

from our viewpoint...

Conservative gains may measure mood

The supposed gains made by the Kansas Republican party's conservative faction might not mean much until the Senate caucus votes on a president next year, but they may be a measure of the voters' mood.

That the Republicans are split so deeply is nothing new. The party is so dominant, it has to fight itself. There is nothing approaching a viable two-party system in most of Kansas, so we have two Republican parties and a Democratic faction that, most days, counts for little.

It's hard to define exactly who is a conservative and who is a liberal in the Republican ranks, so you watch to see how they vote for leadership posts — and on tax increases.

The conservatives include those who vote "no" on tax increases. The liberals — they prefer to call themselves moderates — often vote yes when it comes to spending.

There are other issues. Most conservatives are against abortion, but so are many of the moderates. Conservatives may worry about issues such as "concealed carry" and the Second Amendment. Guns give lefties the creeps.

The liberal wing controls the state party office and the Senate, at least for now. The conservatives have the House. The conservatives have something called the Kansas Republican Assembly, which functions as sort of a shadow party leadership and helps conservative candidates.

The division is so deep leaders on both sides endorsed candidates in the Republican primary, something that's just not done in many states. They lined up to back those who would vote for them come caucus time.

The moderates/liberals complain conservative groups from out of state have poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into Kansas campaigns, but liberal candidates see no shame in taking their own thousands from statewide groups such as the teachers and the Kansas Livestock Association.

This year, the conservatives seem to be winning. They made gains in the Legislature and the state Board of Education, ousting a few liberals who had whipped conservatives two years ago. In the Legislature, on the state board and at party headquarters, this could portend changes.

When the liberals win, the conservatives have no place to go. They vote Republican. But when the conservatives win, the liberals will cry foul. They might well vote Democrat in the general election.

That's how Kathleen Sebelius became governor. It wasn't the Democratic vote that elected her; it was liberal Republicans who couldn't stomach the conservative Tim Shallenburger as governor.

It's more complicated than that, of course. Sebelius is a rare, gifted candidate and Shallenberger was not. But that's the gist of it. Republican votes elected her; there are not enough Democrats in Kansas to do it.

That's why only liberal Republicans can become governor, at least until the conservatives produce a more charismatic candidate.

You can expect more of the same if the liberals lose their grip on the party or the Senate next year — much whining and defections.

But the primary indicates voters, by and large, are not buying the liberal line that we must increase taxes.

Outside a few diehard members of the "moderate" wing of the party, and the Democrats, of course, I have yet to meet a Kansan who wants the state to raise taxes. The exceptions, of course, are mostly tax-paid employees, school officials and the like.

People think times are tough and the state ought to suck it in. They voted that way, and they mean it. — *Steve Haynes*

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I'm on a nostalgic kick

I don't know about you, but I'm still on a nostalgic kick.

My last columns have been about dreams, memories and why you should do some writing — if only to record your life stories.

So I guess I've been dabbling in Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.

That's the name of a poem by Helen Steiner Rice. Here is what she has written:

"Yesterday's dead, Tomorrow's unborn, So there's nothing to fear and nothing to mourn,

"For all that is past and all that has been Can never return to be lived once again — And what lies ahead or the things that will be Are still in GOD'S HANDS so it's not up to me.

"To live in the future - that is God's great unknown, For the past and the future God claims for His own. So all I need do is to live for TODAY And trust God to show me the TRUTH and THE WAY -

"For it's only the memory of things that have been And expecting tomorrow To bring trouble again That fills my today, Which God want to bless, With uncertain fears and borrowed dis-



**lorna
gt**

• commentary

tress — For all I need live for Is this one little minute, For life's HERE and NOW, and Eternity's in it."

It seems to me that most of us don't realize we're living eternally — right now. We long too much for the way things used to be — or we gaze longingly into what we'd like life to be. And so we waste the opportunity that each moment brings.

I used to say things like: "I can't wait for Christmas" or "I wish this week were over."

And my husband lovingly pointed out that I was "wishing my life away." He was so right. I was not reveling in the joy of the RIGHT NOW.

Memories are a gift, and plans are not always bad. But neither should replace the joy of be-

ing alive in the present.

Today is not just "the first day of the rest of your life." Today is also part of eternity, and we can choose how we're going to spend it — full of regrets and lost hope, idly dreaming of all that probably will never be, or taking time to see God in the sunset, in a child's eyes or laughter, or gratefully receiving all that God has given you.

