

from our viewpoint...

Senate candidates to face off Monday

We all have a stake in who represents us in Topeka from our 40th Senatorial District.

We were well represented for neary 10 years by Sen. Stan Clark of Oakley, who, unfortunately, lost his life in a duststorm in late May on Interstate-70 near his home. His wife Ruth is filling out his term but is not a candidate to succeed him in the coming election.

Monday at 6 p.m., in the Frahm Theatre at Colby Community College, a 90-minute debate open to the public at no charge, will feature the candidates for that office — two Republicans who will battle for the Aug. 3 primary vote, and a Democrat, who the primary winner will face on Nov. 2. The debate, sponsored by area radio stations, **will not** be broadcast live. It will be recorded and replayed later by each station.

The papers in the Nor’ West Newspapers group are conducting personal interviews with these same three candidates and other candidates involved in races in their own counties. The information collected in these interviews will be flowing to the readers of those six newspapers — *Colby Free Press*, *The Goodland Star-News*, *The St. Francis Herald*, *the Bird City Times*, *The Oberlin Herald* and *The Norton Telegram* — next week.

The Republican primary election candidates for the 40th Senatorial District are Dan Rasure of Goodland and Ralph Ostmeyer of Grinnell. Rasure is dipping his toes in the political waters for the very first time. He’s the youngest at 22, and is alert, determined and a student of the process. Ostmeyer, on the other hand, has two terms experience as Kansas House representative from the 118th District. He had filed for re-election to that seat but withdrew that filing to enter the Senate race after the death of Sen. Clark. He’s older, experienced and also determined.

Tim Peterson of Monument is the Democrat. Peterson has a long history of involvement in the Democratic Party and is currently chairman of the First Congressional District. He has the desire and the drive.

The debate, sponsored by radio stations in Colby and Goodland, and is the brainchild of James Claasssen, manager of KGCR, the Christian voice of the region located between Edson and Brewster.

Rich Epp, the radio voice of the Colby College Trojans and the Colby Eagles, will moderate the political debate Monday evening. Epp served as press secretary to former Gov. Mike Hayden.

The debate will be replayed at 5 p.m. on Tuesday on KLOE in Goodland. The candidates have been invited to a public forum at 7 p.m. on Tuesday at the Goodland High School auditorium, along with candidates for Sherman County sheriff and treasurer. The Sherman County Farm Bureau is sponsoring this public forum.

Coupled with the six-newspapers’ interviews, these should serve well in giving the voters the information necessary to make the best possible choices on election day. —*Tom A. Dreiling*

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1932-2003

**The Sherman
County Herald**

Founded by Thomas McCants
1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY
STAR

Founded by Eric and
Roxie Yonkey
1994-2001

Nor’West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company



I like reading a variety of books

I don’t know about you, but I read a variety of books.

I enjoy mysteries — if they aren’t sadistic. I like historical novels as well as history.

I take pleasure in many kinds of books, but draw a definite line against romantic tripe. How someone can get “hooked” on an endless succession of that drivel is beyond me.

But to each his/her own, I guess. I just feel I have outgrown “the Cinderella syndrome.” I’m not big on fantasy — or hobbits, or space, or futuristic guessing, or Harry Potter.

By reading a wide range of books, I often run into some interesting descriptions and information, often about the origin of names and phrases many of us have heard all our lives. Here are a few:

1) Bootlegging — “is derived from stuffing bottles of liquor into the tops of oversized boots to foil customs inspectors at American borders” — Stephen Birmingham, *The Rest of Us*, *The Rise of America’s Eastern European Jews*, p. 153. (I often wondered why smuggling liquor was called bootlegging.)

2) Numbers game (policy game) — “Every day, the customer would buy a three-digit number from 000 to 999. The winning number would come from a supposedly unriggable source that would be published in every news-



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paper — the last three figures of the total sales on the New York Stock Exchange, for instance, or the betting totals at a particular racetrack. This way, no better who lost could claim to have been cheated. The winning numbers would pay at odds of 600 to 1, which would make it attractive, and since the actual chance of winning was less than 1 in a 1,000 the profits could be enormous” — Stephen Birmingham, *The Rest of Us*, *The Rise of America’s Eastern European Jews*, p. 212. (Not being a gambler, I never understood what a “numbers game” was.)

3) Ever wonder about throwing salt over your left shoulder to ward off evil? I always thought that to be a pretty silly custom. But in a book (can’t remember which one) I read: Throwing salt over left shoulder was considered as “Salt for the tail of the Devil.” (Just what that was to do to thwart the devil, I still don’t know.)

