

Back east, people think Hays must be close to us

How do you suppose people back east ever came to consider Hays the “capital” city of northwest Kansas?

It’s true that Hays is the “big city” out here, with a county population of 27,000. Thomas County is next-most populous with 8,000.

But Hays is pretty much in the center of the state, barely in northwest Kansas at all.

Look at the map.

Hays is as far south as you can get and still be in the northwest. Almost as far east as you can get, if you figure the halfway point is somewhere between Russell and Ellsworth.

The problem, as usual, starts with the perception of people in eastern Kansas. They think anything west of Salina is Way Out There. And that includes a good two-thirds of the state.

If you tell someone you live in western Kansas, they brighten and say, “Oh, is that close to Hays?” It’s hard to explain that many of us have to drive more than two hours to get to Hays.

The average state official driving west to meet someone is pretty much tuckered out after driving two hours to Salina. It’s another hour from there to western Kansas, and yet another hour to Hays. In eastern Kansas, two hours will get you just about anywhere.

So after driving four hours, though, an easterner figures you must be deep into northwest Kansas. It doesn’t work that way, as we all know.

Out here, we’re used to driving six, seven hours to get to a ball game at Lawrence or a meeting in Kansas City. We know just how far it is across the state.

Even so, if a state agency or a statewide group wants to condescend to meet in “western” Kansas, they’ll pick Hays every time. Hey, it’s closer. For them.

Other towns might have a claim to being the most convenient meeting spot in the northwest.

Oberlin and Phillipsburg, have good facilities. Colby is central to the northwest corner of the northwest, and it’s got a college, more people and so on.

It seems the towns you think of meeting in cluster along I-70 or U.S. 36, with a gap of sorts in the middle. Osborne and Beloit might object to that kind of thinking, but Beloit isn’t really in northwest Kansas, either. Too far east.

What Hays has going for it is one thing, really: a four-year state college.

Civic leaders showed great foresight when they talked Congress into donating the unused military reservation southwest of town to the state as the site of a “normal” school, which later became a “teachers college” and still later a “university.”

Nothing ensures economic growth in this country like a good state university, and Hays built one.

Elsewhere in the northwest, Colby has the junior college and Goodland the technical college, both fine institutions, but far smaller than Fort Hays State.

So population and economic power weigh in for Hays, but really, it’s location — closer to the east — that tips the scale.

Want to make someone from the east blanch and squirm?

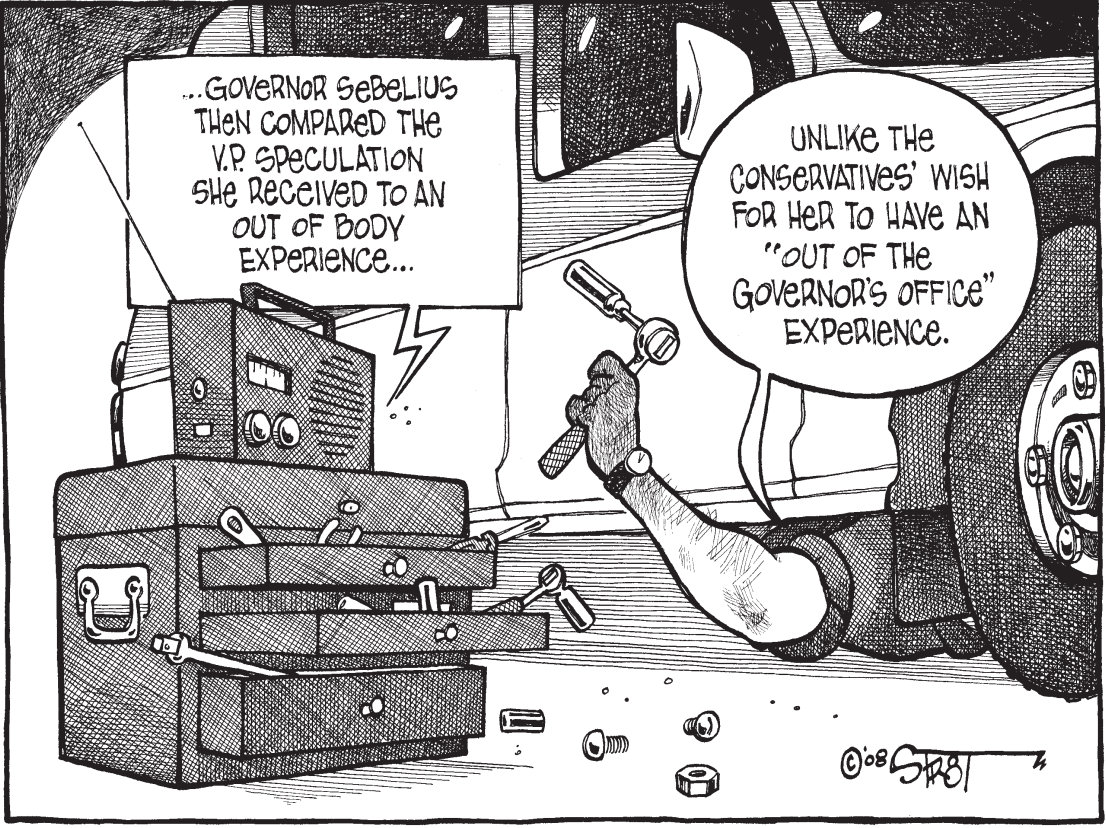
Suggest having the next meeting in Goodland or Colby.

