



Other Viewpoints

Governor has will to get things done

It's really too bad that state government doesn't have any money to work with during the short tenure of Gov. Mark Parkinson.

With a little money and a little more time, this governor could really get something done.

Within the first few weeks after he took over from Kathleen Sebelius, Parkinson brokered a deal that ended the legislative standoff over building a coal-fired electrical plant that had stalled important progress on renewable energy efforts in the state.

Last week, he delivered a powerful challenge to the Kansas Board of Regents about steps that need to be taken to elevate higher education in the state. This week, he pledged "to put our full effort behind" an effort to pass a statewide ban on smoking in public places.

It has Kansans wonder what else is on the new governor's agenda.

Parkinson knows he must work quickly. He has announced that he won't seek election — and insists he won't change his mind — meaning he has only one legislative session in which to accomplish his goals....

It's ironic that Parkinson's decision not to seek election seems largely responsible for why he now seems like a perfect candidate. Free of political ambitions, he is able to focus on issues of importance to the state. He can tackle politically volatile bills without fearing what impact it will have on his political future.

Parkinson could make many Kansans nostalgic for the days when both the governor's office and the Legislature were populated mostly by people who didn't spend their careers in politics. They were people like Parkinson who had other businesses to go back to and didn't pin their futures to the ability to be elected again in two or four years. It freed them up to do the right thing rather than having to constantly weigh the political fallout.

The 2010 legislative session will be an interesting one. It's refreshing to see Parkinson tackle some of the state's tough issues and it will be exciting to see what agenda he puts forth. It's just too bad that financial concerns might temper what could be a truly dynamic time for Kansas.

— Lawrence Journal-World, via The Associated Press

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Here's a vote for that old typewriter

I'm an independent cuss, though some of my coworkers might not phrase it so nicely.

The fact of the matter is, I've always been of the firm opinion that the world should operate in a certain way, and that I was best equipped to know the way. Don't confuse me with facts; my mind is made up!

Given all this, it should come as no surprise that every change in technology over the last 40 years has been forced on me, dragging me kicking and screaming into a new environment.

I learned to type on a manual Royal 440 typewriter. It was just fine with me. I didn't need an electric typewriter, thank you very much. Then I went to college, and got a work-study job, and learned to use a correcting IBM typewriter. While I stayed loyal to my old Royal, the IBM got more attention.

Later, working as graduate assistant, I got my introduction to computers with two Apple IIc's and an Apple IIe. This felt like space-age technology to me, especially since I got thrown in at the deep end, as the only staff person in a department that was in transition from federal grant start-up funds to local money.

The whole situation was interesting, but the biggest hurdle for me was having to use those computers. They had no hard drive, so every program had to be installed from a floppy disc every time it was used. I believe I also had the use of a nine-pin tractor-feed printer. I must say that the whole experience did not convert me to a love of computers.

A few years later, I moved up to a memory



Marian Ballard

• Collection Connections

typewriter that could fix errors before the end of the line. It was a bit of a mixed blessing.

Then I got a library job, where I had to do a little bit of everything. The memory typewriter there was a lot more capable, but had a lot more rules as well. The computers had more rules, too, and I had to learn at least a little bit about MS-DOS. For those who missed that stage, you had to type all these weird commands exactly right, letter-perfect, or you might get something totally different from what you wanted, or even erase what you wanted. Very nerve-wracking.

While at the library, I met the Internet for the first time, using online resources to catalogue books.

Then came Windows.

Then came the Internet as we know it today (more or less).

Along the way came responsibilities and ideas that forced me to stretch my thinking about information processing and information transmission.

Why am I getting into this? Within the last month or so, several of our major sources of information here at the paper have had their

computer systems go down.

