



The Jayhawker

By Jim Merriott
jtmerritt@nwkansas.com

First trip taught teen to ride the rails

In high school, I dreamed of the adventure of riding the rails.

Stories of Woody Guthrie's experiences and John Steinbeck's writings filled my mind with an escape from the reality of everyday sophomore English.

By the 1960s, those who rode the rail were not in search of jobs or a better life, they were the homeless, people who fell through the cracks. Still, the idea adventure hung over me like a rain cloud.

My buddies and I would talk about making our way to California to become beach bums. I had heard stories of the hobos and railroad bulls who rode the rail.

I hopped my first box car to get across the mile-wide Missouri River to North Kansas City. The shortest and quickest way was via the A.S.B. Bridge.

Each Friday and Saturday evening, I would catch the bus downtown to work at the *Kansas City Star* to help stuff circulars and special sections into the Sunday-morning paper.

I worked with an old black man named Russell. He told me the quickest way across the river undetected was to hitch a ride on the rail off First and Front street by the A.S.B. Bridge.

I was 15 and with no wheels and a cute blonde on the other side of the river, it was either ride a bike, thumb a ride or hoof it.

I decided to skip work that Friday night and take my chances on the rail.

By the time I was 18, I had learned from the pro how to "hop-da-line." My first attempt, however, was a complete failure.

I was to meet Lorissa Gray at the North Kansas City bowling alley. I wasn't quite sure what to do, but the next train that headed north, a bum by the name of "Texas Jack" reached his long, grungy arm out to help me up into the empty box car as I ran alongside the tracks.

"Where are you headed, son?" he said. "I am trying to get across the river to Northtown," I said.

"You realize hopping the rail is not a game or a way of playing around, don't you," he said. "I have been doing this for the past 35 years and I am almost 50."

"I got a hot date waiting and I have no transportation," I said.

"Well, first of all, son, you got to understand this way of life is only bound by the railroad time schedules. It's important to know when and where to get on and when and where to get off so you don't get caught," he said. "The first thing all good riders have is a railroad spike."

"What's it for?" I asked. "It has several purposes, one for protection and another to tap the box cars to see if they are empty - the empty ones will echo."

"Kid, remember this, if a box car has a metal sealed band on the upper latch of the door, find another car. If there is no seal, you're in business."

"Knock the lock loose and pry the door open with the spike. Most of the time it'll work. I would say, about one out of four cars has a lock that you can pick. But remember, a closed door means a dead rider."

"The last purpose for the spike is to wedge the door, keeping it from rolling shut while you are riding. If you get locked in, you're either caught or dead, especially during the hot and cold."

"And catch the rail sober. I have seen too many riders get sliced and diced trying to catch on. It just takes a second and you're dead."

As the train began to pick up speed heading across the river, I

asked him, "Do you mind, if I ask you why you do what you do?"

"No," he said. "This life has few boundaries. This is how I make my cash. I ride the rail to find work. I know what crops sprout when and where. I am pretty good at getting day labor, I know where the offices are. I get paid in cash, so I don't have to pay taxes."

"Do you have a family?" I said.

"My wife left me a few years ago because I got a drinking problem," he said. "She lives down in Tulsa. You got any money?"

"Are you going to rob me?" I said. "Not this time, but there will be others and some are killers, so watch yourself."

"I don't have very much money anyway, only a few bucks," I said. "So I could take this girl out tonight. I was supposed to meet her at 8 at the bowling alley."

"Kid, you're late," he said.

"I know," I said. "I hope she'll wait. By the way, what about the stories of the railroad bulls who beat up riders?" I said.

"The majority of the railroad employees are friendly and helpful and you should respect them at all times, but it depends on where you are."

"I've run into problems trying to get to the peach harvest in Georgia. Just don't give them any reason to hit you."

"I'll remember that," I said. "What is the best way to get off these things?"

"Kid, the best way is to wait until they stop, but if you got to get off when they're moving wait until they slow down, or you're dead or broken."

