



Other Viewpoints

Kansas scouting shamed by files

Seeing south-central Kansas show up in the Boy Scouts of America’s “perversion files” was a shock – and a reminder, like the Penn State and Catholic Church scandals, that there is no justice for children victimized by sexual predators unless authorities do the right thing.

The shame is that the recent progress in identifying and prosecuting child sexual abuse doesn’t help the victims of crimes committed and covered up so long ago.

The 14,500 pages of confidential files, dating from 1959 to 1985, were released in mid-October by order of the Oregon Supreme Court. According to the Associated Press, the 14 Kansas cases in the files include six from troops in Wichita, one from Arkansas City, and the shocking story of a Newton Scoutmaster who admitted holding all-night parties at his home in which he took a boy at a time into his bedroom for “immoral acts.” An investigation revealed that perhaps 10 boys had been molested by the man, who also was affiliated with the local YMCA; a second man acknowledged he had molested at least two Scouts.

The files yielded a 1961 letter from the then-Harvey County attorney explaining his decision not to prosecute the men because doing so “would cause great harm to the reputations” of the Boy Scouts organization and the local YMCA, and also damage the reputations of several churches in town. He wrote that he felt “the price which the community would have to pay for the punishment of these two individuals would be too great, in view of the fact that the damage thusly done to these organizations would be serious and lasting.” Instead, according to the letter, the men were required to cut all ties with youth groups and get psychiatric treatment.

No doubt there would have been fallout for the groups and pain for the community. But ask those who were molested as children about the “serious and lasting” damage done to them.

Ignoring such criminal behavior in an effort to spare reputations, institutions and communities merely compounds the offense by treating victims as if they and their suffering don’t matter.

The cover-ups also end up destroying more lives, as predators who should be off the streets instead are shuffled around to new positions. Three of the named abusers in the Wichita and Arkansas City cases were convicted years later of sex crimes, including crimes against children.

It’s important to note that the Boy Scouts organization has changed, having adopted such preventive measures as criminal background checks, training programs and mandatory reporting of abuse to law enforcement. Kansas law is far more enlightened on the issue, too, mandating long prison terms for those who rape and exploit children.

But these changes have come too late for thousands of child victims, who have been victimized first by their abusers and again by the silence of organizations meant to serve and nurture them.

– The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the *Colby Free Press*, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or e-mail colby.editor @ nwkansas.com.

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Early Winona farmer faced challenges

This column and my next two will contain excerpts from the book “My Life on the Kansas Plains,” by Leslie Linville, published by Prairie Printers Inc. I was given permission to use information from that publication by Harold Linville of Colby, one of Leslie’s eight children. In my last column I mentioned that Leslie’s oldest son died, but got the son’s name. He was Richard.

Leslie Linville was born Jan. 23, 1904, to William Henry and Alice Mae Linville in Beloit. Because he farmed in northwest Kansas during some of the worst years in the history of the U.S., I have chosen to tell his story.

Leslie was his parent’s oldest child; his sister Doris was also born in Beloit in 1909. Youngest sister Margaret was born in 1911 in Winona.

Leslie attended high school in Winona, graduating in 1923. Right after graduation, he started farming for himself.

“In those days we could get all the land we could farm with horses to do the work,” he wrote. “There was not much expense involved then.”

In 1924 Leslie bought his first tractor. It was a forerunner of the John Deere line, the Waterloo Boy and, he said, it nearly proved to be his Waterloo. He reported it had a cumbersome, two-cylinder engine mounted on steel wheels with angle-iron lugs to keep the wheels from slipping. It caused him all kinds of trouble.

“But, from it and my Model T Ford,” Leslie said, “I learned my engines.” He planted barley for himself and his neighbors who paid 50 cents per acre.

Leslie married Bertha Williams, a neighbor and sister of one of his best friends, in 1926 in the Methodist church in Winona. She was a school teacher before they were married and had taught in 1924 at Orange Lawn, a school southeast of Winona. The next two terms she taught in the Pleasant Valley school about five miles southwest of Leslie’s parents’ farm.

His parents were going to move to Missouri, so Leslie rented their farm. That is where he



Marj Brown

• Marj’s Snippets

and Bertha began their married life, on the Smoky Hill River about 11 miles southwest of Winona.

