

Other Viewpoints

Former KU coach gets a fresh start

Former University of Kansas football coach Turner Gill has landed on his feet at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., where he was recently named head football coach.

We wish him well and are pleased he so quickly found a job he is excited about.

Gill is a good man and a good football coach whose style simply wasn't suited to the Big 12 Conference, especially not at a school trying to climb out of the conference cellar.

That became evident throughout the two seasons the Jayhawks played under Gill and was reinforced upon his departure, when several of his players acknowledged the football program might be better off under a coach with a more disciplined approach. It seems some members of the team weren't self-starters and lacked the motivation to work as hard as they could have in the weight room and other areas.

It's one thing to ask, and expect, young players to put forth the effort required to improve themselves and the team. It's another thing to demand it. Gill asked for the effort but apparently didn't demand it, and, therefore, didn't get it from everyone.

That says as much about some of the players as it does Gill, but when a team goes 5-19 over two seasons and wins only one conference game, it's the coach who is held accountable.

Whether Gill had sufficient time to recruit his own players and develop them is debatable, and Gill has supporters who contend he wasn't given enough time considering the level of talent, or lack of talent, he found available when he accepted the KU job.

Fans who regularly visited KU's Memorial Stadium this fall quickly became aware some of the players weren't of Big-12 caliber. Yes, the Jayhawks had some good players and some very good players, but not enough of them – at least not enough who cared enough.

Coach Bill Snyder at Kansas State University is the acknowledged master of taking players with perhaps not as much talent as those available to other conference schools and getting them to excel. But his methods are different, too.

Had Gill still been working for the athletic director who hired him, he may have been given another year to show the football team was making progress. Then again, maybe not. But Gill was working this year for Sheahon Zenger, an athletic director in his first year with the university who certainly heard the rumblings from fans and boosters unhappy with the football program.

Athletic directors don't like being put on the hot seat by the performance of coaches they didn't hire. Zenger did what he thought he had to do.

Gill left Lawrence and KU as gracefully as he entered and conducted himself honorably throughout his brief tenure at the university. No one who knew him expected any different.

Gill now is at a university where he doesn't have to recruit, coach and compete against the likes of Kansas State, Texas, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State. He is in the type of place where his methods have brought him some success in the past. The people at Liberty University expect his manner and style will be a good fit for their program. We think so, too, and expect him to do well.

Good luck, coach.

—The Topeka Capital-Journal



People want their mail service

It's hard to tell whether the U.S. Postal Service will kill itself off before the Internet gets it, or the venerable agency will survive to serve the nation for another century or two.

Ben Franklin, revered as the first postmaster general (among other things), was among the founding fathers who realized that a young nation connected mostly by ocean transport would need a means of knitting its populace together. That's why the post office is the oldest federal agency, actually predating the Constitution.

But in the last five years, the service has fallen on hard times. First-class mail volume has dropped by 40 percent, the agency is losing \$9 billion a year and there's talk it might not make it.

A nation without mail? How would we survive?

If customers across the nation are anything like the ones who turned out for a regional public meeting last Monday in Colby, though, you can rest assured, people want postal service. And they can see what the Postal Service is doing to itself in its rush to cut back.

These people were not fooled by promises that somehow, taking all the mail into a few big cities for sorting will either solve all the Postal Service's problems, or even work. They know what "service" is like when mail has to go through those big-city sorting plants today. They can't see the need to haul in-town mail to Denver for processing before it comes back.

The Postal Service can. It has to cut costs, and labor is its biggest expense. It has to cut every hour it can, even though union contracts make that difficult. Postal managers envision a world where every letter is sorted down to "walk sequence" by big machines in the city offices, then placed in trays for shipment out to carriers.

Carriers, who today spend an hour or two "casing," or sorting, mail in the office would



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

just put the trays in their trucks and go to work. Offices would be consolidated, routes lengthened and employees trimmed. Just in mail handling, the service hopes to get rid of nearly 35,000 jobs. That after it has slimmed down from 880,000 workers five years ago to 559,000 today, nearly one-third of the workforce, all without any layoffs.

The only way this scheme will work, however, is if the service can use its big sorting machines 18 to 20 hours a day. Now, they run six to eight hours, sorting overnight. It wants to run them from 8 a.m. to 4 a.m., sorting all that mail down to delivery sequence. But to do that, it must give up the idea of overnight delivery to nearby addresses, something consumers have come to expect.

On the surface, it makes no sense to send a letter to my neighbor to Denver for sorting, but it would cost money to sort that letter here. Someone would have to handle it, the carriers would have to deal it into his or her trays and all that would take time – and money.

Only presorted mail like newspapers and, perhaps, some advertising would be exempt.

So, despite the cries of protest, it's most likely your mail will be taking a trip by sometime next year. It may not be to Denver, however. Roy Reynolds, the postal manager from Omaha who ran the meeting last week, seemed to pick up on the notion that depending on trucks to get mail from Colby to Denver and back is not a good idea.

"West is not the way to go," one resident

said, "unless you want to go skiing."

It's even money that the service will realize that Wichita, which currently sorts most of our inbound mail, would be a better bet. Mr. Reynolds admitted it's likely no one at the Postal Service has thought of weather when they decided our mail should go to Denver. It's 50 miles closer than Wichita; that's all.

It remains to be seen, however, whether anyone will use the mails after service slips from overnight to three days for a cross-town letter. One postmaster at the meeting, Darrel Evans of Quinter, said, "We are shooting ourselves in the foot for \$14,000 (the estimated savings from the Colby move)."

Others said they'd heard banks and businesses would bail out if their bills have to take an interstate trip before delivery.

"It doesn't look to me that cutting back service will save you any money," one said, considering the prospect of losing even more business.

Apparently, no one thought to study the mail and see if most of it goes east or west from this area, which could affect the cost.

Mr. Reynolds assured everyone that, strapped as it is, the Postal Service has made no decisions and wants to hear our thoughts. If you have any to add, you can send them to the district office, addressed to "Manager, Consumer and Industrial Contact, Central Plains District, Box 199504, Omaha, Neb 68119-9504." Write by Tuesday, however, or you'll miss the mail truck.

Your letter will go straight to Omaha, after going to Salina to be sorted, then to Wichita, then, well, you get the picture.

Steve Haynes is president of Nor'West Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

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Write a letter to the Postal Service

To the Editor:

Just a last-minute reminder to everyone not to forget to put a short note in the mail to the Postal Service about leaving our mail service alone!

According to information from last week's meeting with the Postal Service, letters to the district office must be postmarked by Dec. 27. Just write something along these lines

Manager, Consumer and Industry Contact
Central Plains District
P.O. Box 199504
Omaha, NE 68119-9504

Dear Manager:

This letter is to ask you to re-instate the sorting and processing centers back to where they were a year ago. And if that isn't possible



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

at this time, then at least call a halt to further changes until you have realistically reviewed what those changes would do to every rural community in every state.

You already know the problems that delayed mail service would create for the elderly who get their prescriptions by mail; for mail-in ballots for states that have "vote by mail" only; for small rural newspapers; and for the legal

community who accepts only original documents, and does not accept faxed or e-mailed documents.

Less service and higher postage for the citizens who did not create the problem is not going to fix the problem. Don't cut service to the citizens you are absolutely mandated to serve – the same ones who made your service profitable for many years.

Make the cuts where they should be made. It's apparent your problem lies within your own organization.

Sign your names and stick it in the mail before Dec. 27.

Vera Sloan
Colby

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.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We

sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length

and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate) will not be published after the Thursday before the polls open.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