"I start running before I jump and then try and hit the softest spot I can find, then roll into a ball, but you never know what you are going to hit, there may be a rock, glass, metal, or gravel that can mess you up, so next time wear a leather coat, even when it is hot out," he said.

"Well, this looks like the place where I get off," I said.

"Kid, watch yourself. It was nice talking to you," he said. "Remember what I said."

I turned to the old man, who looked something like the actor Robert Ryan, and handed him \$2.

"Here take this, you need it more than I do," I said. "What you have taught me is worth more than this, I have learned more about life in the last 10 minutes than I have learned all the way through high school."

"Good luck, you had better jump now," he said.

I took a running leap as the tracks made a curve heading north and landed in some kind of a bush.

As I looked up I waved to the old man. He nodded his head and waved back.

Dusting off my shirt and pants, I walked the last eight or so blocks to the bowling alley looking for Lorissa.

As my luck would have it, she had gone home with some guy who had a car.

With the money I had left, I bought a hamburger and asked if anyone was headed back across the river.

Luckily, an old man gave me a lift to the *Star* building. I reported late and had to work from 2 a.m. until 10 a.m.

I took the bus home, tired and broke, but with a grin. Mama wanted to know why I was so late as I usually got off work around 6 a.m. I told her it was mandatory overtime because the paper was running late.

Three years later, I rode the rail to California, headed to Hawthorne to meet the Beach Boys and ride the wild surf.

I still had a lot to learn.

Club News

Members meet at center

Oberlin United Methodist Women met at the Good Samaritan Center on Wednesday afternoon. Pat Wright opened the meeting and the group recited the purpose.

Violet Shaw gave devotions on Easter from *Guideposts*, using Luke 18:27, comparing the first Easter to today. Thank you notes were received from two college students, Jeremy Tally and Bayley Bryan.

The May 2 meeting will have Joan Betts, Louise Pollnow and Pat Wright as hostesses. Mrs. Betts will give the program and Goldie Stapp will have devotions.

Members were reminded that May 6 will be United Methodist Women Sunday.

Elaine Bryan gave a reading report. The Spiritual Growth Retreat will be Friday and Saturday, April 20 and 21, at Lakeside.

Jeanne Isdell brought a list of needs for her new son, Christopher, and told us some of her problems and joys. The group recited the benediction, then went to the Town Square for refreshments and entertainment by the Chanté group and several vocal solos from the music department at the high school.

Lord's Acre Day April 22

Prairie Chapel United Methodist Women met at the home of Phyllis Metcalf on April 4.

President Angie Wilson opened the meeting with prayer after which Nadene Lafferty gave devotions about the change of seasons and Easter. Roll call, "Something special to me," was answered by eight members and a guest, Pastor Doug Hasty.

Mrs. Lafferty reported on cards sent to those who have been ill. The nominating committee report was accepted. The quilt, which has been a project of the group, will be auctioned at the

Prairie Chapel Lord's Acre sale on Sunday, April 22, following a potluck dinner. Proceeds from the quilt after expenses will go to the Urban Ministries of Wichita.

Cheryl Metcalf gave an inspiring program on Easter and the group sang, "He Lives." In the absence of Melissa Hasty, who was ill, her father, Pastor Hasty, gave a report on the homeless and the trip to Denver by the youth group.

The May meeting will be at the home of Lucille Townsend. The program, "Shine, Shine," will be given by Rowena Cathcart.

Adopt-A-Highway program cleans up state

Areas residents are encouraged to make a difference in your community and help the environment at the same time by joining the Adopt-A-Highway program in Kansas.

The goal of the program is to clean along the roadways throughout the state to increase safety for motorists and pedestrians as well as improve the beauty of Kansas.

This helps to raise awareness on the negative effects of pollution and the positive aspects of a clean community.

