

from our viewpoint...

Celebrating creation of Interstate system

President Dwight Eisenhower signed the law creating the Interstate Defense Highway System on June 29, 1956, and with his signature the mobile society began to roll.

Americans have always been a rambling lot, and that spirit carried people in covered wagons to the west until the county reached from shore to shore.

We drive some of the best highways in the world today, and it is hard to remember when there wasn't a national highway system, or a state highway system.

The covered wagons left ruts that can be seen today, and we replaced the trails with ribbons of gravel, concrete and asphalt until we have a web of roads that can take us anywhere we wish to go.

After World War I a convoy of 80 military vehicles and 300 men began a journey from the east coast to San Francisco. Vehicles, roads and technology were not up to modern standards. The convoy was lucky to average 6 mph, and it took 62 days for the transcontinental trip.

Merrill Eisenhower Atwater, great-great grandson of President Eisenhower, is traveling with the special convoy driving from San Francisco to Washington, D.C., to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Interstate system. He stopped at the Tourist Information Center west of Goodland Wednesday with part of the special convoy to get a little lunch and begin the trip to Abilene for a special ceremony honoring his great-great grandfathers interest in developing a national highway system.

Atwater said he was glad to be in Kansas, and that it has been an interesting trip through the first half of the country. Atwater said the longest section so far was between Salt Lake City and Cheyenne, Wyo.

Atwater is writing a log about the trip, which will be placed in the Eisenhower Library next to the daily log of the trip in 1919 that then Lt. Col. Eisenhower was part of.

Atwater wrote that in the log from 1919 Eisenhower said the convoy was lost for two days in the Great Salt Lake plains with nobody knowing where they were.

"Last 6 miles was natural desert trail of alkali dust and fine sand up to 2 feet deep with numerous chuck holes. No rain for 18 weeks and traction exceedingly difficult. In places chaises of trucks grounded on road surface leaving wheels free, making jacking up and digging out necessary. Sage brush was cut from desert to fill in wheel ruts, as this was the only material available."

Atwater said the trip now is averaging 60 mph, and the people are riding in comfort through all kinds of weather.

Those who grew up with the Interstate system remember when all the roads went through the towns and not around them. The four-lane freeways have changed the face of our country. Today as never before the mobile society takes to the highways and complains about the price of gas.


Kansans can be proud of the historic connection through President Eisenhower, and watch the rolling wheels of commerce that take products through the state. — *Tom Betz*

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What to do if a tour bus shows up for dinner

We've all had unexpected company, but what do you do when a tour bus loaded with professors pops in for a bite to eat?

If you smile, and everyone pitches in, it can be a lot of fun, though I'm not sure Dan and Shirley Bourquin will volunteer to do it again any time real soon.

Cynthia and I got to be part of this little adventure quite by accident. We were planning to take Tom Eblen to dinner in Colby that night. Tom, who taught journalism and guided the student-run Daily Kansan as the University of Kansas for many years, is retired now and does consulting for the Kansas Press Association. He was in town to work with the staff of the *Colby Free Press* and *Goodland Star-News*.

Tom's wife Jeanne works at KU, and she knew that Margey Fredricks, who runs the annual Wheat State Whirlwind tour, was bringing her crew into Colby for the night. Why not join them? Tom asked.

To two old KU alums, that seemed like a good idea. The tour serves as an introduction to the state for new faculty and staff, many of whom come from states (even countries) far away from our plains.

We'd had dinner with the group a couple of years ago, and found you get to meet some interesting people that way, plus Don Steeples. Steeples, professor of geophysics, vice provost and old pal of Jim Reeves of Oberlin, is, I swear, at every KU dinner. At least all the ones I go to.

Anyway, Tom looked at the schedule and said we should be at Bourquins' Old Depot Restaurant down by I-70 a little before 6:30 p.m. to meet the bus. We walked in about 6:15 and told Shirley Bourquin we were there to



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- along the sappa

meet the KU group.

A look that may have been horror crossed her face.

"No," she said, "I think that's supposed to be Thursday."

Tom looked puzzled. I'm sure we did, too, but we didn't know anything, so we just went along with the gag.

"I'm pretty sure it's today," he said.

Shirley went for her file, pulling out a contract that said Thursday. Tom tried to call Jeanne. Shirley kept checking her file.

About that time, Todd and Melissa Stramel of Colby walked in and asked innocently enough where the KU group was. Melissa, a pharmacy graduate, now works part-time for KU. She'd heard about the tour and invited them to dinner at her place, but Margey instead invited the couple to join the big feast at Bourquins.

I looked out the window and spotted something large and red coming up the drive, past the RV park and campground the Bourquins run.

"You may be right about that contract," I said, "but there's a tour bus coming up the road."

That sort of galvanized the place. As 53 professors, instructors and administrators unloaded and wandered in, Margey found Shirley and got the news: The crew, the food, the hospitality, all set for Thursday.