4) Why are detainees said to be in “concentration camps”? “The Fuhrur does not like the

term labor camp. He says that it sounds too much like the ghastly places that the Blosheviks sent their political prisoners. He prefers to call them places where through work and concentration on the patterns of thought that have opposed nations socialism, people can be made free. Concentration camps are what they will be called, and there are several being planned for various places in the Reich. There won’t be a need for too many of them, and as I say, their nature is transitory.” — From an old paper back that I neglected to get the name of or author of because it fell to pieces as I read it. The chapter title was *Crimson Comes the Dawn*.

5) And here’s another gambling term. I have played poker on a little home game set, and I’ve wondered where it got its name. Then, in a book, some people were playing Poque — a 3-card game. Given a corruption of the French pronunciation, I wondered if, in English, it became Poker. Well, I still don’t know, but it was interesting to speculate.

Looking back over this article, you’re probably wondering about my psyche.

Please don’t! I truly am more mentally well-rounded than this column makes me seem.

I do think about deeper and happier topics than gambling, drinking and detention camps!

Candidates warming up to the campaign

Scenes from the meet-the-candidates day:

For a bunch of glad-handers, the candidates don’t seem too eager to meet new people. I have to collar the ones I haven’t met.

If they are reticent, though, it passes by the time they get on stage.

The thought strikes me that I might be able to make some observation that would make every candidate cringe. That should be popular.

Norton’s Doug Sebelius came across as the most liberal of the lot. That’s no surprise. He’s always been seen as a member of the GOP’s “left” wing.

His ideas on taxation — adding a “superrate” to the current income tax to soak the rich, and “decoupling” the state income tax from the federal system so the state could decide its own deductions — would make a Democrat proud.

Sebelius made it pretty clear he thinks it will take a tax increase to solve the state’s budget problems. His talk of making rural Kansas more attractive to families made sense, but he didn’t really say how to do that.

By contrast, the Democrat in the race, Norcatur’s Bob Strevey, focused on the philosophical issues of the school battle, not something most of us think about.

There are those rallying against a school tax increase, he said, who just don’t like public education. They want private schools, church schools, home schools or no schools, but not public schools. He’s right about that: some of these people have an agenda. Most of the conservatives just don’t want to raise taxes, though.

The conservatives — Reps. John Faber, running against Sebelius and Strevey for re-election, and Rep. Ralph Ostmeyer, running for the Senate — pointed out that they voted for a House plan



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• along the sappa

that would have added nearly \$200 per student to school districts’ spending base. That would produce nearly \$100,000 a year in Oberlin.

Faber, a former school board member who traditionally is more generous on school spending than some conservatives, said it made him sad to come home without any money for schools.

Ostmeyer said at least they had “held education harmless” while cutting other programs.

Sebelius and Goodland’s Dan Rasure, like the Senate and the governor, criticized the House plan as “smoke and mirrors,” robbing one budget to pad another. Most likely, they are right.

Sebelius was well spoken and made his case clearly, as befits an experienced trial lawyer. (A prosecutor, though, and not one of those contingent-fee hucksters.) He was the best-spoken of the House candidates.

The Senate side did not win glory as orators. Rasure was nervous and halting, and he misspoke a couple of times. He said, for instance, there was an effort to bring a Veterans Administration hospital to the district, when he meant a clinic.

Several in the audience of 40 said later they were impressed with his youth and his enthusiasm, however.

Rep. Ostmeyer rambled so long, the host, Mike Matson of the Farm Bureau, was ready to give him the hook. He made it clear he wasn’t

going to push for a tax increase for schools. As the state’s economy improves, he said, it will provide enough money to take care of necessities. That’s a perceptive view: just wait, and the problem will go away, but he’s probably right.

Rep. Faber was, well, Rep. Faber. He’s held the seat for eight years now. He beat both his opponents last time, and unless one of them learns to knock on doors, there’s no reason to believe he won’t do it again.

Like the Senate race, though, it’s too early to tell who will pull out ahead.

And that Senate scramble? Rep. Ostmeyer probably is better known and has better party connections. His experience is his main campaign plank.

Dan Rasure has his enthusiasm and, for a new college graduate, a great deal of political and government experience. His uncertainty before a crowd should fade. He impresses people as bright, dedicated and sincere.

Democrat Tim Peterson starts out behind, but he has farm connections. Still, it’s a Republican seat to lose.

For now, though, it’s a race.

Now, have we missed anyone?

Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste.

garfield

