

from our viewpoint...

## Passing of Reagan marks end of era

The passing of former President Ronald Reagan marks the end of an era as surely as the fall of the Soviet Union. Reagan came to prominence with “The Speech,” an accounting of the rise of communism and the threat it posed to freedom.

The Speech catapulted the ex-actor into prominence in Republican party circles and among conservatives around the nation.

That notoriety in turn led him to run for governor of California, where despite cries that he had no political experience, he won the race against a legendary veteran pol, Assembly Speaker Pat Brown.

Amassing a credible record as governor, Reagan became in turn a viable candidate on the national scene. He eventually won the Republican nomination and went on to win the presidency.

A creature of the Cold War, he was at home pushing a huge defense budget and at the same time talking with Soviet leaders. While some were surprised at the fall of communism, the end of the Soviet empire and the demise of the Berlin Wall, perhaps Reagan was not.

His detractors said he was too old, too slow-witted and too conservative. Though he campaigned for a balanced budget, he ran up some huge deficits.

But on his watch, the free nations did prevail and the Dark Empire faded away.

His contemporary, Margaret Thatcher, former prime minister of Britain and a fellow conservative, said of him, that Reagan has a better claim than anyone of having led the Free World to victory in the Cold War.

The Iron Maiden was one of his chief allies in that struggle, which she noted, ended in victory without a shot being fired.

Some said Reagan simply spent the Russians into bankruptcy. Others implied that the communist system, which once seemed so formidable, had rotted from within and would have fallen no matter who had been president.

He was the only union president — he led the Screen Actors Guild — ever to occupy the White House, though the AFL-CIO may not have supported him much.

In later years, the ex-president lived in increasing obscurity as his Alzheimer’s grew steadily worse.

From the vantage point of the next century, his name harkens to a simpler time when Americans knew who the enemy was and who the good guys were, a time when Republicans stood for strong defense and smaller government and movie heroes could realize the American dream.

For a “B” list actor, Ronald Reagan played pretty well. Few on the stage today could match his stature. — *Steve Haynes*

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## Damage brings respect for tornadoes

I don’t know about you, but I have a new respect for tornadoes.

I have lived in this small community for seven years.

Bad storms and tornadoes have skirted around this town for all the time I’ve lived here. Last weekend they got too close for comfort.

Several tornadoes were in the area, one very large one. Twelve homes were destroyed — literally gone — south and east of town, and 12 more were damaged.

There was a lot of devastation, and many acts of kindness following.

I went out at dawn the day after to see what I could do to help, and emergency crews were already on the scene - many had been working all night.

Roads were blocked off already — to keep out the looky-loos and possible looters. (Isn’t that a terrible commentary on our society?)

As usual the M & M’s were in evidence by noon the day after the storm.

The M & M’s are known by disaster response teams. You probably know them are Methodists and Mennonites. I guess the Red Cross re-



Lorna  
Gt

• commentary

sponded too, although I didn’t personally see them. The Salvation Army was here for three days — transporting volunteer workers and hot meals from the United Methodist Hot Food Disaster trailer from Hutchinson area, which set up shop on Main Street.

Our town was out of electricity for awhile — some sections for days. That created a water shortage as the generator couldn’t keep up with the pump. Officials expected it to last for at least two days since one of the big transformers had been taken out with the homes.

Our hearts go out to the victims of this tragedy, but we have much for which to be thankful. There was only one injury and no loss of life.

People have responded as well, and better, than you would expect. People walked the

fields to pick up debris so that the quickly-coming harvest will be accomplished with a minimum of damage to machinery. Some fields won’t need harvesting, but they are few. The surrounding fields will have good yields. And if the huge tornado had been even one mile to the north, our town would have lost a lot more homes and had more severe recovery problems.

I couldn’t help but think: the storm came the night before we Christians celebrate Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit, as a mighty wind, was breathed into Jesus’ disciples after His ascension into heaven. The disciples were all empowered to do the mighty acts that Jesus had done. Maybe this wind sweeping across our area was meant to teach us something too.

Think about how insignificant material things are at times like this. If nothing else, we in this area are all humbled by the extreme power of God’s nature — showing us once again that human beings are really not in control.

