

Other Viewpoints

Regent's exit an unhappy sign

Gary Sherrer's shocking resignation from the Kansas Board of Regents was a sad note on which to end a long and distinguished career of public service to the state of Kansas.

At the beginning of the regents' May 18 meeting, Sherrer delivered a brief statement announcing his resignation. In the statement, Sherrer cited what he saw as an "atmosphere of mutual disrespect and distrust between many board members and myself." At the conclusion of the statement, he wished Kansas higher education leaders well and walked out the door.

Later, Sherrer told reporters he was upset that fellow board members refused to appoint him to lead a search committee to find a new president for Emporia State University, his alma mater. He said he had fond memories of the school and, "It meant a lot to me to chair it." However, he added, "a few people (on the board) were adamantly opposed and rejected my seeking that role."

Although his four-year term expired at the end of June, Sherrer didn't want to wait. "I am getting too old to be in places I don't want to be, with people I don't want to be with," said the 70-year-old Sherrer.

There may have been some good reasons not to put Sherrer in charge of the Emporia search, and, despite his disappointment, it's unlikely Sherrer would have made such a dramatic exit based solely on the search committee issue. In fact, Sherrer alluded to "a rather negative situation" on the board, adding, "It escalated, and I'm just tired of it."

Other board members expressed shock at Sherrer's departure, saying they thought the board was getting along just fine. It's hard to believe that was — or is — the case.

It hasn't been an easy year for the regents, dealing with tight budgets and politics. For instance, in another trust-related issue, Gov. Sam Brownback made a major point of not allowing the regents to administer the \$5 million approved for cancer, animal health and aviation research at Kansas University, Kansas State and Wichita State. Instead, he insisted the money go through the Kansas Department of Commerce. It's easy to see how such a contentious atmosphere could wear down the regents chairman.

Sherrer has been a dedicated public servant who served the state well as lieutenant governor and commerce secretary under Gov. Bill Graves. He was a committed and engaged member of the Board of Regents and was able to list a solid record of accomplishments as part of his resignation message.

Sherrer was one of three regents whose terms end on June 30; all three were eligible for reappointment. The governor now will have to appoint at least one new regent and perhaps three. As we've noted before, these appointments are extremely important to higher education and the state. Sherrer's departure only highlights the need for Brownback to choose carefully as he chooses the regents who will guide higher education in the state.

— The Lawrence Journal-World, via The Associated Press

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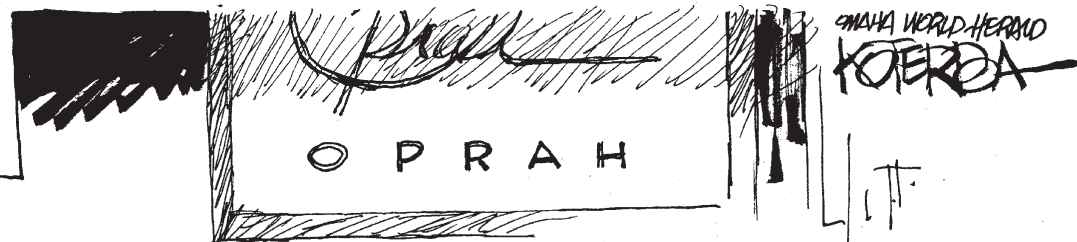
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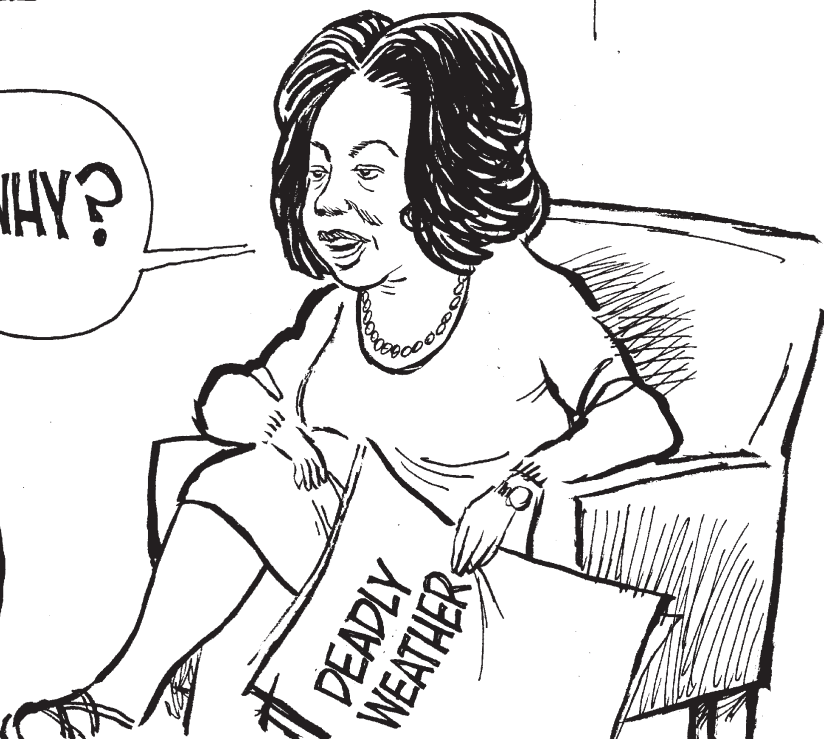
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IF ANYONE COULD'VE PULLED OFF THIS INTERVIEW...



WHY?



Visiting sports desk teaches new rules

I have never been much of a sports fan. So when I took over the sports reporting duties (temporarily) after Andy Heintz left the Colby Free Press, it was something a little outside my comfort zone.

