



Free Press Viewpoint

Courageous acts mark governor's way

Hooray for Gov. Mark Parkinson, for having the courage to slash the state budget not once, but twice, since the Legislature went out of session last spring.

Not only that, but the governor took time, in an aside, to lecture greedy school superintendents and teachers who want to sue the state for money it doesn't have, and taxpayers can't afford, so they can avoid taking their share of the budget cuts.

The time to worry about that, the governor said, will be after the state's economy recovers, the recession has passed, unemployment shrinks and Kansans' incomes start to grow again.

Let's hope the lawyer-driven group known as "Schools for Fair Funding" listens to his advice. The governor, in his message announcing the cuts, pointedly said there was no point in spending taxpayers' cash on a lawsuit over money the state simply doesn't have.

The governor also said that, this time around, cuts are going to hurt. Cuts include \$50 million from the Kansas Department of Transportation, meaning projects will be dropped, roads won't be resurfaced and other critical maintenance will be put on hold. With \$36 million more cut from public schools, teachers may lose jobs and classrooms will get more crowded.

The Department of Corrections, which already has closed some programs, will cut back on parole supervision. Waiting lists will grow for programs for the disabled. Colleges and universities will have to put off already-delayed maintenance.

None of this is good.

As the governor said, "We have cut every ounce of waste, streamlined every program and squeezed every last saving we could find. We are now cutting basic services."

And the recession is not over yet. State revenues continue to run under estimates, which in turn, have been cut again and again. There is no sign of a turnaround in state income. Why?

Because Kansas businesses are not making much, and therefore are not paying income taxes at the expected rate. (And the projected rate is far below tax collections a couple of years ago, when businesses were flush.)

Kansans are not doing well, either. Thousands are out of work; thousands have lost overtime, seen hours cut, even been forced to take unpaid leave. People are not paying income taxes as they did in good times, because they don't have the income. They are not spending, so sales tax collections are down.

When will it end? No one knows, but the state has to dig in for at least another year of cuts and bare-bones spending. There won't be much waste left to trim by the time it's over.

The governor called for a review of state spending and priorities when the Legislature convenes, aimed at getting the state through the crisis. Yet it's clear that taxpayers and businesses don't have a lot to give right now. They are, if anything, hurting worse than the state.

Things could be worse. Some states already are cutting payroll and forcing employees to take unpaid time off. But Kansas has it bad enough. Everyone, schools, colleges, state agencies, will have to tighten their belts and do the best they can.

Good times will return, and when they do, there will be more money, though never probably enough to satisfy all the state's need.

In all this, Parkinson, as a short-term governor thrown in a tough situation, has performed admirably. Our hat's off to him.

— Steve Haynes



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A 'fall' weekend trekked into Sappa Park

It was a beautiful fall — right on my face. We were out walking in Sappa Park on Saturday.

The park has picnic areas, camping areas and trails, lots and lots of trails. Some of the trails go up and around the dry lake bed. Some go around the inside and a couple cut right across, running through weeds, grass and stands of trees that grew up during the dry years.

One trail goes away from the lake and heads more or less toward town through the trees. You could almost believe you are back east while winding your way around through trees and brush along the creek. In one spot, a fallen tree has bowed itself right over the trail. The only way through is under the arching trunk.

Volunteers run mowers down the trails several times a year to keep them clear and usable. Since nothing is growing right now, it's been awhile since this trail has seen much maintenance, but it's in excellent shape.

We had just gotten to the cattle guard that marks the end of one section of the trail. At this point, we usually turn back. The walk



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

from where we park to that spot is about 30 minutes, so to the cattle guard and back is an hour of exercise for us and the dog.

Steve turned around. The dog headed back up the trail. I turned around and stuck my foot under a fallen branch laying mostly off the trail. I tried to recover and almost made it — but not quite.

Crash! Steve turned around and hurried back to make sure I wasn't broken.

Nothing injured but my dignity, which was severely dented. I had landed on my front-side with my hands out in front of me shielding my face, so I was shaken but not hurt.

The last time I took a header like that, I landed face-first on a gravel road and I wasn't nearly so sure I wasn't hurt.

It turned out I was fine. I just had a few bruises and a mouthful of gravel.

That time, Steve had told the dog to heel and she had amazingly obeyed. Right in front of where I was walking.

I jumped, and sort of tripped over her in midair.

I've since learned that the dog will always go to Steve's left side when called to heel and I try to stay on the right. This doesn't always work, but I haven't had any gravel for lunch in quite a while.

Now if I can just figure out which side the fallen branches are taking, I'll have it made.

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@nwkansans.com

Thanksgiving football a fond memory

I can remember when Thanksgiving Day in Colby was especially exciting.

It was not only because it was the day when family and friends came over for a wonderful dinner, or because it was a time to thank God for all the wonderful gifts He had given us throughout the year.

It was more exciting because every year, Colby High School played a football game with Goodland High at 2 in the afternoon. That was before Dennen Field, and the games were played at the fair grounds. The whole town would turn out when the game was to be played in Colby on alternate years. Sometimes we had our dinner before the game and sometimes after. However, the players always had to wait for their big meal; the coach insisted on that.

There was usually a pep rally and a big bonfire the day before the game to get us excited and ready for the event. That was before they came up with tailgate parties like they have today.

I don't remember the scores of any games, but I am thinking that we always won, because we had Garnold Schneider as our coach, and we had a wonderful team in those early 1950s years.

I was in the band, and we sat in the bleachers for every game. I played the drum but twirled a baton when we marched during the half-time performances.

When my older sister Shirley was a senior, I was a freshman and she was a friend of Murray Smith's. I remember one particular trip to the



Marj Brown

• Marj's Snippets

game when Murray came by to pick Shirley up to go to the game with a gang of other kids. Even though his old car was already full, they took me along. I rode in the back seat on someone's lap with my snare drum hanging out of the window, since there was no room for it in the car. Being in the drum section was great at football games, because we could make a lot of noise when our team made a touchdown.

Sometimes the boys had to play in snow or freezing rain. It was a muddy mess, because the field was covered with weeds, not grass like they play on today. My husband Jim tells me that he remembers there were sand burs growing out there, too.

I don't remember when they stopped having the Thanksgiving Day games. I suspect parents complained because they couldn't take their kids out of town for the holiday, and if the home team lost, it probably put a damper on the happiness of the day.

Our high school band played for a lot of things in those days. Each band member was paid a small amount to play during the Thomas County Fair. That was great, because most of us spent our money at the carnival. We had horse races at the fair during those times, and we usually played during the afternoon events

— never at night.

We also played on the old stage area in Fike Park. We did this for special occasions in the summer, but the times I liked best were when we had the Tractor Show in Colby in the early spring before school let out. All of the bands from nearby towns would come to Colby to march in our parade on Band Day. Each band would perform some type of formation right in the intersection of Franklin and Fourth Street. Everyone looked forward to Brewster High School's band, because they always did a dance routine as they played. They were outstanding.

During the Tractor Show, the streets in the main part of town were blocked off and a carnival was set up on the vacant lot across from the old Syms-Shaffer building. We all looked forward to that special occasion, because school was let out for band day.

Colby has made so many changes since those days, some good and some not so good, but I guess we always look back at the past and the fun we had when we were young and carefree, and it always seems like it was better.

I was a little unsure about some of these things in the distant past, since it was so many years ago, but Harold and Grace Jones helped fill me in on the things I forgot since we all went to school together.

Marj Brown has lived in Colby for 62 years and has spent a good deal of that time writing about people and places here. She says it's one of her favorite things to do.

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