Just see what they say.

“Why, we can’t drive all day to get to a meeting,” might be a good guess.

What do they think we do, living out here? It’s not fair, but there you have it.

—Steve Haynes



Wind may power resurgence

By LEE ‘DOC’ FRANKLIN
“The Saudi Arabia of wind power.” That’s what western Kansas is being called.

Is that true? That sentiment came from a couple of world-class businessmen, but major wind power companies and our neighboring state of Colorado, which is “green” with envy over our wind assets, seem to agree.

I attended a meeting of commissioners and others from northwest Kansas counties on wind power, representing Decatur County for information-gathering purposes. I did not represent and I do not speak for our commissioners, who could not attend.

I have conveyed the information presented to the commissioners and the county Economic Development office. These observations represent my sense of this first northwest Kansas Regional Wind Energy Conference, and where it could take us.

What “world-class” businessmen? Two of our neighbors, as it turns out: Texan T. Boone Pickens, whom you have seen on television endorsing wind power, plans to build large transmission lines to collect and deliver power. Omaha billionaire Warren Buffett has a similar plan.

In matters of wind power, we are fortunate that our county commissioners understand and “get” it. All of us will need to pull together and organize assistance for landowners in understanding the contracts used for wind leases and provide assistance in a host of related business and management areas.

Opinion

Why western Kansas? Wind patterns have been studied, mapped and judged for reliability, and western Kansas wins. Kansas is one of the top three states for wind potential, along with North Dakota and Texas. We fire in the center of the nation, minimizing distribution costs.

Our winds aloft at 50 to 70 meters are the most consistent and reliable. As other states benefit from reserves of steel or coal or timber, our land and our wind have become important “capital.” Reducing dependence on foreign energy has become a national priority for both government and voters.

Our near future will include meetings with developers of wind power and associated businesses. If our counties and cities are perceived to be the best organized, best informed and most contract savvy, we will enjoy the rewards of these negotiations.

We would be considered the “best partners” to which the power developers would award the best financial returns. Time is money for them, and good partners are good business. We could expect their best ideas and introductions to business looking to locate near power-production centers.

Sen. Sam Senator Brownback, who spoke at the meeting, recommended we use part of the wind-generated electricity to develop our own anhydrous fertilizer industry. This would be huge for western

Kansas.

In a meeting at 7 p.m. Tuesday at The Gateway., we will have an opportunity to consider a “distributed power” wind model, where the community takes an ownership share in the revenues. If we could develop a regional model in Decatur County for this moderate size of power generation plan, we could be of major interest to businesses and communities across the U.S.

Along with all of us, our county commissioners will have much to consider. Please give them your best input and management support.

Lee “Doc” Franklin of rural Jennings, is the Democratic candidate for county commissioner in District 3. A Decatur County native, he is retired from a career in finance, consulting and strategic planning.

From the Bible

And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Matthew 8:2-3

Palin speech was ‘awesome’

I’ve avoided watching the political conventions. To me, they were just so much rhetoric. More of the blah, blah, blah of campaigns.

But, that was before Gov. Sarah Palin was picked as the running mate for Sen. John McCain. I caught a glimpse of her when the announcement was first made. That little taste was enough to make me commit to watch her acceptance speech. And, boy, was I glad I did. She blew me away. No faltering, no stammering, no hesitation. It’s an overused word, but she was awesome.

Not everyone shares my opinion. My oldest daughter Halley is a staunch (dare I say “militant”) Democrat. We try not to talk “politics” and just leave it as an area where we agree to disagree. She had called me during the Democratic convention so I returned the favor. I said, “Well, did you watch the speech last night? What did you think?”

