

from our viewpoint...

Fire service talks moving in circles

The discussion between the City of Goodland and the Sherman County Rural Fire Board continues, but Tuesday the two sides appeared far apart in the description of what they hope to accomplish.

Discussions about an agreement or consolidation have been ongoing in spits and spurts for nearly six years, and from the presentation on Tuesday it could take much longer.

The fire board, which was established many years ago and through state laws, feel the answer is full consolidation. The resolution presented to the city was a version of a resolution adopted by De Soto and Johnson County to consolidate their fire protection.

The resolution has been drafted with the legal language to accomplish the consolidation of the city and rural fire district into one High Plains Consolidated Fire District. The resolution would replace the current fire district resolution and includes the creation of a new five person fire board. The city would appoint two, the county would appoint two and the fifth would be appointed from the Kanorado area.

Sounds like a reasonable approach from the perspective of the current rural fire board who are trying to move forward with the consolidation they felt the city commission wanted.

The city commissioners on Tuesday seemed to back away from the consolidation term and kept talking about an agreement to provide fire protection services.

Confusion on the fire board's side is from the third draft of an agreement from the city saying: "...the District and the City are desirous to combine fire protection and fire management services, to combine use of equipment and other resources owned by the City and the District;..."

Mayor John Garcia maintains it is his desire to continue to work with the fire board, but he wants to see more of a contract for services between the city and fire board rather than talking about consolidation.

The draft agreement the city submitted to the fire board in the last round gave the fire board further confusion about consolidation with a section setting up a new fire board.

"The Fire Chief shall answer to a Fire Board. This Board shall determine appropriate personnel policies and procedures, as well as determining the salary and benefits for the Fire Chief and other firefighting personnel. This Board shall be comprised of four (4) representatives from the City and three (3) from the District...."

Such a "Fire Board" would require a change in the existing fire district resolution, and that is what the existing fire board presented to the city commissioners. The city agreements, as presented so far, have not been reviewed by the city attorney, and we feel that may be adding to the problem.

We feel as City Commissioner Bill Finley said, "We (the city commissioners) don't really know what we want."

Getting the legal wording right to cover all the questions – or at least as many as possible – appears to be the main stumbling block in this process.

If the city wants to contract for fire protection services with the existing rural fire board that is a different approach than the consolidation the rural fire board seems to be taking.

Getting the attorney's – both city and county – involved in drafting the "agreement" might help both sides narrow the differences and find a way to reach an accord.

Mayor Garcia made the point it is the fire protection the city wants to see improved. "It does not matter whether the departments are consolidated or not the important thing is if my house is on fire I want the firemen to come put it out." – Tom Betz



Not enough time on the weekends

I love weekends, but I never seem to get everything done. Three-day weekends are just a little longer way to not get stuff finished.

I suppose most people have the same problem. Every weekend is like New Year's Eve for me. I make all these resolutions, and most of them never get done.

I'm a list maker. I have a book that I write down what I want to do each day. That way, if I have a task that has to be done at a certain time, hopefully I won't miss it.

I even separate the work and home stuff. This is a good thing. But I always have more lines in my little book than time in my schedule.

My list looks a little like this:

- Home**
1. Nap.
 2. Walk.
 3. Fold laundry.
 4. Clean cat boxes.
 5. Clean dog pen.
 6. Bake zucchini bread.
 7. Get groceries.



cynthia haynes

• open season

8. Put away Christmas decorations.
 9. Put out trash.
 10. Clean out hall closet.
- Office**
1. Write basketball story.
 2. Write wrestling story.
 3. Write column.
 4. Take pictures at soup luncheon.
 5. Finish payroll report.
 6. File stuff on chair.
 7. Enter postal reports in computer.

While a good half of this stuff won't get done, the first two items under home will. These are high-priority items that always get done. Sometimes in reverse order. Sometimes early. Sometimes late. But I get really cranky if

I don't get my nap, and Steve gets out of sorts if we don't get a walk.

The pictures will be taken and the stories get written before the paper is finished Monday night. The cat boxes and dog pen will get cleaned and the trash put out before the trash man comes on Monday morning.

The zucchini may have to sit in the refrigerator for another day or week, but those Christmas decorations will get taken to the garage before Lent. I just know they will.

As for the hall closet and the pile on the chair in my office. They'll still be on my to-do list for the next several months. Hey, they haven't been cleaned up or filed in a couple of years, so what's the hurry.

Besides, if I get those tasks done, I'll just have to add something else tough to the list, and I really don't want to have to deal with the basement at home or the back room at the office. They've been ignored since before some of our employees were born, and would take up way too much time – and space on the list.

A rose by any other name

Several years ago I heard it said that garbage is the ugly side of plenty. No matter what you choose to call it – solid waste, refuse or some other more politically correct phrase – garbage remains just that, garbage.

