual, starts with the perception of people in eastern Kansas. They think anything west of Salina is Way Out There. And that includes a good two-thirds of the state.

If you tell someone you live in western Kansas, they brighten and say, "Oh, is that close to Hays?" It's hard to explain that many of us have to drive more than two hours to get to Hays.

The average state official driving west to meet someone is pretty much tuckered out after driving two hours to Salina. It's another hour from there to western Kansas, and yet another hour to Hays. In eastern Kansas, two hours will get you just about anywhere.

So after driving four hours, though, an easterner figures you must be deep into northwest Kansas. It doesn't work that way, as we all know.

Out here, we're used to driving six, seven hours to get to a ball game at Lawrence or a meeting in Kansas City. We know just how far it is across the state.

Even so, if a statewide group wants to condescend to meet in "western" Kansas, they'll pick Hays every time. Hey, it's closer. For them.

Other towns might have a claim to being the most convenient meeting spot in the northwest. Oberlin and Phillipsburg have good facilities. Colby is central to the northwest corner of the northwest, and it's got a college, more people and so on.

It seems the towns you think of meeting in cluster along I-70 or U.S. 36, with a gap of sorts in the middle. Osborne and Beloit might object to that kind of thinking, but Beloit isn't really in northwest Kansas, either. Too far east.

What Hays has going for it is one thing, really: a four-year state college.

Civic leaders showed great foresight when they talked Congress into donating the unused military reservation southwest of town to the state as the site of a "normal" school, which later became a "teachers college" and still later a "university."

Nothing ensures economic growth in this country like a good state university, and Hays built one.

Elsewhere in the northwest, Colby has the junior college and Goodland the technical college, both fine institutions, but far smaller than Fort Hays State.

So population and economic power weigh in for Hays, but really, it's location — closer to the east — that tips the scale.

Want to make someone from the east blanch and squirm?

Suggest having the next meeting in Goodland or Colby.

Just see what they say.

"Why, we can't drive all day to get to a meeting," might be a good guess.

What do they think we do, living out here?

It's not fair, but there you have it.

— Steve Haynes

## Hangin' With Marge

Tired

By Margaret Bucholtz



*margeb@cityofstfrancis.net*  
No matter how much you love your children I think every mother secretly has that feeling in their heart that you sort of hope your children will get paid back for some of the things they did as a child.

I don't ever want anything really bad to happen, I am just talking about the little things in life.

This weekend Darrin called and told me something that had happened around their home. It was great, so I am passing it on.

Tucker, the little 3-year-old came out of the kitchen eating a piece of string cheese. His mother told him, "I would really appreciate it Tucker, if you would ask for something to eat and I would get it for you. I am tired of you get-

ting in the refrigerator and messing around."

Without missing a bite, very quickly he replied, "I am tired of hearing you talk."

Just does the old heart good to know my kids are getting a small dose of what I had.