Their oldest son Richard was born in 1928, and Walter, the second boy, was born in 1929 while they still lived on that place.

When Walter was born, Leslie took Bertha to the Hays hospital where she stayed for about two weeks, not unusual for those times. When he brought her home it was late in the evening and almost dark. After he got Bertha and the children settled, he went to the barn to do his chores and milk the cows.

When he went out of the barn to get a milk cow, he was attacked by his bull from behind and it nearly killed him. After the bull had thoroughly stomped him and crushed him up against the barn, it threw Leslie back almost into the barn. He was then able to crawl around more into the barn but could go no further. Leslie wrote that he must have been out of the bull’s sight because it didn’t come into the barn, but it did tear the door off of its hinges.

Later, when Bertha came to check on him, he managed to warn her and she didn’t come into the corral but ran to the neighbors a half mile east and got help.

Bertha and the children were taken to her parents in Winona and Leslie was taken to the Hays hospital.

Leslie passed out on the way, and when they brought him into the hospital his heart stopped. The doctor had to restart his heart with artificial respiration.

In a few days they put him in a cast that extended from below his knees to just under his chin. All he could move was his arms. He had

broken his hips, back and 17 ribs. The doctor didn’t hold out much hope for him.

Leslie’s mother and sisters came out from Missouri to help him and Bertha came to Hays every time she got a chance. He was in the hospital a little over a month. When he was released, he took a taxi to the depot and a train to Oakley alone. He never did even use a crutch.

That winter they lived with Bertha’s parents. A good neighbor, Tom Ukele, and his family took the Linville’s livestock and cared for them until Leslie was able to tend them.

Later he learned some neighbor children had been hiding in a tree and tormenting that bull by throwing sticks and rocks at it for a long time before the accident.

When he was able to get back to farming, he made a deal to plant a quarter of Black Amber cane for Ray Herschberger. Herschberger would furnish the seed.

This type of cane seed was used in dye manufacturing and there had been a good market for it the year before. Now everyone was planting Black Amber cane the same as Leslie.

When the cane was harvested, Leslie hauled it to the McAllister elevator in a four-wheel trailer made from the running gears of an old Model T Ford. It had a wagon box mounted on it and was pulled by a car.

Every night Leslie hauled a load of that cane seed home with him, put it in his granary and could not sell it. He said he just about never got rid of it. He tried to feed it to the hogs but they didn’t even like it. No one planted Black Amber after that and they even quit using it to make dye.

In my next column I will tell what Leslie said about harvesting in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

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.

Car trouble draws a crowd

It was like buzzards circling the body. The Jones kid, Randy, was out in the Mule Barn parking lot with the hood up on his car. He was staring down into it as a first-time parachutist would look out the airplane door. You never quite knew for sure what lay ahead. “Looks like Randy’s got problems,” said Steve.

“Let’s have a look,” said Dud. So coffee was left to get cold and the entire Supreme Court of All Things Mechanical – Steve, Dud, Doc, Herb and Dewey – trooped out to see what was going on.

They formed a powerful semi-circle of wisdom around the youth and his engine with folded arms and facial expressions that said, “It’s okay, Kid. We’re here.”

Dewey spoke first. “Having trouble, Randy?”

“Won’t start.”

Doc, who has the most initials after his name, said, “Give it a try.”

Randy ground the engine, but it wouldn’t kick over.

“Stop! Stop!” Doc yelled. “Don’t want to flood it.”

All Doc knows about flooding is that the

Other Opinions

• Slim Randles Home Country

animals went on board, two by two.

“Randy, I think it’s the solenoid,” said Steve, looking wise.

“Doesn’t have one, Steve,” Randy said.

“Sure it does. All cars have solenoids.”

“Not the new ones. Haven’t made solenoids in years.”

Steve’s expression said, “Young punks, what do they know?” But his voice said, “Well, what do you know about that?”

“Need a jump?” Dewey asked.

“Got plenty of spark,” Randy said.

Randy looked at the older men and then bent to the engine and smiled. His voice came floating up over the radiator. “Might be the junction fibrillator. Or it could be a malfunction of the Johnson switch. If I rerun the wire from the

organ housing to the pump by-pass, that might get it done.”

When Randy looked up, all the men had gone back in for coffee. He smiled and called Triple A on his cell phone.

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