Maybe it’s time for all of us to re-evaluate our lives’ priorities.

## There were highlights of legislative session

**Editor’s Note:** This is part of a column written by the late Stan Clark just days before his death in a dust-induced traffic accident on I-70, rounding up accomplishments of the Kansas Legislature.

What did the Kansas Legislature accomplished this year? Here are some highlights:

### Economic Development

The Kansas Center for Entrepreneurship was established within the Department of Commerce. Its purpose is to increase seed capital for entrepreneurs, especially in distressed and rural communities; work with the Board of Regents and Board of Education to create training and classes in entrepreneurship; and be a resource center, clearing house and referral source.

Most area bankers will tell you 75 percent of the deposits are held by people 65 years of age or over. For several generations, when our grandparents died and their assets were distributed, most of the money left the area. In an attempt to turn this tide, the Legislature authorized the creation of seven regional foundations. Every donation to these foundations can receive a 50 percent tax credit. The goal is that each foundation will have \$2 million within 3 years to invest in new businesses in rural Kansas.

Commercial buildings that have been approved by local city or county officials and the secretary of commerce will be eligible for a rebate of property tax on improvements. The idea is if you take a building that currently has a tax value of \$25,000, fix it up and the new tax value is \$100,000, for five years you will receive a rebate on the increased value, and then for years six through 10, you will pay increased property taxes on an additional 20 percent of the increased value. At the end of 10 years, the entire building is in the tax roll.

An “accredited angel investor” can invest in a rural business, and receive a 50 percent tax



Stan  
Clark

• newsletter

credit not to exceed \$50,000 on each business for up to five businesses. The goal is to encourage business investment in rural Kansas instead of investing in Wall Street. The investor hopefully not only will have a financial stake in the business but will also serve as an advisor.

Reduced the franchise tax from \$2 per \$1,000 in assets to \$1.25. This will lower taxes for 31,000 small businesses. This change is revenue neutral because the former cap was raised to apply to a greater percentage of the assets of larger corporations.

Delayed implementation of the Streamlined Sales Tax Project until January 2005.

Now is the time to crystallize your dream, pool our resources, unravel the tangled mess of wool and truly bring new life to our communities. Beside the “enterprise facilitation” program that is available in several counties in my district, your local economic development organization, local utilities and KREDA (Western Kansas Rural Economic Development) will be more than happy to assist you.

### Insurance

Health Savings Accounts will be available in Kansas within the next six weeks. Health Savings Accounts are similar to Individual Retirement Accounts except the money is used for medical expenses rather than retirement.

An individual can put \$2,600 tax free every year and a family \$5,150 into these accounts. All unused amounts can be carried forward. At retirement age, any amount due the employee from unused vacation or sick leave can be placed in this account tax free and used to pay Medi-

care premiums. Money in this account will be used to pay medical expenses and can be used to pay long-term care insurance premiums.

Everyone who opens a HSA has to also have a health plan with an annual deductible of at least \$1,000 for individual coverage and at least \$2,000 for family coverage.

### Public Safety

Provided an approval process and funding mechanism so local emergency dispatch centers will have the equipment to locate where an emergency cell phone call is coming from. Each cell phone will pay 50 cents per month to pay for this equipment; one-half of this fee will go directly to the dispatch center and the other half will be grants awarded to rural dispatch centers.

Another bill would allow local emergency radios to use the Kansas Department of Transportation’s communication towers and help agencies move to the 800 megahertz communication channels.

### Oil, Gas & Electricity

Kansas entered the competition with a number of other states for a \$1 billion experimental, emission-free, coal-fired electric generation facility. Our central location, national rail lines and existing oilfields make us a viable candidate. The site selection criteria is still being developed by the U.S. Department of Energy but at least one location in my district looks like it meets the preliminary site criteria.

There are a number of challenges remaining, chief among them writing a constitutional school funding formula. It has been rewarding to serve the citizens of Cheyenne, Decatur, Gove, Graham, Greeley, Logan, Norton, Rawlins, Scott, Sheridan, Sherman, Thomas, Trego, Wallace and Wichita counties in the Kansas Senate the past 10 years and I look forward to continuing this service. The district expands to also include Lane, Ness and Rooks counties.

## garfield

