

* Senate race keeps people interested

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 generation farmer and rancher and the older brother of Randy Ostmeyer of Oberlin.
 He pointed out that the problem of depopulation is not new.
 "We were worried about people leaving town when I was a high school senior," he said. "I think communities need to pull themselves up by their bootstraps."
 He said he helped pass economic development legislation last year that would help provide hunting opportunities and help for bed and breakfast businesses.
 On education, he pointed out that the House tried to give schools more money last year but the Senate and governor blocked the effort.
 "We held education harmless (did not cut its budget)," he said. "If we had cut the schools like everything else, we could have balanced the budget."
 Raising the sales tax to pay for education is not a business-friendly idea, he said.
 Every time sales taxes are raised, Kansas businesses lose more customers to out of state.
 "We have to make sure when we take care of education we get the same bang out here in Western Kansas as they do in Eastern Kansas," he added.
 While the state needs to pay for a basic education, it should not pay for extracurricular activities, he said.
 That should be done with local money if the community wants the programs.

TIM PETERSON

Mr. Peterson said that he has farmed in Logan County since 1980 and has a Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of Kansas, but also has affiliations with K-State.
 He said that he knows how bureaucracy works, having served on boards for various federal farm service programs.
 "I'm running so that I can work for the Kansas families," he said.
 There needs to be a reason for younger families to return to the

area, he said. While depopulation has been a long-standing problem, it is getting worse.
 Health care is a big problem, he said, especially health insurance.
 "In our family, we pay more for health insurance than for food and clothing combined," he said. "It's crazy."
 The educational system needs strengthening, he said. Every child needs a proper education so that he or she can have all the opportunities available.
 Right now, he said, our schools are doing fine but if a tax increase is needed, those dollars should go into the classroom, not into anything else.
 "We can still cut waste and administrative costs," he said.
 The area needs to start working together to encourage more people to live here.
 "We're not just opponents on a football field," he said. "We're a region, we're an area. We have to work together."

QUESTION-ANSWER

During a question and answer period, Steve Haynes, editor of *The Oberlin Herald*, asked the candidates what specifically they would do for education.
 Mr. Rasure said that the educational system needs to be paid for like it was designed and not with property taxes or transfers from the highway fund.
 Mr. Ostmeyer said the Legislature is banking on the economy to get better. The state should decide what it will pay for, he said, and let local communities pay for everything else.
 "We can't just raise taxes every time we have a problem," he said.
 Mr. Peterson said he, in the best political tradition, was going to waffle, but thinks the state needs to solve the problem.
 "I can't answer that question," he said, "but, if the problem isn't solved in Topeka, local districts will have to raise property taxes or close schools."