You know the stuff I'm talking about, too. That awful pungent collection we set on the curb each week. Torn tennis shoes, moldy grass clippings, empty food packages, food scraps – just about anything we don't want sitting around our houses. Most of it is originally packed in plastic and winds up on another trash bag or by the refuse control people.

Some regions of our country, especially the east and west coasts, are literally being covered with garbage and waste. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) figures show that in 2010, Americans generated about 250 million tons of trash and recycled and composted nearly 85 million tons of this material. On average, we recycled and composted 1.51 pounds out of our individual waste generation of 4.43 pounds per person per day.

In the State of Garbage In America report the estimated tons of municipal solid waste generated in the United States during 2002 was 369 million tons. That resulted in an average per capita generation of 1.31 tons/person. Per capita rates calculated for individual states range from a low of 0.68 in South Dakota to a high of 1.73



Insight this week

• john schlageck

tons in Kansas. And that was 10 years ago. No matter how you haul it to the dump, this country has a rapidly growing waste problem. While some people know about this growing challenge, few have the ability, or care to exert the effort, or spend the money to do anything about solving this dilemma.

Few Americans or Kansans will feel down in the dumps about the problem as long as they can carry their bags of trash to the curb in the morning and find them gone when they arrive home from work at night.

And while picking away at the waste problem individually may not seem to matter it can and it will. One of the easiest things we can do to slow this growing trash problem is recycle.

Recycling does not begin with empty beverage containers and yesterday's newspapers. It starts with shopping lists and the questions we must ask ourselves before taking an item to the checkout counter.

Do I need this product?
Is the package recyclable or returnable?

Does a similar product come with less packaging?

Can I reuse this disposable product?
Is there a non-disposable alternative?

How many times can I use this product before I throw it away?

How long will this product last?

Can this product be repaired rather than discarded?

If the product is something I seldom use, can I borrow or rent it?

Will disposal of this product be hazardous to the environment? If so, is there a safer alternative?

At the checkout counter, choose recyclable paper sacks rather than non-recyclable plastic ones.

Our garbage glut is the product of an American compulsion for convenience and our need to save precious time. That said, it's high time to rid ourselves of such backward thinking and look forward to a future of limiting our waste and the garbage we pile in already crowded dumping sites.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for more than 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

He must have been an important man

Les Anderson must have been important, his son Spike speculated, looking out at a sea of faces that nearly filled a vast suburban auditorium owned by Wichita State University.

He seemed a little surprised at that, and seemed somehow to doubt his dad had thought of himself that way, yet here were all those people.

I'm not sure I ever thought of Les as important. I thought of him first as a friend, as a damn fine editor, a good writer, as a teacher of journalism.

How he wound up drawing all those people together does make quite a story. He was born in tiny Viola, southwest of Wichita, and moved to his long-time "hometown" of Valley Center, north of the city, only when he was 14.

After graduating from high school there, he went to Fort Hays State College, then to the University of Missouri for a master's degree in journalism. He came home to work for the *Wichita Eagle* in 1971.

By 1975, Les left a startup weekly in Wichita to found the *Ark Valley News* in Valley Center, and in 1977 he started teaching at Wichita State. Both are both full-time jobs, but if they wore Les down, he never complained.

Much later, he sold the paper – twice – and



steve haynes

• along the sappa

finally "retired" to just teaching. In 2009, he was honored by the university, which promoted him to the rank full professor. He was the first to be elevated to that rank with only a master's degree in many years, it's said. That is a measure of what his bosses and colleagues thought of him as a teacher, in a world where schools are graded down for faculty lacking a doctoral "meal ticket."

Spike professed inadequacy when he talked about his dad – "Unfortunately, he wasn't here to edit this," he said. "I'm sure he'd had plenty of comments." – but he spoke eloquently about a man who didn't seem to know "how important he was."

He was a man, his son said, who volunteered to sleep in a cardboard box outside his church to raise money for the homeless, and who left baskets of fresh tomatoes from his garden for a new neighbor.

"If you die young," a fellow editor intoned, "I guess you can have a big funeral."

At 62, nearly 63, he was younger than a lot of us in the press gallery. But I think it was more than that.

Les won a lot of awards, served on the board and as president of the state Press Association, influenced thousands of students, fought in his stories and columns for what he thought was right. But perhaps his biggest impact was summed up by a former student:

"Your dad changed my life," she told Spike.

That, and he was a heck of a good guy.

A cartoon image from 1971 shows Les with curly red hair, but most of that was gone by the time we met him. Another, by long-time Eagle cartoonist Richard Crowson, shows him as a somewhat-intimidated angel arriving in Heaven to tutor William Allen White.

Forgive me for writing about someone most of you didn't know, but there are days, when as my old boss in Kansas City once told me, "news is something that happens close to an editor."

A lot of people did know Les, and we are going to miss him.

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e-mail: star.news@nwkansas.com

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nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(nt.betz@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. (support@nwkansas.com)

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