



Free Press Viewpoint

Big 1st primary still centers on cash

We're just about two weeks out from the primary election, and there is one race that will be particularly interesting to watch: the U.S. House of Representatives.

The Colby Free Press is in the enviable position of having interviewed and printed stories about each one of the candidates. We have not been fortunate enough to have any kind of a candidate forum here, but the stories give our readers what we hope is a good picture of who is in this race.

Candidate Marck Cobb, a former pilot and planner at the Pentagon, was in town Thursday to place an ad with the Free Press. He said that now is the time when a lot of people are just starting to be interested in the race. That's probably true. If you drive around Colby there are twice as many lawn signs (and a few almost-billboard sized banners) as there were a couple weeks ago. Beyond that, there have been television and newspaper ads, radio spots, televised forums and volunteers knocking on doors to try and get the word out. But what really has people talking are the KWCH polls.

The most recent one puts Cobb dead last, with Sue Boldra, a Fort Hays State civics professor, also in single digits.

Cobb and Boldra, have both staked their candidacy on trying to prove you can win a seat without raising the most money. Cobb drives himself around the district in a high gas-mileage car. Boldra said she only takes individual donations as a civics experiment.

Unfortunately it doesn't seem to be paying off.

Rob Wasinger, a former aid of Rep. Jerry Moran, is at 10 percent. Tim Huelskamp, a state senator from Fowler, was a front runner but has had to go on the offensive recently since he slipped to third place. Huelskamp was in the area this week, holding poorly-attended meet-and-greets in Colby, Norton, Oberlin and others. Huelskamp is one of only two candidates in the race who does have a voting record, which he says is far more consistently conservative than Jim Barnett, also a state senator, from Emporia.

Locally, the best thing Huelskamp has going for him is the endorsement of our state Sen. Ralph Ostmeier, with whom he shares an office in Topeka. Barnett has not been through the area much recently.

The real surprise of this campaign has been the Mann Surge. Tracey Mann was an unknown, having never run for political office. But he has scored big with effective communication and clever slogans, not to mention a big door to door push by both the candidate and his volunteers. He has drawn criticism by underdog candidates like Cobb for farming his campaign management to out-of-state firms, but if his numbers are any indication, they must be doing something right.

And through it all is Democrat Alan Jilka, former Salina mayor, who has been waiting quietly for whomever will emerge as his actual opposition.

Polls are tricky, especially in "smaller" races. It's a big district, but this isn't New York City where you can't swing a dead cat without hitting a political action committee with their own polling numbers this is rural Kansas. We get pretty much the one poll, and we have to take it with a very large grain of salt. The poll sampled 516 likely voters out of 1,315 registered voters. Who knows where they are from, and who knows if that would really represent our area.

We think there are far more undecideds than the KWCH poll indicates, particularly in this region of the state, where the none of the candidates had great amounts of name recognition before the election. That number is shrinking, however, and will continue to do so before the election.

In any case, the only stats that really matter will be released on Wednesday, Aug. 4.

- Kevin Bottrell



Summer swims hold scary history

It's polio season. The hot, muggy part of summer when mothers once feared letting their children out to go to the pool.

To put that into perspective, according to www.infoplease.com: "Generally known as 'infantile paralysis,' polio infected 27,363 people in 1916 in the U.S., with more than 7,000 deaths." The same source says that in 1952, there were 57,628 cases and 3,300 deaths.

In contrast, in 2008, fewer than 2,000 cases were reported around the world, according to the website www.rotary.org/en/endpolio.

I'm a little too young to remember the fear that closed swimming pools and gripped parents in summers before a vaccine was developed and licensed in 1955.

Yet, like other traumas, the stories are slower to pass. I had a mother-in-law who had polio as an adult and later suffered from post-polio syndrome. She had four children who suffered from her absence for weeks or months when she was infected in the early 1950s. Many families lost children, or had family members who were permanently paralyzed.

Between Cynthia Haynes, a registered pharmacist, learning to give immunizations, and a granddaughter needing boosters before school starts in the fall, vaccines have been featured in several conversations around the office this week.