* Health committee looks to the future

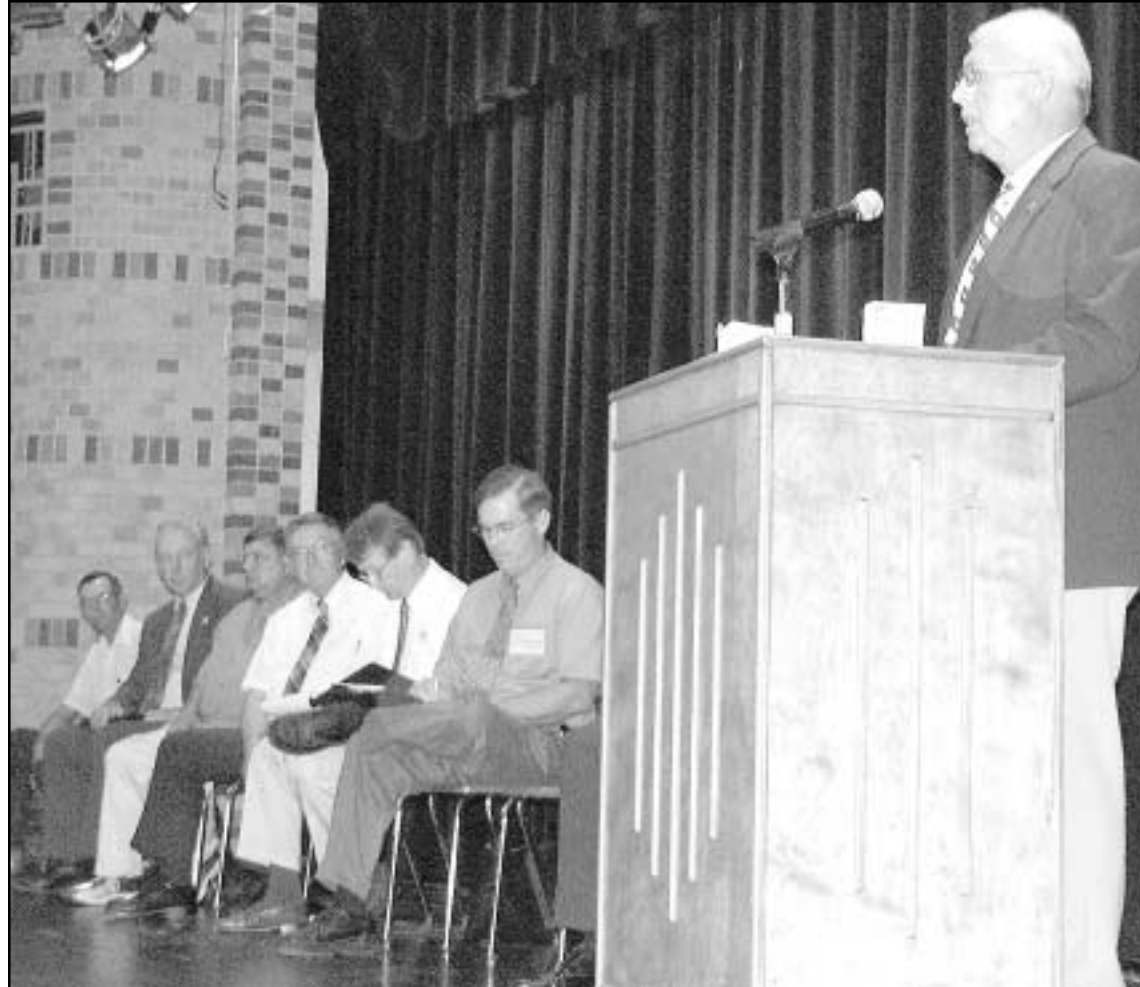
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 Lohoefer. The committee members said there are facilities in Norton, Colby, Hoxie and McCook.
 Mr. Brown said it would be nice to "fill in the cracks," offering things people need that they can't get or services that are already full elsewhere.
 Assisted living places have to have tubs or showers in the room, said Mrs. Doeden. The group noted that both nursing homes have rooms with shared bathrooms. Two rooms could be combined to make an apartment, with a little kitchen area put in if necessary, she said.
 Mrs. Shobe said she knows there is a need for assisted living. The doctors, said Mrs. Wilson, have said there are a lot of people who should be in an assisted living facility.
 "Families aren't pushing too hard for that," said Mrs. Lohoefer. It is a hard decision to make.
 Mr. Brown said when people in this age range look for a place to move they will look at health care.
 "There needs to be a strong hospital for both of the nursing homes," said Mrs. Shobe.
 Maybe each facility should list everything it offers and then figure out where it fits best, said Mr. Brown. Everyone could probably look at their census numbers to see where they are going, said Mrs. Shobe.

If there was assisted living in one of the facilities, would it all be under the same umbrella, asked Mr. Unger? The facility would need to be certified for it.
 Mrs. Shobe said there are people in the Good Samaritan Center now who would probably qualify for assisted living. Some will choose to go to assisted living and then just transfer into the nursing home later.
 Mr. Brown said there is no way to predict what people will decide to do, but there needs to be a facility available.
 "If we don't do something, both homes will struggle," said Mrs. Shobe.
 Maybe everyone can keep their ears and eyes open so that the county can offer a service that no one else does, said Mr. Brown. Mrs. Lohoefer said she wondered what happened to older prison inmates who are serving life terms when their health fails. She said she would do some research in that area.
 Other members were going to check into the fees for assisted living facilities in the area, how many Alzheimer's units there are in the area and do other research.
 The group agreed to have a joint booth at the county fair to help promote health care in the county.
 The committee will meet again during the county commission meeting at 10 a.m. Tuesday, July 27.

Stations plan Senate debate

Six radio stations in northwest Kansas will sponsor a 90-minute debate for candidates running for the 40th District in the State Senate at 7 p.m. on Monday at Frahm Theater of Colby Community College.
 All three candidates for the Senate seat, Tim Peterson, a Democrat from Monument; Dan Rasure, a Republican from Goodland; and Ralph Ostmeyer, a Republican from Grinnell, have been invited. Doors open at 6 p.m.
 The event will be moderated by Rich Epp, former press secretary for former Gov. Mike Hayden. Questions previously submitted by listeners will be asked by representatives from each station.
 Sponsoring stations include

KLOE-AM and KKCI-FM, Goodland; KWGB-FM, Colby/Goodland; KXXX-AM and KQLS-FM, Colby; and KGCR-FM, Goodland/Brewster.
 KGCR Station Manager James Claassen said that the idea of a debate was conceived after the death of Sen. Stan Clark in a traffic accident just months into his re-election campaign.
 "We felt that, although the candidates are well-known in their individual communities, the 40th District covers such a large area that most residents will need more information about each candidate's stand on the issues," he said.
 Claassen said the stations will broadcast the debate at a later date.