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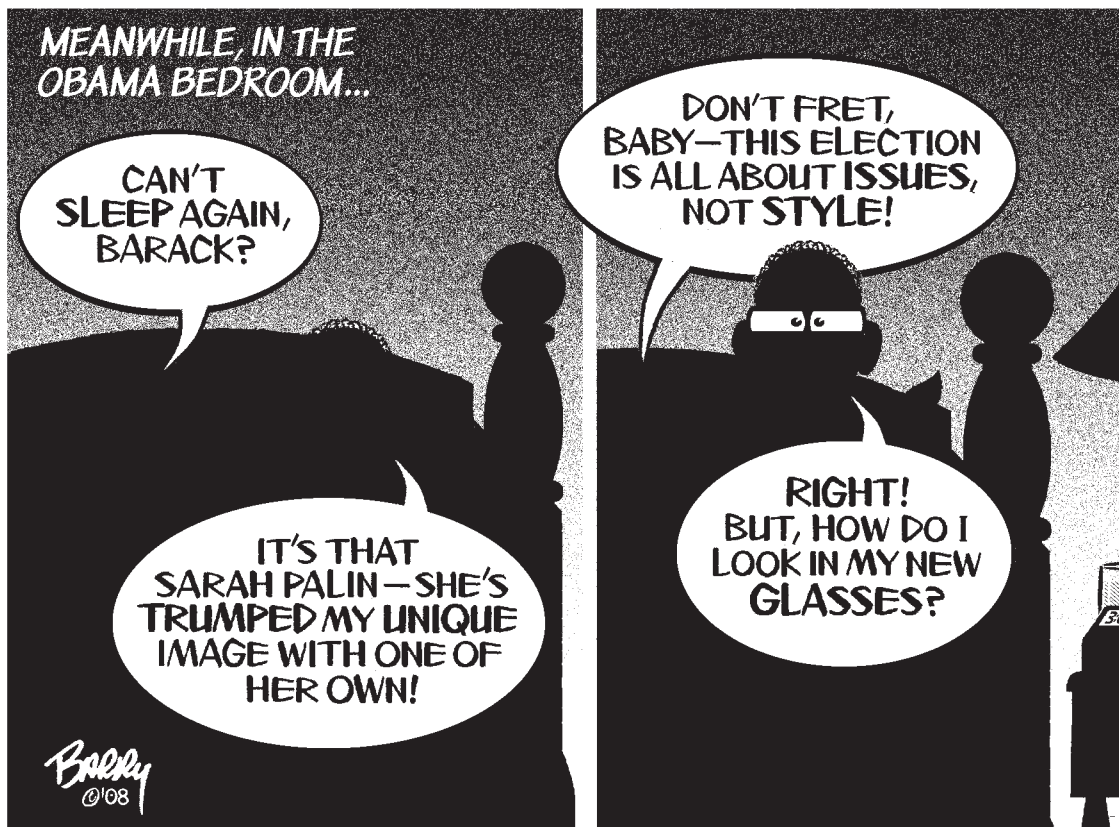
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**GOD SAYS**  
Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me.  
*Isaiah 46:9*



## Writer is supportive of new gym

Letter to the Editor:

I would like to make some observations concerning the upcoming bond election for the St. Francis Community Schools. I have had the opportunity to watch more games and matches in the elementary school gym than almost anyone in the last 20 years. I can certainly understand objections to the gym project based on costs. Building anything new is costly. The issues here are that the costs don't decrease and the need for better facilities will not go away.

Some of the obvious problems with the elementary school gym relate to both size and construction of the facility. The floor is too small for high school athletes to fully and safely compete.

If you watched the League volleyball matches held at the grade school last year, you can appreciate how frustrating it was for

## Letter to the Editor

a varsity volleyball player to try to serve and receive serves when there is no room to move. The wall that separates the court from the stands further complicates play. In addition, male and female athletes are much stronger and faster than they were when the small gym was built.

Imagine being a coach with 20 players and trying to talk to them in the girls' locker room. There is not enough room for 10, let alone 20 players. Yet, I regularly place teams there because there is nowhere else to go.

During the winter, we ask athletes to go from the high school to the elementary school on slick streets and in frigid conditions. Aside from the obvious safety issues there are health concerns

as the shower facilities at the elementary school are inadequate. Athletes then go back to the high school soaked in perspiration.

If I worked at the elementary school, I would love to get the junior-senior high events out of the building. Practices and events often occur while school is in session. I know how hard it is to keep a 16-year-old on task when there is something going on in the building. I can't imagine how hard it is with 6-year-olds.

In conclusion, I would be glad to give anyone a tour of the facilities at the elementary school. I think you will then understand the predicament.

Jeff Olofson  
St. Francis

## Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



*scMcCormick@nwkansas.com*  
Man's ability to make and play music is one of the traits that sets us apart from the beasts. Not that nature doesn't have its own beautiful melodies, but many human compositions have stood the test of time, while making the world sound better.

Take, for instance, the works of Mozart, Beethoven or Tchaik-

ovsky. For the trained ear their musical works can be identified in the first few notes. They are complex yet familiar.

I was blessed to grow up in a home where music always had an important place. My sister, brothers and I got to have our Aunt Sissy show us the way.

She was a concert pianist who taught all of us piano. Although

my sister was the only one to go far with the piano, graduating from the University of Denver with a degree in piano performance, the rest of us took up other instruments.

Having the ability to make music and to listen appreciatively to it has made a difference in my life. I'm a better person for it.

My dear aunt passed away not long ago and it is hard to imagine the world without her. But just like a written musical work, so are the memories of her and her music.

"Music, the greatest good that mortals know,

And all of heaven we have below."

(Joseph Addison: *Song for St. Cecilia's Day*)

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