Of course, it was Tuesday. We all knew that.

Not to worry, Margey said: "We can go to Pizza Hut."

No, said Dan Bourquin.

"We want to take care of you, and we need the business."

He and Tom and Shirley huddled. They started a plan in motion. Margey quickly explained what was happening and everyone moved to the kitchen or the dining room.

I'm not sure exactly what happened next. The important thing was that they broke out the bar, and started selling wine and beer to the thirsty crew, who'd been on the bus touring Kansas for two days straight. That settled things down while Shirley, who's pert picture appears on Bourquins' posters and brochures, got a few volunteers working in the kitchen.

Everyone pitched in. We had professors hawking beer and Shakespeare scholars tending bar. Deans waited tables and controllers mixed salad. I don't know where Shirley found it all — I think they must have a deep, deep freezer — but ribs and chicken and pie plate after pie plate of scalloped potatoes appeared, got cooked, plated and delivered to the tables.

Todd Stramel, though not a KU grad — he went to some other university, then to Wasburn law — got into the spirit, running beer and wine to the dining room. Melissa was in the kitchen. I finally grabbed Margey Fredrickson, sat her down and said, "Eat your salad. It's good for you."

And the multitude was fed. Well, in fact, and that's nothing against Pizza Hut, mind you.

So if you go to Bourquins for supper this month, you'll get a good meal. But be nice and don't say the word BUS around Shirley.

Gore, Giuliani spoilers of the 2008 race

The shape of the 2008 presidential sweepstakes is becoming clearer through the fog of war. There is a surprising and artful symmetry in how each party's contest is shaping up.

Both parties have clear front-runners — Hillary Clinton and John McCain — around whom the race will be formed. In each party there is a looming presence whose entry into the race could change it completely. And there is an assortment of ideologically more extreme contenders who are trying to break through and challenge the front-runner.

In the Republican primaries, McCain runs far ahead of all other contenders. But the specter of Rudy Giuliani hangs over the nominating process. If Rudy runs, his challenge will most directly affect McCain, who would have to battle for the moderate side of the party. But if Rudy stays out, the contest will polarize around the Arizona senator.

Since McCain is on the left of the GOP — despite his efforts to court the right — he will inevitably face a runoff in the primaries against the great right hope, a title for which Virginia Sen. George Allen, Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee and Tennessee Sen. Bill Frist are competing. Gov. George Pataki of New York and Sen. Chuck Hagel of Nebraska are considering runs for the nomination, but both have to battle McCain for the center-left and neither will get much traction in the face of McCain's appeal.

The problem is McCain probably can't win the Republican nomination. He is too indepen-



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dent, original, creative and populist for his party. A party that prides itself on regularity and corporate grayness won't take a chance on a maverick who led the fight for tough corporate governance, against big tobacco, for campaign-finance reform, against CIA torture and for tough environmental regulation. So the challenger who emerges from the right-wing mini-primary will probably be the nominee.

Interestingly, there is no tall mountain to climb for a challenger in the right-wing alternative-to-McCain derby. Allen is running a narrow first, with Romney slightly behind him. Frist will probably die early from diseases he caught running the Senate. Huckabee, a tremendous speaker with a clerical past and a galvanizing presence, could be a formidable late starter. None of these candidates is getting many votes, and a good showing by anyone in a debate or a straw poll could begin a miniature landslide. My bet is that Huckabee is the strongest of the field because of his platform skills. (Disclosure: he's a former client of mine.)

On the Democratic side, Hillary is under increasing fire for her failure to move to the left on the Iraq war. In a massive miscalculation, she aimed at winning the general election by back-

ing the war before she got the nomination, which will be decided by anti-war Democratic primary voters. Her error opens the door for Al Gore.

If Gore runs, it will be a dogfight to the end between these two veterans of the Clinton administration. Gore, a virgin on the war and the certified owner of the climate-energy-gas price issue, would give Hillary a very tough contest.

If Gore runs, there is no room for anybody else. If Gore doesn't go for it, Sen. John Kerry and former Sen. John Edwards will assert their claims, but I think they will be easily pushed aside by Hillary. Both backed the war and are seen as losers in the wake of 2004's disaster.

But that does not mean Hillary will have a cakewalk even if Gore stays out. Voters are antsy about nominating Hillary, worried that she is a polarizing figure who can't win. That could open the way for a crop of new Democratic contenders like former Gov. Mark Warner of Virginia or Sen. Evan Bayh of Indiana.

My bet is if Gore doesn't run, Hillary wins the nomination.

As to the election, whoever wins the Democratic nomination in 2008 will get elected president unless:

(A) Either McCain, Giuliani or — my old favorite — Condoleezza Rice gets the GOP nomination, or

(B) McCain runs as an independent, a race he could win, thereby reshaping American politics forever.

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garfield

