



## Other Viewpoints

### Kansas River an asset for state

Gov. Sam Brownback didn't exactly take a day off to float, or paddle, along a stretch of the Kansas River – he was acting in his official capacity to draw attention to the recreational opportunities the river offers – but it wouldn't qualify as one of the most taxing days he has endured since being elected in 2010, either.

More people, Kansans and visitors from other states and countries, should follow Brownback's lead.

When most people in this state think about getting out and spending some time on the water, they're considering visiting one of Kansas' many lakes. That's always a fine idea, and there are enough lakes to meet everyone's needs, whether they want to fish, ski, float, paddle or just camp somewhere away from the concrete, asphalt and fumes.

The Kansas River, though, in an underused asset that deserves more attention than it is getting, despite efforts to spread word of the opportunities it presents for much of the year.

Brownback and his guide, Brian Leaders of the National Park Service, led a group of about 100 people in canoes and kayaks along a 10-mile stretch of the river between Wamego and Belvue. The river flows from a point near Junction City where the Republican and Smoky Hill rivers merge, all the way east to the Missouri River, a trip of 170 miles.

The Kansas River has its danger points, including a weir in Topeka that directs river water to an intake for the municipal water system, but they can be avoided, or managed, by responsible boaters. A portage is required for boats approaching the Topeka weir, and boat ramps give canoeists exit points if they desire to bypass some stretches of the river.

The ramp at Belvue was dedicated on arrival of the flotilla of canoes and kayaks. Mike Calwell, one of the founding members of Friends of the Kaw, which helped build many of the ramps, says he "fell in love" with the Kansas River and figured other people might, too.

They probably would if they spent some time on it.

If Brownback's Thursday excursion encourages more Kansans to view the river as a recreational destination, he should consider it a good day at the office.

– *The Topeka Capital-Journal, via the Associated Press*

### Where to write, call

**U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774  
roberts.senate.gov/public/

**U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966.  
Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/

**U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp**, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 136-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 Ralph.Ostmeyer@senate.ks.gov

**State Rep. Ward Cassidy**, (120th District) State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 151-S, Topeka, Kan., 66612, (785) 296-7616 ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov

**State Rep. Don Hineman**, (118th District) State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 50-S, Topeka, Kan., 66612, (785) 296-7636 don.hineman@house.ks.gov

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## Community Building rounds out park

Information for the Fike Park series comes from research done by Opal Linville at the Prairie Museum of Art and History.



**Marj Brown**

### • Marj's Snippets

We are now up to 1954 in our Fike Park history. That was the year Colby people decided they needed to build a Community Building on the last available lots in the blocks where Fike Park had developed.

Buildings that had to be purchased by the city and then torn down to make room for the new civic center included the Bjork home and welding shop on the corner of Fifth and Court. Other lots purchased were owned by Frank Wolf.

On June 24, 1954, a sale of the buildings and accessories was held to clear the area for ground work to be done. The Community Building was finished and dedicated on Veteran's Day 1955. It has been a big asset to Colby since, bringing many conventions and performances to our town. The auditorium-gymnasium seats 2,500.

In 1960, a new library was built and the library moved out of the City Hall to the Pioneer Memorial Library building at 375 W. Fourth St.

In March 1963, the old band shell in the park was enclosed with siding so that it could be used for storage by the city.

In May 1965, people decided something had to be done about the condition of the Thomas County Honor Roll Service Board at the southwest entrance to Fike Park. It listed the names of all of the men who served in World War II, though some men who left for service at the

end of the war didn't have their names on it.

Many of the names were in such bad condition that they couldn't be read. It was determined that it would cost more to put the board back in first-class condition than could be afforded at that time.

A story in the *Colby Free Press* said: "The Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion took the matter up with their members – veterans of World War II in large numbers – and it was decided that the best thing to do was to remove the board from the brick mounting and save the names of those who lost their lives in World War II and place them on a permanent plaque which would be placed in the courthouse for permanent keeping.

"Then the city has indicated they will place a large city directory in the space where the names have been removed (on the plaque by the park). This all takes time and money, but this seems to these men most concerned, the best thing to do. The small name plates are to be given to the men or their relatives for mementoes."

By 1965, Colby had grown so much the city decided a new water tower should be built in Fike Park. The tower was removed and a

much larger tower replaced it. The new tower was put to use on July 1. That tower was torn down and a larger tower was built on College Drive around 1989; the exact date could not be found, so if anyone knows that date for sure, Opal Linville would like them to call her at the museum.

In 1973, the front of the fire department area of the City Hall was covered with stone to match the city building. In 1976, the police department moved from City Hall to the new Law Enforcement Center just south of the courthouse.

In 1987, the southwest entrance to Fike Park took on another new look. The old city directory sign was removed and an area garden club planted a small flower garden. Jim Landry, a senior at Colby High School, fashioned a large, sturdy, wooden sign with the name Fike Park engraved on it as his Eagle Scout project. On Oct. 7, 1987, Jim and his father, Francis Landry, and several of their friends hung the sign behind the flower bed at the southwest entrance to Fike Park where the directory once stood. It did a lot to improve the looks of that entrance.

*My next column will wrap up the history of Fike Park. Following that, with Opal helping with research, I will start telling the history of the Thomas County Courthouse.*

*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.*

## Newspaper journalists do the leg work

A couple of years ago, I was host to a leadership development class from northwest Kansas on a tour of the Kansas Press Association, followed by a discussion of the newspaper industry and how it had changed in the past decade.

I posed a series of questions to the group. First, I asked for a show of hands of how many in the room subscribed to at least one print newspaper. More than half the class answered in the affirmative.

Of those remaining, I then asked how many regularly got their news from one or more newspaper websites. All but one held up their hands.

OK, I continued for that one remaining holdout: Do you consume your news at a non-newspaper Internet site? That last guy held out for a moment, then nodded his head in agreement.

My point was simple: while some think they aren't a "newspaper reader" if they don't receive a printed copy on their doorstep or in the mail or pick it up at the local convenience store, the source of most "authoritative news" in our country is still – you guessed it – the newspaper.

What is "authoritative" news? It's news written by journalists, those who are trained to ask questions, write objectively and strive every day to get all sides of a story.

When you read "news" online or on your mobile phone – especially local news – you're more likely than not reading a story written by a newspaper journalist.

How is that, you ask? Because much of what is available on the Internet uses as its basis information first assembled by a journalist. In



**Other Opinions**

### • Doug Anstaett Kansas Press

other words, the facts of the story that lead to those interesting discussions at the coffee shop and online originated with a journalist, and in most cases one who works for a newspaper.

Oct. 6 through 12 is National Newspaper Week, a time set aside each year to recognize the role of newspapers in our daily lives.

As you know, our industry is in the midst of dramatic change. Those technological advancements listed above have put pressure on our newspaper editors and publishers because they require them to collect the news and deliver it through a variety of avenues: print, online and, more often these days, through a mobile device.

Even with these challenges, newspaper staff members have continued to perform their two primary functions in American society: to keep the public informed and to be a watchdog on government.

James Madison, our nation's fourth president, said: "A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: And a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