Our office windows, looking out onto the Fifth Street sidewalks, show a lot of youthful swimmers walking past.

With the ground breaking for a new water park in Colby, we could wonder whether a new pool would be needed or wanted in a world where hot summer weather spelled fear



Marian Ballard

Collection Connections

of disease.

Yet, I have never feared polio at all, and it all goes back to one day when I was about 7. I stood in line in the Chadron, Neb., Community Building, along with my family and hundreds of other people, large and small.

The line was long because there are always forms to fill out. I discovered this years later, when a handful of cards showing the date of our immunizations showed up while cleaning out my parents' home. As I recall, we stood in line to fill out the cards, then stood in line for the oral Sabine vaccine. It was sweet, and didn't involve needles, which relieved me greatly. It also makes me wonder if I didn't go through the same sort of process at an earlier date with the Salk vaccine, which was an injection.

Summer has also been associated with other diseases, of course - malaria, encephalitis and cholera, to mention just a few. Many of these outbreaks had to do with contaminated water and unsanitary living conditions in general. Particularly in the early years of the Industrial Revolution, crowding in cities that had little or no provision for getting fresh water to residents or removing waste resulted in appalling mortality rates.

The world has changed. The connection between diseases and germs

is clearly understood. The connection between germs and sanitation is understood, though not always practiced as carefully as in U.S. towns and cities. Methods to beat the germs in new and creative ways are found every day.

The first vaccinations, against smallpox, eventually eradicated the disease - and the need for vaccination - by 1980. Vaccinations against polio have been effective in eradicating it in many areas of the world, and Rotary International has set a goal for its complete end.

Oddly enough, though, diseases have not disappeared. Improved sanitation probably led, at least indirectly, to an increase in polio. Why? The short answer is that previous generations were exposed to viruses by poor sanitation and developed immunities that were passed on to their children. Improved sanitation meant no exposure and no immunity.

We now face new disease threats in the form of antibiotic-resistant bacteria and the rapid travel of new strains made possible by airlines.

That trend can be seen in other areas of health care. Heart disease, for example, is a far more significant issue in a world where adults are not considered senior citizens at the age of 30.

Yet in polio season, I'm thankful that Colby is unlikely to face the fear of an epidemic among its children.

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.

Neighborhood flashers start at home

Something weird is going on in our neighborhood. That's right, I said weird; really weird. It all started several months ago, and it was with my husband Jim.

You see, Jim is one of those people who, for some insane reason, gets up around 5:30 every morning regardless of whether he has to or not. The first thing he does after he gets dressed, and thank goodness he does get dressed, is to open the living room picture window drapes as far as they will open. Then he sits in his Lazy Boy rocker and waves at everyone who drives by on the street in front of our house. Of course, those people don't think that is strange, because Jim knows just about everyone in town. He was born in Levant and has lived in this area all of his life.

I think Jim started this waving thing during the winter months, because some times it must have been difficult for him to see if his friends were waving back or not in the dark. The next thing that happened is Jim got a neat little



Marj Brown

Marj's Snippets

flashlight as a free gift from some advertiser, so he started flashing the light as he waved.

Well, it wasn't long until the people driving by started coming up with flashlights of their own, one at a time, until now most of those who go by and wave also have flashlights waving at Jim. It's getting to where now, early in the dark mornings, it looks like a Christmas light parade going by our house. Now they even wave when they go home from work at night.

I guess you could say that we have a bunch of flashers living in our area.

The bad thing about this is, on rare occasions when I do decide to get up early in the morning, and I walk into the living room in my nightgown and robe, with my hair sticking up on end, it's like I am standing in the middle of a fish bowl with the whole world flashing lights at me. This is not a pretty sight.

I have decided this is a good reason for me to stay in bed until the sun comes up. I am just the opposite of Jim. I like to stay up late at night reading or writing, but I have no desire to flash lights at people at midnight. You never can tell who might be up running around at that hour.

Instead, I have all the drapes closed tightly.

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.

Where to write, call

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U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 274-W, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorrison@ink.org

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State Sen. Ralph Ostmeier, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeier@senate.state.ks.us

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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