BATTING SECOND AT the Meet-the-Candidates day Saturday at Decatur Community High School was Rep. Ralph Ostmeyer of Grinnell, a Republican candidate for the state Senate. Other candidates waited their turn on the stage. The event was sponsored by the Decatur County Farm Bureau.
 — Herald staff photo by Steve Haynes

Forum attracts 50 voters here

By CYNTHIA HAYNES

About 50 people showed up to meet the candidates at a forum Saturday at the Decatur Community High auditorium.
 Sponsored by the Decatur County Farm Bureau, the forum drew all three candidates for the 40th District state Senate candidates, all three for the 120th District state representative and both District 2 Decatur County Commission candidates.
 After chatting with each other and the audience, the candidates sat on the stage and took turns giving their views of what the important issues

are and how they hope to solve the problems of the state and county.
 Mike Matson, Kansas Farm Bureau communications director from Manhattan, moderated the program, while Decatur County Farm Bureau volunteers laid out cookies, coffee and pop and did all the work to set up the program and publicize it.
 Attending the event were state Senate candidates Dan Rasure, a Republican from Goodland; Ralph Ostmeyer, a Republican from Grinnell; and Tim Peterson, a Democrat from Monument; state representa-

tive candidates Doug Sebelius, Republican, Norton; Bob Streyve, Democrat, Norcatur; and incumbent John Faber, Republican, Brewster; and Decatur County Commission candidates incumbent Ralph Unger and Phillip Lahman, both Oberlin Republicans.
 The senate candidates are vying for the seat held by Stan Clark, who was killed in a traffic accident earlier in the summer. Gov. Kathleen Sebelius has appointed Ruth Clark, his wife, to fill the seat until the election. She is not running for a full term, however.

* Men looking at House seat

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 tax structure from that of the federal government and go its own way setting up a deduction structure that is best for the people of the state.
 Education is high on his list, he said.
 "Once your schools start going downhill, it's like losing a church or store on Main Street," he said.
 The family farm is another issue, he said. The state needs to have an active antitrust policy to protect farmers, he said, noting that three companies slaughter most of the cattle in the country. This, he said, should be an anti-trust issue.

BOB STREVEY

Mr. Streyve, who said he has a deep attachment to Oberlin and Decatur County, noted that candidates put on lots of miles and invest innumerable hours in campaigning and talking to people.

He read an essay from *The Oberlin Herald's* Freedom Section 2004 by Andrew Dempewolf, in which the young man notes that the two political parties seem to be fighting all the time.

He assured Mr. Dempewolf and the audience that the two parties are not "sworn enemies," that everyone is working to solve problems.

"Each of us has to pitch in there and make things work the best they can," he said. Everyone has to work together.

He likened the area's outward migration to a lesson he had seen in the Vietnam War when a sleeping soldier on guard duty had been awakened by a shout to find his sergeant holding a gun between his eyes.

"We really need a great wakeup call," Mr. Streyve said. "We've got a lot at stake, and our area of the county's in jeopardy."

There are those in the state actively opposed to public education, he said, including some who believe in parochial schools, private schools, home schooling and no schooling.

"There are people who would like to return Kansas to a class society like it was at the turn of the century," he said, "with the wealthy and everyone else."

He said he opposed high standards to get into the state's colleges because that put an unfair burden on small rural schools.

He warned that cutting income taxes, which has been done in the past, could lead to problems if property taxes keep going up. In the 1930s, he said, property became worthless because the taxes were more than the land would produce.

JOHN FABER

Mr. Faber, a former member of the Brewster School Board, said that he supports education and worked to get more money for schools last year as a member of the House of

Representatives, but the state Senate refused to pass the bill without a tax increase.
 "Sometimes you have to do what is possible," he noted, "not what needs to be done."
 "This year, it broke my heart to come home without anything at all (for school districts)."

Johnson County, which provides 30 percent of the state revenue, would like to let its school districts increase the local option budget from 25 percent of a district's total spending to 30 percent, he said. The people there want to support their schools with property taxes. However, out here, that isn't feasible because our property tax base just won't cover the costs.

Mr. Faber pointed out that he has held his seat for eight years and he has worked on the education committee for six, although he is no

longer on that committee. He is now the vice chairman of the transportation committee.

While a new person would have to take what he could get, Mr. Faber said, as an incumbent he has built up relationships and connections with other representatives.

Johnson County has 27 representatives, he said. In northwest Kansas, the 120th district, which he serves, covers five counties. The western half of the state has only 15 or 16 representatives total to cover more than 50 counties.

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