“Yes, I watched it,” she said. “It was a good speech, no doubt about that.”

“Good?” I said. “That wasn’t just good - it was great!”

Halley replied, “I wouldn’t say it was great. She didn’t talk about health care. She didn’t talk about the war. She didn’t talk about education.”

“Well, I don’t care,” I said. “She



Out Back
By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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brought tears to my eyes.”

“Mine, too,” Halley said in her dry way, “but for totally different reasons.”

Everyone else I’ve talked to, though, shares my opinion. And, I’m sure I must have some Democrat friends.

I have never felt this way before, but Sarah Palin has inspired me. Not because she’s a woman, either. If a man had given that speech, I would still feel the same, although the pitbull-and-lipstick joke wouldn’t have made much sense. I want to do what I can to “get out the vote.” I want to help the campaign; I’ll put up posters; put signs in the front yard, make telephone calls, drive people to the polls. My first call today will be to my county’s Republican chairman to volunteer.

—ob—

Tomatoes, peaches and apples are coming on strong. Canning flats, rings and jars are in short supply.

I tried to pick up some flats at a major store over the weekend, and the shelves were absolutely empty, save for a few boxes of freezer containers. Trouble is, my freezer is already full.

What a country we live in, where someone can actually complain because we don’t have enough space to store all of our food.

In case of famine, you want to be at my house.

—ob—

School has been back in session almost a month. Our granddaughters all report they are doing well. Except, perhaps, Taylor. During our last phone conversation, she told me she didn’t like school.

“Why not?” I asked her.

“It’s boring,” she said. “I do my work, then I have to wait for everyone else to get done.”

Oh, boy. Somebody better find some work to challenge that girl.

To the Editor:

At the national political conventions, after all is said and done, much more will be said than done. As I write this, the conventions are just beginning, so my views may be influenced by them, but I doubt it.

This election seems destined to rise to a new level of hate and vicious attacks on both candidates. Books have been written doing hatchet jobs on the candidates. They are vilified, slandered, their integrity questioned, and their families subjected to attack.

I remember during the 1960 election, John Kennedy was subjected to attacks on his faith and loyalty, but nothing like this. I also remember the hateful charges that Lyndon Johnson was a scheming McBeth who was responsible for Kennedy’s assassination. What rubbish!

Youtube.com and the Internet have taken these personal attacks to a whole new level. Talk of coon hunting, i.e. killing blacks, nasty assaults on their manhood, their integrity and who they are – hogwash! Such ridiculous filthy trash. It’s shameful to vilify our future leaders in this way and I’ll have none of it.

Both Sen. McCain and Sen. Obama are men of integrity. Both have been elected by the people of their home states to the United States Senate. Both have made personal sacrifices to serve their country. They deserve our understanding and respect.

The real issue for those of us who live in western Kansas is ethanol. Millions have been invested in our ethanol plants and the improved price of grains has greatly benefited our entire area. Sen. McCain has pledged to cut off subsidies for ethanol. Sen. Obama has pledged to support ethanol and other forms of renewable energy.

We must choose between their pocketbook or their prejudice.

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People in our area don’t seem to want to work at understanding political questions. I remember a

Political attacks at new level

Letter to the Editor

friend who, in the 1964 election, told me his mind was made up years before the election. He simply wasn’t interested in looking at the issues.

I am sorry that Rep. John Faber does not feel the need to debate the issues before us. He should help us understand the choices that confront us. His absence and lack of response prevent meaningful debate.

I am also disappointed by the lack of civic involvement in promoting the education of voters. Learning about the issues before we vote is a duty we owe our country. Elsewhere, community forums raise issues and give candidates a chance to respond. This is lacking in our area.

We need, as a state representative, a person of vision who will lead, not just react, to others. We need to consider what the state needs for an energy policy. We need to look at our response to climate change. What

can this district do to be part of the next 10-year transportation plan? How do we get the state to meet its obligations to those in need? It’s not by cutting taxes and borrowing against our children’s future.

Western Kansas is facing some crucial questions concerning our water supplies. We need to be looking for solutions. We need to develop our wind energy and we need leadership to revive our rural economy.

I urge people not just to vote, but to listen to the debates, sort out what is important to them and make an educated vote.

Bob Strevey
Norcatur

(Mr. Strevey, a retired teacher who farms near Norcatur, is the Democratic candidate for state representative in the 120th District. He faces Rep. John Faber of Brewster in the general election.)

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