There is so much for which to be thankful.

Why not look for the good instead of moaning and groaning over missed opportunities? After all, RIGHT NOW holds an opportunity you will look back on tomorrow.

Do you want to regret having missed it, or will you rejoice that you took advantage of it?

Someone once said, "Life is what you make it."

Another wise person indicates, "Life is how you take it."

So much depends on your attitude. You can choose joy or regret. And you will have no one to blame but yourself.

Think about it.

Notes from a cross-country road trip

Children really should stay closer to home. It's a LOT more convenient.

But who could resist the chance to spend three days with a 20-something daughter who's moving to the East Coast?

So last Tuesday, I saddle up and start driving. In a 1,370-mile journey, I figure that by the time I get to Lawrence, I'll have finished nearly a quarter of my trip. And still be in Kansas.

The next day, we leave my truck at Kansas City International Airport, where the new parking lots are arranged by terminal and I park in the wrong one.

Crossing Missouri should be easy — it's only 246 miles — but Missouri is the worst state to drive in. I-70 is the only freeway from Kansas City to St. Louis, a key link in the trans-continental lane, and way overcrowded.

Add to that the fact that Missouri is about 10 years, maybe more, behind in major maintenance. It's rough, crowded and traffic is fierce. And that's the quiet rural stretches.

Missouri is green, rolling, with roadsides dominated by billboards, fireworks stands, porn shops and peep shows. Truckers must get really bored.

We lunch at the G&D Steak House, a cool place where the meat is rare and fine, and the service is . . . well, there isn't any. You order at the counter.

Why do they sell fireworks year around? Who uses them in the winter?

Then there is St. Louis. It's my turn to drive. We bypass St. Charles on a new freeway, but we have to rejoin the main route on I-270. It's rush hour. It's raining. It's a parking lot, with random vehicles trying to crush, smash or merge into you. We lose an hour.

I think she planned this so I'd have to drive.

Once over the Chain of Rocks Bridge and across the barge canal, though, we're footloose and fancy free on good roads in Illinois. We fly through field and pasture around East St. Louis



**steve
haynes**

• along the sappa

and find I-64 east. This is traveling.

Illinois roads appear to be as good as Missouri's are bad. I-64 is not crowded, and we make good time. The weather remains gray, and Illinois is pretty — if you like cornfields, flat and green. It's easy driving, but we miss the hills along the Ohio River that may be the most scenic part of a most unscenic state.

And they say Kansas is flat.

Across the Wabash River and into Indiana, there's more flat land, more cornfields. Light is fading as we approach the Hoosier National Forest and the freeway begins to climb, twist and turn. It's like that all the way across the east half of the state. First the hills of the forest, then deep valleys cut down to the Ohio.

And then like magic, we pop out into New Albany and shoot across the river.

We're stunned by the beauty. Louisville's waterfront is all lights and action as we cruise by the barge terminals, bridges and buildings. I know, by day, it's just a city, but at night, it's spectacular. It's nearly 11 p.m. Eastern Time, and the freeway is nearly empty.

We need gas and food. We use our Dillons card at a suburban Kroger and buy lunch meat. We find a room. We crash.

Next day, we turn southeast and head for home. The day, still rainy, is brighter and the horse country of Kentucky is beautiful. The roads are not as good as Indiana or Illinois, but still OK. I-75 is a busy north-south route. We stop in Corbin, home of Col. Harlan Sanders' first restaurant, which still serves KFC. We don't go in.

From here on, the mountains are prettier and

prettier until we get to North Carolina and the Great Smokies. The highway goes through the gorge of the French Broad River, and I have to call Cynthia to tell her it must be part of her heritage.

Then it is up and over, just north of the national park. The country is rugged and beautiful, but quite different from western mountains. Also a lot more humid.

Then it is down onto the Piedmont as we race for Columbia, where daughter's apartment keys await. We are two hours off schedule and pressing the 7 p.m. deadline, but we'll make it.

We've talked for two days, and haven't had a single argument — that will come later — and it's been a great trip. We are tired, we still have to unload and the woman at the apartment office insists on reading not only the rental contract but the rules and regulations, word for word.

Three days, 1,370 miles, and for my daughter, I'd do it again.

Not soon, though, I hope.

Letter Policy

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garfield