What used to be an irritation is now a disaster. Back when I was learning typing, the proper spacing for addressing envelopes was drummed into our heads. I haven't addressed more than one or two business letters a year in the last decade, and I usually do it by hand when I do. Why? Because my printer doesn't feed envelopes through properly, and it's more trouble than it's worth. I no longer have my faithful old typewriter. Also, I rely on the Internet, or the telephone, for most communication. (There's another trip down memory lane, for those of us old enough to remember when long-distance phone charges cost real money.)

But when a business, or a university, or a law-enforcement agency has to go off-line these days, the whole organization grinds to a screeching halt. In the news business, almost everything we do depends on computers, and if your paper is late some days, you can probably blame the computers for at least part of the problem.

Maybe it's time to go back to pencil and paper and that old manual typewriter. Think of all the time and stress we could eliminate by just slogging through it rather than fighting the genie in the hard drive.

Here's a cheer for reverse technology!

Marian Ballard has collected careers as counselor, librarian, pastor, and now copy editor for the Colby Free Press. She collects ideas, which are more portable than other stuff.

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Stay alert, aware and alive in farming

The roar and hustle of fall harvest is just around the corner. Time is precious. Hours are long. Breaks few.

In this busy period, accidents are more likely. Agriculture continues to rank as one of the most dangerous occupations in this country and across the globe.

To place the spotlight on farming, ranching and the related health and safety issues affecting this industry, the National Safety Council has designated Sept. 20-26 as National Farm Safety and Health Week.

This year's theme is "Rural Roadway Safety ... Alert, Aware and Alive." It is especially timely as the week falls on the cusp of the upcoming fall harvest.

This event is designed to commemorate the hard work, diligence and sacrifices of this nation's farmers. This year's event marks the 66th consecutive year, beginning with Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1944.

For those who live and work in rural America, sharing farmers' pride and excitement about the harvest season is tempered by the continued, urgent need to foster increased understanding regarding the prevention of ag-related injuries and illness, says Holly Higgins, Kansas Farm Bureau safety director.

"Every year, farmers and ranchers are injured and killed because of preventable accidents," Higgins says. "Farmers and their families can ill afford the pain and inconvenience of workplace injuries and death."

Farmers typically lose four days for every injury they suffer, Higgins says. Still, the daily duties of feeding and caring for livestock and planting, tending and harvesting crops continue.

"We like to label injuries and death in our



John Schlageck

• Insights
Kansas Farm Bureau

industry as accidents," Higgins says. "The truth is these accidents can usually be traced to a specific cause."

Agricultural equipment is becoming bigger and bigger, she noted. As farms become larger and spread out over more area, farmers are spending a lot more time traveling with their tractors and equipment on public roads.

Farm equipment on the road can be hazardous to both farmers and motorists. Most equipment usually travels 25 miles per hour or less in areas where the speed limit may be posted at 55 to 65 mph.

This can be a dangerous situation for a motorist going faster on the same highway. It does not give the motorist much time to react.

Roadway collisions that involve farm vehicles on U.S. roads total more than 15,000 per year. More than two-thirds of these involve the farm vehicle being hit from behind, but collisions can also occur when the tractor and equipment tries to make left turns or in side-swipes.

"More than 90 percent of these collisions occur in the daylight and on dry roads," Higgins says. "Usually, when the fatality occurs, the victim is the tractor operator."

Motorists, be alert for agricultural equipment with the big, triangular slow-moving vehicle emblems, reflectors or flashing lights.

Expect to see more agricultural equipment on roadways during the busy harvest and wheat-planting season.

Be careful when trying to pass equipment, as the operator may not see or hear you. Be patient; do not pass slow-moving equipment unless it is absolutely safe.

Pass with caution, as the equipment may be longer and wider than you think. Be aware of possible left turns into fields or driveways.

Yes, before long activity on the farm will become even busier. During harvest and wheat seeding, there is always a tremendous amount of work to be done in a short time. Take breaks from time to time. Rest and relax, eat well, drink water and keep a clear head.

You only have one life. Make it a safe harvest.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

