

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Remarkable man, remarkable career

The untimely death Saturday night of Oakley’s Stan Clark closed a remarkable political career.

In a decade in the Kansas Senate, Mr. Clark surprised us again and again.

He won the 40th District seat in a coup against the “moderate” wing of the Republican party, regular Republicans who thought the post pretty much belonged to them. He won re-election twice, and likely would have won again this fall.

His quiet demeanor and serious nature belied a keen political sense. Opponents usually underestimated him.

He won the seat in a special Republican convention called after Sen. Sheila Frahm of Colby resigned to become lieutenant governor under Bill Graves. Mrs. Frahm, who left the state house to replace Bob Dole in the U.S. Senate when he ran for president, was a key figure in the moderate wing in these parts. And that group thought it had a lock on her seat.

When the delegates convened, though, Stan Clark had the votes.

When he ran for re-election, the moderates usually thought they could beat him. They were wrong.

His position as a conservative left Mr. Clark at odds with the more liberal Senate leadership much of the time, but he became an effective and knowledgeable senator. No one had a better grasp on the state budget or what it meant to people in this area. Colleagues remarked that he actually read all the bills and caught many errors.

Stan Clark grew to know the budget and the legislative process as well as anyone. Even those who disagreed with him knew him as a man of good will and personal integrity.

As a legislator, Mr. Clark was available to those he represented. He spent long hours on the road, traveling to Topeka and back, and toured his vast 14-county district — covering the entire northwest corner of the state — each year.

In Topeka, he gained seniority and became a committee chairman. The moderates may have thought him a bumpkin, with his thick glasses and his personal commitment to his religion — he was a member of the Dunkard Brethren Church — but those who knew him called him a kind and decent man. His boyish grin and sandy hair won many friends.

Stan Clark was a rare politician, honest, hard-working, knowledgeable. His passing leaves his seat up for grabs.

The voters will pick a suitable candidate to take his place, but it will be some time before his successor can fill his shoes.

There was even talk that he might have run for president of the Senate next year.

His opponents, undoubtedly, would have underestimated him. —*Steve Haynes, Nor’West Newspapers*



Bury we now the Sweetest and the Wisest

In Memory of Stan Clark

In scurrilous time of men of low breeding
And public office seems all rant and rave,
The blessed ideal of our country,
That the voice of the people is the voice of God,
Finds his like, tall and simple and full of grace.

Of Lincoln’s death Walt Whitman wrote,
“O powerful western fallen star!”
And I, no Whitman, feel the same,
That a star has fallen from the firmament.

Keith Coplin

(Mr. Coplin is an instructor at Colby Community College, an author, and a personal friend of Sen. Clark.)

Our Senator’s final words

Sen. Stan Clark wrote the following column on Thursday of last week. It arrived in my e-mail Saturday morning. The senator died in a vehicle accident Saturday evening. It is an unusually long column, far in excess of what he generally writes. But it is such good reading, it is optimistic and it foretells the necessary avenues we must travel as a rural area to insure our viability in the years to come. Here, then, are his final words to the people in his district — the 40th Senatorial District. -td



Stan Clark

- Under the Dome

In cutting through the red-tape. In many ways the development approach returns us to an apprenticeship, mentorship skilled trade era, but its emphasis is on management activities of production, marketing and finance. An entrepreneur can be passionate about any one of these three areas or production and marketing or production and finance but never equally passionate about marketing and finance. You might become skilled in all three areas but not equally passionate.

The belief is that in every community, no matter how small or economically depressed, there will exist some people for whom a unique work in which they may or may not yet be skilled is a passionate driving force. Also, within that same community, are others that possess the skills necessary that can assist in developing, testing and transforming the idea into a successful business.

Does it work? The first experiment was a town on the seacoast of Australia in 1985. Five hundred of the 8,500 citizens were out of work, the tuna industry was in shambles, the people demoralized. The fishermen, businessmen and government officials didn’t trust each other. In relatively short order, a sushi processing plant was developed to provide jobs and purchase tuna at 30 times the price the fisherman had been getting from the cannery. By 1989, the town had 45 new enterprises, and since then 335 more business have been created. Hundreds of communities in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States have modeled this approach.

