

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Hays hardly center of big northwest

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 half-way 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.

After driving four hours, though, an easterner figures he 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 state agency or 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.

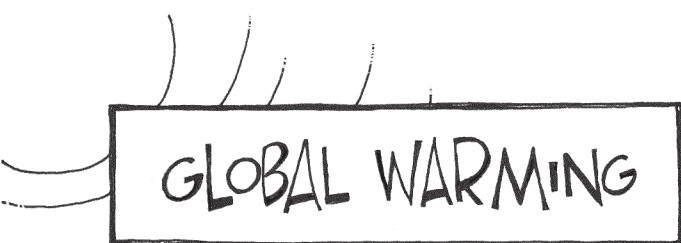
So population and economic power weigh in for Hays, but really, it's location — closer to the east — that tips the scale.

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*



Omelet plan breaks new ground

Steve and I really get cracked up about omelets

Sorry about that. However, several years ago we met "The Egg Man" at a Kansas Press Association convention. I'm sure the guy has a name, but no one ever uses it. He's just the "Egg Man."

He works for the American Egg Board, traveling around the country teaching people to make really quick omelets. In fact, if I remember correctly, he's some sort of national fast-omelet champion or something. Anyway, he shows people how to make an omelet in 40 seconds.

The secret is having a really hot nine-inch stick-proof skillet and all the ingredients chopped, stirred and ready to go.

For each omelet, you break two eggs and two tablespoons of water, plus salt and pepper, in a bowl and mix well. You heat one tablespoon of butter or oil in your skillet. You pour in your egg mixture and move it around until it is almost set. Then you put in your personal ingredients — meat, cheese, green onion, pepper, tomato, whatever — on one half of the omelet. Flip the other half over the ingredients. Cook for a few seconds and then flip to cook on the other side. Slide the perfect (sometimes) omelet onto a plate and do the next one the same way. It's fast food at home.

At our house, we usually split the duties. We put everything from silverware to jelly on the table before we start cooking. Then, I do the chopping and Steve prepares the eggs. While he cooks the omelets, I make the toast. It's a



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

fast, cheap supper in about 15 minutes, including finding the green onions in the bottom of the hydrator and tossing out the bad ones.

Even so, when my friend Pat gave me a recipe off the Internet for a Ziploc omelet, I was intrigued. Steve was out of town and I decided to try the recipe, which touts itself as a great way to fix breakfast for a party or family get-together.

Have each person write their name with a permanent marker on a quart-size Ziploc freezer bag.

Crack two large or extra-large eggs into the bag and shake to combine. Add your pre-chopped goodies and salt and pepper. Shake each bag, press to remove the air and zip 'em up.

Cook in a large pot of boiling water for exactly 13 minutes. It says you can cook up to six to eight in a single large pot.

Open the bags and the omelets will roll out ready to eat.

Thirteen minutes is forever when you're on your lunch hour, though, and waiting for the darn thing to cook. I made my toast, started another load of laundry, put the wet clothes in

the dryer and folded the dry ones, fed the dog, watered the cats, picked the dead leaves off the house plants and checked my watch 10 times.

At the end of 13 minutes, my omelet was still a little runny. I think I didn't get quite all the air out of my bag, so I resealed it, weighted it down with a heavy spoon and cooked it another minute.

The result was everything the recipe claimed. It was a beautiful omelet and rolled right out of the bag.

I thought it was a little tough, but that may have been the extra cooking, and I missed the nice browned edges Steve's masterpieces get. However, it was tasty and if you don't have Steve around to do the cooking or need to make more than one or two in a short time, it works well.

For those who don't care for the eggs smushed up in omelets, the Egg Board web site offers more than a hundred recipes for everything from homemade mayonnaise to orange-spice pickled eggs. Just go to www.aeb.org to learn how to turn hen fruit into anything from a main dish to a dessert.

Now, I wonder if there's a National Bread Board to tell me how to do other things beside turn my slightly stale slices into toast.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Do we want a pit bull in D.C.?

To the Editor:
Do hockey moms, barracudas or pit bulls have the personality or priorities to make a good president?

Playground bullies who punch others in the nose if things aren't going to suit them aren't good prospects for president, either.

Self-proclaimed prophets who claim appointment by God to be political leaders are a little suspect, too. Remember, President George W. Bush made the statement that God wanted him to be president.

Gov. Sarah Palin insinuates that the Holy Spirit revealed to her that she is God's chosen one to protect us from the "Antichrist" (That's who some folks think the top man on the other side is.) and ill-prepared candidates of the Democratic party. Well, Hitler on several occasions claimed appointment and direction from God, and look where that led to. So much for self-proclaimed righteousness.

Do we really need a continuation of the Bush

Letter Drop

• Our Readers Sound Off

policies for another four or eight years? John McCain thinks our economy is strong. Gee, he isn't about to lose any of his houses.

Health Care is in good shape. We have emergency room treatment of anyone who doesn't have or can't afford insurance.

Our tax reforms have doubled and tripled the profits and savings for the top 2 or 3 percent of taxpayers. And the evidence is overwhelming that they are reinvesting those profits in expansion of business and manufacturing to benefit the other 97 or 98 percent of our society? The

"trickle-down theory" is a proven fact. Don't you think so?

We no longer "tax and spend." We just spend and borrow from the next generation of taxpayers.

We can clean up the morals and ethics of society by posting scripture texts on our walls, kind of like the phylacteries the religious folks in Jesus' day tied on their foreheads.

We are on the brink of victory in Iraq and we've scared the aggressive desires right out of Iran and Russia by threatening them with our awesome military power. We've scared Osama Bin Laden right out of his turban and sandals, and he's probably tending a little flock of sheep on the north slope of that hill over yonder. We are all just as safe as a bug in a rug, due to the unrestricted surveillance of our communications and associations.

All is well! Why would anyone think we need change?

Ken Poland, Gem

Please vote for our buffalo

To the Editor:
The Kansas Sampler Foundation of Inman is promoting the "8 Wonders of Kansas" balloting in different areas to make people more aware of the wonders of our great state.

They are taking votes for the "8 Wonders of Kansas Art" among 24 finalists. We urge all Kansans to vote for these wonders. We would particularly like to encourage people to vote for the magnificent work of Charlie and Pat

Norton, our Buffalo Bill bronze sculpture in Oakley.

You can vote on line at www.kansassampler.org or call (620) 585-2374 for a paper ballot. Please follow directions carefully or your vote will not count.

If you have not visited our monumental Buffalo Bill bronze west of Oakley, we encourage you to do so. We thank you in advance for any support that you might give us.

C. Lewis Evins, Oakley
Wild West Historical Foundation
www.buffalobilloakley.org

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the *Colby Free Press*, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or e-mail s.haynes@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the *Free Press*.

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Mallard's BACK TO School memory #17

Bruce Tinsley

YOUR TESTS WILL BE GRADED ON A CURVE, SO IT WILL BE REALLY HARD TO GET A BAD GRADE... OR A GOOD GRADE. I GOT THE IDEA FROM THE WAY THE TEACHERS' UNION TREATS US.

Tinsley 99