Any nonprofit group that does not discriminate upon the basis of race, religion or sex can join and there is no cost to the group. Members must be at least 11 years old and have adequate adult supervision. Groups

have clean-ups three times a year and are recognized for their efforts with signs marking their sections of highway.

Adopt-A-Highway groups are gearing up for the annual Clean Up Kansas Campaign which takes place during April.

This event, as well as the program, is sponsored by the Kansas Department of Transportation. All Adopt-A-Highway groups are encouraged but not required to participate in the statewide event.

There are approximately 1,800 Adopt-A-Highway groups in Kansas. One by one, they are helping to make Kansas a better place to live and visit.

For details, call (785) 877-3315.

Counselor training set

The Northwest Kansas Area Agency on Aging and the Kansas Department on Aging will sponsor a three-day class for volunteer health insurance counselors Tuesday to Thursday, May 15-17, in Hays.

The class will cover aspects of health insurance that most affect Medicare beneficiaries, including Medicare claims and enrollment, Medicare supplement insurance, long-term care insurance and the Medicare prescription drug program.

The staff of the Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas pro-

gram will conduct the training.

Volunteers are available through the Northwest Kansas Area Agency on Aging to counsel Medicare beneficiaries who have questions and problems about health insurance.

To become a counselor, volunteers must not be in the health insurance business or a financial planner. The volunteers will be expected to offer some time for counseling duties but their expenses will be paid.

Anyone interested in the class should call Glenna Clingingsmith at the Area Agency on Aging at (800) 432-7422 or (785) 628-8204. Pre-registration is required.

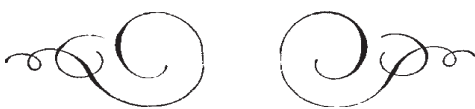
Orchestra to perform in Colby

The Pride of the Prairie Orchestra will conclude its 2006-2007 musical season at 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, April 22, in the Frahm Theater at Colby Community College with a concert themed "Dance Into Spring."

The afternoon will include selections from "West Side Story,"

"Polka from the Bartered Bride," "Saturday Night Waltz" by Copeland, "Music Box Dancer" and "Uptown Hoedown."

This final concert will be directed by Bradley Herndon, college band director. The orchestra has been presenting music on the plains for 25 years.



Due to the winter storm and collapse of 3 of our greenhouses, Fairacres Greenery has relocated!

Directions: From 'B' Street, turn North on West 5th, go 15 blocks to 'Q' Street. Turn 1/2 block East to West 4th then North 2 blocks on 4th Street OR Call 308-345-1900.

**NOW OPEN
Hours: Monday - Saturday 9:30-6
Sunday 1-5
FAIRACRES GREENERY
1700 W. 4th St. • McCook, NE**

Oberlin grad named Presidential Scholar

Hillary McShea, a 2000 graduate of Decatur Community High School, has been selected as a 2007-2008 Presidential Scholar at the State University of New York College at Geneseo.

The honor reflects her achievement as an outstanding academic and community leader, the college said.

She was nominated by her academic major department, psychology, then reviewed by a selection committee including faculty and students. She will be recognized as among the "best of the best" at the school.

"Your excellent academic standing, your superior involvement in your department and your outstanding commitment to the Geneseo community places you among the most talented students on the campus," wrote Katherine Conway-Turner, provost and vice president

for academic affairs. "You are an exemplary student and you represent the qualities that all Geneseo students strive to attain."

Ms. McShea will be among 15 students honored at a reception on Sept. 11 given by President Christopher Dahl and Ms. Conway-Turner.

The scholars will be involved in several roles during the coming year, including assisting the president and provost in promoting academic excellence on campus, serving as undergraduates who exemplify Geneseo's institutional values, helping admission activities and panel discussions, and promoting Geneseo during development and advancement activities.

The daughter of Gary and Jody Shike of Oberlin, Ms. McShea is a junior majoring in psychology.



H. McShea

Shower honors bride-elect

Angela Bliss, who plans to marry Adam Ketterl, was honored with a bridal shower on Friday, March 23, at the LandMark Inn in Oberlin. Hostesses were Liane and Anikka Martin.