Before he left I had taken a few sports pictures here and there and written one or two stories, but I never paid much attention to sports until I was thrust into the job at the tail end of the Colby High girls' excellent basketball season.

Growing up I would prefer to watch an episode of Star Trek rather than watch the game with my dad and my brother. There were times I would enjoy watching sports. My brother used to want to be a sportscaster, so he would watch the game and turn the sound down — this was before we owned a television with a mute button — and do his own play-by-play. It was fun to listen to.

I also liked going to games. In the 80s and early 90s my family used to go down to Mile High Stadium (the original) and watch the Denver Zephyrs, a minor league farm team for the Milwaukee Brewers. We liked to go with friends and tailgate before the game. We always sat real high up, and when we could we went for the fire works around the Fourth of July. When the Rockies moved in the Zephyrs moved out, but we kept going to games, first at Mile High and then at Coors Field. It was fun, but I never really followed the team and I never cared to watch them on television.

My grandparents live half the year in Arizona, affording us the opportunity to go to some spring training games. I had the chance to see Jim Abbott pitch with just one hand, he was amazing.

When I hit high school I still wasn't interested in sports. I joined the marching band, which we treated like a sport. We had tough day-long practices and state competitions. We had sports-like rivalries — first the Class 5A rich kids from Pomona and Fairview and later the Class 4A upstarts from Green River and Air Academy.



Kevin Bottrell

• Simple tricks and nonsense

We did play at halftime in football games and we took a smaller pep band to basketball games. Those were fun, but I never really cared about the games. The band had a long-standing feud with the football team anyway (chair-throwing, arson, that sort of thing) so if we watched the game it was only to make fun of our own team or to figure out when we needed to play the fight song.

And since high school I've never paid much attention to sports. Colorado State University didn't have much in the way of winning teams, so they were easy to ignore.

But growing up with my dad and my brother, who are huge sports fans, meant that I at least know the rules to most sports. Wrestling is something of a mystery to me, but fortunately I took over sports writing in the spring, so I was spared having to cover wrestling.

Since I also have my news editing duties, I haven't been able to devote the kind of time that Andy could. Mostly I have been able to get to the teams that had a lot of home games. This year that meant Colby Community College baseball and Colby High School softball, and boy did they have fantastic seasons. They each came just one game short of moving on to the highest competition, and they were fun to watch.

It was great watching freshman Haileigh Shull's grand slam at regionals, not to mention Caitlyn Wark's opening and closing home runs in that same game. It was fun watching Karly Kriss beat a throw to first without breaking a sweat or Kenzie Curry get strikeout after strikeout.

It was great watching R-Jay Joe come in

for an excellent relief effort against Fort Scott Community College or Jon Cotter make flawless throws to first base.

I got lucky with these teams, because if I had to choose I think baseball and softball are my favorites. I got to watch some of the high school baseball and college softball teams as well, and while they didn't have the kind of season that the other two did, their games were still a pleasure to watch.

Covering sports can be dangerous. I nearly got hit in the head with a baseball while standing on the first baseline at a high school baseball game. It was literally inches from my head. Needless to say after that I moved around behind the fence and out of the line of fire.

I was also able to make it to some tennis. The boys didn't do very well, but they are young and inexperienced. They have a coach who is a tireless optimist and with a season under their belts, I'm betting they can do much better. That is, as long as the school is still able to offer tennis.

One thing that has been great are the parents and the coaches. Most games I had at least one parent come up and talk to me, usually to see if I had found a good spot to take pictures (the baselines were my favorite). One grandfather even gestured out at the college softball team and asked me which one was mine. I had to tell him that at 26 I'm not old enough to have a daughter in college. A sister, sure, but not a daughter.

Next week the Free Press is getting a new sports editor. She's a University of Colorado graduate, but since I've never paid much attention to that kind of rivalry, I won't hold it against her. But my sports writing days have come to a close for now, so I will say congratulations to all the area teams and good luck next season.

Kevin Bottrell, news editor of the Colby Free Press, is a Colorado State University graduate who believes that the middle road is often the high one. Contact him at kbottrell @ nwkansas.com

State budget far from a victory

Other Opinions

• Paul Davis House Minority Leader

Last November the political landscape in Topeka dramatically changed. An influx of hard-right Republicans altered the power structure of the Legislature along with the arrival of Sam Brownback, the most conservative governor in modern Kansas history.

Several days after taking office, Gov. Brownback proposed the largest cut to our public schools in Kansas history. House Republicans went a step further by insisting that the Legislature make deeper cuts to state programs so that a large ending balance could be socked away. The final budget left many state agencies decimated and over \$72 million in the state's savings account.

Gov. Brownback called the budget "a victory for Kansas" and stated that he only wanted Republicans to vote for it. While we must recognize that a sizable budget gap had to be closed and cuts were inevitable, the magnitude of the cuts is staggering, especially considering that over \$1.3 billion was cut from what once was a \$6.5 billion state budget prior to Brownback taking office.

Throughout the budget discussions all that the far-right Republicans focused on was the number of the ending balance. In my time at

feel like winners?

Ask the people in Easton who no longer will have a parents as teachers program or after school programs for at-risk kids if they feel like winners?

Ask the 186 employees in the Wichita school district that just got laid off if they feel like winners?

Ask the parents who will find out that their child is in a much larger class in August and that they have to pay higher taxes if they feel like winners?

No, I would not describe this budget as a victory. Perhaps those who only see the numbers in this budget and want to ignore the impact to middle class Kansans are winners.

A victory is not a large ending balance without care or concern for the harm that may come of it.

Paul Davis is a State Representative from the 46th district (Lawrence) and was elected House Minority Leader in 2008.



Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