Prosperity can be directly attributed to “civic values” and attitudes. A precondition of a good economy is the existence of social conditions which allow creativity and intelligence to blossom, or conversely, to wither and die. In particular, the environment that is required to capture the passion, entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity of local people is an environment that promotes mutual and reciprocal cooperation. This, of course, is the definition of community where through volunteering and networking a social glue is created and the whole community prospers.

Just as in this world “peace” cannot be defined as the absence of conflict, but has to be defined as “quiet goodness,” so the citizens in our rural communities have to join together and pool their talents. We are no different than the citizens of the coastline town in Australia except the struggling industry is agriculture. The change in our communities is very apparent, the middleclass is being squeezed. Many communities have home grown carnivals that pull them together, others rally around their high school athletic team; we need to experience the same community passion with helping each other, and particularly our youth in developing their dreams into businesses in our hometowns.

We can see some success stories locally where an idea is now a business:

Heartland Mills in Marienthal markets organic grains and food products around our nation and in Europe;

The finest puppets in the world are designed by Martha Bishop at the Puppet Factory in Goodland;

Go on an African Safari and your bullet most likely will have been made by Swift Bullet Co. in Quinter;

Myron and Rachel Keller, owners of Quality Collision Repair & Service/Petro Plus in Palco last week received the National Young Entrepreneur Award from the United States Small Business Administration in Orlando, Fla.

The Food Service Equipment at Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs was manufactured by New Age Industries in Norton.

In a class all by itself is Chuck Comeau and

his Dessin Fournir Companies in Plainville. House & Garden magazine voted Dessin Fournir as one of the top three design and manufacturing firms of furniture in America. I stand in awe of the restoration he has completed in Plainville and Hays. Dessin Fournir is one of the four finalists for this year’s Governor’s Award of Excellence, the highest honor a business can receive from the state. The Governor’s Award of Excellence is presented annually to a business that exemplifies Kansas values and makes a tremendous contribution to the economy and the quality of life in the community it serves.

The legislature accomplished this year:

The Kansas Center for Entrepreneurship within the Kansas Dept. of Commerce. Its purpose is to increase seed capital for entrepreneurs, especially in distressed and rural communities; work with the Board of Regents and Board of Education to create training and course work in entrepreneurship and be a resource center, clearing house and referral source.

Most area bankers will tell you that 75 percent of the deposits are held by people 65 years of age or over. For several generations when our grandparents died and their assets were distributed most of the money left the area. In an attempt to turn this tide the Legislature authorized the creation of seven regional foundations. Every donation to these foundations can receive a 50 percent tax credit. The goal is that each foundation will have \$2 million within three years to invest in new businesses located in rural Kansas.

Commercial buildings that have been approved by local city or county officials and the Secretary of Commerce will be eligible for a rebate of property tax on properties that have undergone improvement. The idea is that if you take a building that currently has a tax value of \$25,000, fix it up and the new tax value is \$100,000, for five years you will receive a rebate on the increased value and then for years six through 10, you will pay increased property taxes on an additional 20 percent of the increased value. At the end of 10 years, the entire building is in the tax roll.

An ‘accredited angel investor’ can invest in a rural business, and receive a 50 percent tax credit not to exceed \$50,000 on each business for up to five different businesses. The goal is to encourage business investment in rural Kansas instead of investing in Wall Street businesses. The investor hopefully not only will have a financial stake in the business but will also serve in an advisory role.

Reduced the franchise tax from \$2 per \$1,000 in assets to \$.125. This will lower taxes for 31,000 Kansas small businesses. This change is revenue neutral because the former cap was raised to apply to a greater percentage of the assets of larger corporations.

Delayed implementation of the Streamlined Sales Tax Project until January 2005.

Now is the time to crystallize your dream, pool our resources, unravel the tangled mess of wool and truly bring new life to our communities. Beside the ‘enterprise facilitation’ program that is available in several counties in my district, your local economic development organization, local utilities and WKREDA will be more than happy to assist you.

The remainder of Sen. Clark’s final column will continue Thursday on this page. He deals with Insurance, Public Safety and Oil, Gas & Electricity.

Readers wishing to comfort the family with a card, or note, can send them to his wife, Ruth, and son, Will, at 205 US83, Oakley, Kan. 67748.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail td@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.com. Comments can also be faxed to (785) 462-7749, or dropped off at the office. All submissions must carry a signature, daytime telephone number and address.

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