Each guest was asked to bring an apron with a special meaning to share with the others.

The hostesses presented a program and history of the different styles, time periods, and many uses of each apron.

A Victorian Tea of cookies,

cakes, and specialty teas were served, after which the guest of honor opened her gifts.

Guests included honored guest Angela Bliss, Liane and Anikka Martin, Arlene Bliss, Judy Ketterl, Sarah White, Lorraine Wurm, Iris Lane, Candi Ketterl, Roma Grafel, Sarah Olson, Dianna Kastens, Colleen Fikan, Kari Ketterl, Sandy Ketterl, Gleneva Higley, Myra Sattler, Darlene Wahrman, Nadine Green, Anita Ketterl, Evelyn Lortentz and Rita Howard.

Two children baptized here

Morgan Lea, 2, and Kacie Jean, 6 weeks, children of Wade and Leslie Brown of Oberlin, were baptized during morning services at the Oberlin United Methodist Church on Easter Sunday. Officiating was the Rev. Doug Hasty.

A dinner in their honor followed at the home of their grandparents, Kent and Deb Brown. Those present included Charlotte Parks, Hill City;

Ruby Phiser, Goodland; Jeremy Brown, Justin Brown and Addyson, and Talia Reuber and Skylar, Denver; Larry and Terri James, Northcatur; Natalie Brown and her fiancé, Chris Barlett, Manhattan; and Wade and Leslie Brown, Morgan and Kacie; Mike and Denise Jones and Tim; Kevin and Jackie Brown; and Norma Brown, all of Oberlin.

Christian women to meet

"Turning Happiness into Joy" will be the theme when the McCook Christian Women's Club meets from 10 to 11:30 a.m. on Friday, April 20, at the Chief Poolside, 612 West B, in McCook.

Dr. Candace Mohr will sing, after which Jean Hudak of Parker, Colo., will tell about her recovery from the loss of her two sons. The

author of "Letters to my Grandsons," she is working on a new devotional book. She has a degree from Barnes School of Business and enjoys writing and cake decorating.

Reservations should be made by Wednesday, April 18. Call Dollie at (308) 345-4011, and leave a message. Reservations should be honored, canceled or used by a friend.

New Arrivals



G. Carman

Gideon Don Carman

Gideon Don Carman was born at 2:20 p.m. on March 26 to Kendal and Amy Carman of Oberlin. He weighed 10 pounds and measured 21 7/8 inches long. He was welcomed by a brother, Isaac, 8, and two sisters, Patience, 5, and Moriah, 1. Grandparents are Duane and Norma Carman, and Jack and Donna Fortin, Oberlin. Great-grandparents are June Fortin, Oberlin, and Donald Fulk, Cave Junction, Ore.



P. Wilson

Parker Richard Wilson

Parker Richard Wilson was born Feb. 23, 2007, at Centura Health Avista Adventist Hospital in Louisville, Colo., to Daniel Scott Wilson and Heather Dawn Shaver of Broomfield, Colo. He weighed 8 pounds and was 21 inches long. Grandparents are Don and Sharon Shaver, Aurora, Colo., and Boyd and Margee Wilson, Oberlin. Great-grandparents are Richard and Betty Pauls, Selden.

Spring Fashion Premiere by The Dresser

Friday, April 13th

154 S. Penn (1 door South of The Dresser)
Red carpet rolls out at 6:30 p.m.
Show at 7 p.m.
Evening of fashions, food and fun
Donations accepted for Sunflower Cinema

152 S. Penn
Monday thru Friday — 9:30 to 5:30
Saturday — 9:30 - 5
or by special appointment call
785-475-3407 during business hours



Please help to honor our mother,
Fern Wenger
on her
85th Birthday
April 19
We are requesting a card shower. Mail may be sent to: 502 N. Cass, Oberlin, KS 67749
Ron, Evan and Jodie

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