



Other Viewpoints

Kansas' troubles not new to state

Even in difficult times, Kansans should never forget the challenge the state's founders left us to overcome difficulty and reach for the stars.

"Ad Astra Per Aspera" is Latin for "to the stars through difficulty."

The founders of Kansas who chose that phrase as the official state motto must have suspected that the trials that had been part of the state's entry into the Union wouldn't be the last challenges faced by the 34th state.

On Saturday, Kansas marked its 150th birthday. During those 150 years the state and those who call it home often have reached for the stars and built a proud heritage for Kansas.

Amid the pre-Civil War fight over slavery, the U.S. Senate rejected three constitutions to make Kansas a state before accepting the Wyandotte Constitution in 1861. By that time, southern states were beginning to secede from the Union and take their U.S. senators with them. According to information supplied by the Kansas State Historical Society, senators from Mississippi, Alabama and Florida withdrew from Congress on Jan. 21, 1861. The constitution bringing Kansas into the Union as a free state was approved later that same day.

Since then, the state often has taken a leading role in national affairs. The original Kansas Constitution included unusual provisions for the time giving women equal rights over their children and property. That provision led naturally to Kansas becoming the first state to give women the right to vote in municipal elections in 1887....

Kansas has sent many notable leaders to Washington, including President Dwight D. Eisenhower and former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole. It has produced leaders in fields ranging from aviation to entertainment. It's had its share of colorful characters like Carry Nation and John Brinkley, the "goat gland doctor." It's been home to astronauts, artists, actors, adventurers and astronomers. And don't forget those in athletics, including Kansas transplants James Naismith and Forrest "Phog" Allen, who brought basketball to the state and nation.

Life hasn't always been easy in Kansas. Pioneers settling across the state did battle with Mother Nature on a regular basis, living through the Dust Bowl and simply meeting the day-to-day challenges of living on the prairie....

Throughout it all, Kansas has persevered. Like most other states, Kansas now faces financial challenges that are forcing difficult political and philosophical decisions. The decisions government leaders make are guaranteed to make at least some Kansans unhappy.

At such a time, it's good to remember that Kansas has faced challenges before and still found an ability to reach for the stars. On its 150th birthday, the state and its residents should celebrate the tenacity of a state that was founded amid turmoil and has produced a people full of talents ready and willing to address whatever difficulties history has to throw at us.

Happy birthday, Kansas!
— *The Lawrence Journal-World, via the Associated Press*

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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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"DAD, THE GOVERNMENT SAYS YOU'RE USING TOO MUCH SALT..."

Long road leads from Fort Hays

How did I end up in Aurora, Colo.?

Fair question.

After all, it took me 44 years to get here.

Hint: Hand-fed press. Typewriter. Camera with flash bulbs. And so it goes. Or should I say, and so it went.

Those were the ingredients for producing a newspaper when I decided, way back when, to move into this thing called journalism, nudged partly by one of my professors at what was then Fort Hays Kansas State Teachers College. Mrs. Rogers apparently saw something in me.

So, armed with a college education and just knowing the world was awaiting my arrival, I set out to make a name for myself, not giving any thought to the 'names' I would sometimes be called.

I was hired by *The Ellis County Farmer*, a weekly newspaper in Hays which, during my tenure, was renamed *The Ellis County Star*. I did a little bit of everything, and due to my love of sports, I covered a lot of high school football and basketball.

During the summer months, thanks in large part to a friend, Arlen Walters, I became associated with the Hays Larks, passing along information on the baseball team to a couple of news outlets. Arlen was a member of the team — a gifted and talented member.

Games were played at the field in south Hays. Early in my reporting, I began using the name Larks Park. That was shorter to write than the name it then had, something like the Hays City Municipal Baseball Field. I had stationery and envelopes printed carrying that name, which caught on and is used even today.

Whatever I was doing at *The Star* caught the attention of Bob McFarlin, editor of *The Hays Daily News*. One day we talked. A few days later, I was on the staff of Bob's newspaper.

Wow! A daily newspaper. Of course the responsibilities were greater. I started as sports



Tom Dreiling

• A View From the West

reporter and photographer. The slow hand-fed press I was used to at *The Star*, was replaced by a rotary press at *The Daily News* I never imagined existed. Big, fast and yes, noisy.

But boy did it ever turn out the papers! During my tenure at the daily, I eventually moved up to the position of city editor.

Who was it that said, "Go West, young man, go West!" Well, I did. I went to the six-day a week daily paper at Goodland, *The Goodland Daily News*, which had a companion weekly called *The Sherman County Herald*. I edited both papers while serving as a general assignment reporter and photographer. Whew!

I stayed out 'West' for the remainder of my career, at newspapers in Sheridan, Wyo., then back in Kansas at Colby and Norton.

I often think of the beginning of my career when the ingredients consisted of a typewriter, a hand-fed press, and a camera with flash bulbs. Today, the technology to put out a newspaper causes me to shake my head in disbelief.

Without question, the most unforgettable day of my career was the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas. I was on the desk at *The Hays Daily News*, finalizing the front page. Suddenly, the Associated Press machine rang out five bells. That signals a bulletin.

I pushed my chair back to the machine and it said, "President shot." I shook my head to make sure what I just read was what I just read. Minutes later, another five bells, and another brief note. "President rushed to hospital."

Then the final bells, three in number indicating a flash, the AP's top priority: "President Kennedy is dead."

The hours after that announcement were spent reshaping that day's front page. That issue was put out in silence. We were all in shock. That unforgettable day remains with me as though it just happened yesterday.

So, back to the opening question, how did Aurora, Colo., figure in my retirement decision? Well, choosing a place to live out the remaining years was a challenge. I had two kids living in Centennial, Colo., and one in Spokane, Wash., at Fairchild Air Force Base.

I was at Norton when that topic was being tossed around, so I decided I'd go back to the community I spent more time in than any other, Goodland. My sons, Lance (the Air Force guy) and Todd, who is in business in Centennial, moved me to Goodland from Norton.

But a strange thing happened during that move. Lance, a master sergeant, received a phone call from his base at Fairchild to inform him he was being transferred to — guess where? — Buckley Air Force Base at Aurora!

Needless to say, that phone call changed everything. I knew then I would be retiring in that vicinity. Aurora and Centennial are adjoining communities. And now, all three kids and five grandkids live in Centennial.

So here I sit writing this column from Aurora. And each day I ask myself the same question: Why did it take me this long to find this place? I think it was the guy 'upstairs' who gave me the patience to endure while he was putting everything together.

Tom Dreiling of Aurora, Colo., is a former publisher of the Colby Free Press and The Norton Telegram, and a former long-time editor of the old Goodland Daily News. He is a life-long Democrat, a curmudgeon come lately and a newly minted Coloradan.

Faithful trustee needed for Social Security

Trust. What does that word mean? If you have a good thesaurus, you might be surprised at all the synonyms and associations or combinations of words that imply trust. For now, I choose to use the following definition: something (as property) held by one party (the trustee) for the benefit of another (the beneficiary).

A program established as a part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal," the Social Security system was designed and put into place. The justification for a retirement and disability program was the total collapse of savings accounts and investment values.

Why was this program going to be any more secure and available when workers or contributors became disabled or reached retirement age? The idea was that it would be held "in trust" by the federal government (trustee) and distributed to the people (beneficiary) entitled to the benefits, as prescribed by the program. Banks had gone bankrupt and savings accounts disappeared. Businesses had gone bankrupt and owners lost all their equity. Corporations had gone bankrupt and stockholders lost their total investment portfolios. This had left the majority of the elderly population at the mercy of charity and most folks who still had any assets or money didn't think they could share it without jeopardizing their own security.

The program was bitterly opposed by some. Many feared it was communistic socialism and government intrusion on their privacy and



Ken Poland

• Ken's World

freedoms. Some thought it was a ponzi scheme that would collapse before they had opportunity to collect their benefits. That thinking was very much evident 60 years ago when I first earned wages subject to the system. The ponzi scheme fear has persisted, even to this day.

Well, what do you know? We have just experienced the worst depression, since the 1930s and the fund is not bankrupt and those who qualify for benefits are still getting those benefits. Mismanaged private and company managed retirement plans have resulted in default of benefit payments. Dividends on stocks and interest on savings accounts have disappeared. The older segment of the population suffers the most. They have limited time and opportunity to replace their retirement funds.

The Social Security system has been self-funded from taxes levied on employers and employees. There has been no money taken from the general fund (income tax) of the United States budget. It has not contributed to the deficit spending and resulting huge debt of

our nation. The labeling of benefits as entitlements that are wrecking our national budget is an outright misrepresentation of facts (lie?). You are entitled to your opinion based on philosophical principles, but blaming the deficits and national debt on Social Security is not legitimate.

If the trustee (national government) accepts its fiduciary responsibility, the Social Security Trust Fund will be viable for as long as our nation remains viable. The trustee loaned or re-invested trust funds in lieu of raising income tax rates. Will they reclaim those funds? If they don't, they have not kept the trust of we who invested our funds in the system. Those politicians or political parties that do not demand fiduciary responsibility of the trustee should be deprived of their positions — voted out of office.

Reducing or eliminating benefit payments will not stimulate the economy. The majority of those receiving payments spend the entire amount on their daily living requirements. Taking that money away from them will certainly not increase their purchase of goods and services.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semiretired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at rcwinc@cheerful.com.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

