

From telegraph to smart phone in 150 years

Imagine this: the age of electronic communication is just 150 years old.

In all of human time, maybe 8,000 years of recorded history, thousands of years of prehistoric civilization, perhaps millions of development, in all the eons since creation, men have been able to communicate instantly with the next county or state for only 150 years.

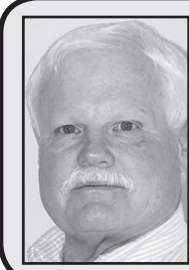
Oct. 24, 1861, marks the completion of the transcontinental telegraph line, linking the East Coast with California just months after the start of the Civil War. Most immediately, the line bound California and the West to the Union, but the implications were far greater.

An era had begun. Soon, the invention of the telephone, radio, the teletype and other electronic devices would snowball connectivity. Within a few years of each invention, a device would become commonplace, and the world would change. Again and again.

It's likely no one alive 150 years ago could have envisioned the impact of this revolution. Talking to someone across the continent, or in Europe, and hearing their voice might have seemed too much.

But the tide had begun to come in. Television and computers would push it higher. The Internet and satellites would bind the world as it had never before been connected. Instead of weeks to get a letter across the continent or across the sea, messages would fly in seconds.

The change is striking: Much of it has occurred in the 65 years since World War II, a watershed time for invention. Then, soldiers had to wait weeks or months for letters from home, despite the priority the military put on mail. Today, you can pick up a phone and call your friends or family



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

on station in the war zone.

Things we accept as normal today, from joint replacement to cancer therapy, would have seemed impossible just a few decades ago. Men imagined space travel and intercity flight a century and a half ago, but these were mere dreams, science fiction.

In our lifetimes, my generation has seen these things come to pass. We remember a world without cell phones, computers, vaccines for childhood illnesses, easy, accessible travel, transistors and miniature

electronics.

We can tell our grandchildren about phones with no dials, wired to the wall. Our good ol' days include two-lane roads and streamliners, propeller airliners and black-and-white television. And, compared to all who went before, we grew up in a world of luxury and wealth, in a time of peace and prosperity unequalled in all of history.

Where is all this leading us? To wreck and ruin? Will we exhaust the Earth's resources, foul her air and water, overcrowd her continents and bring ourselves and society full cycle? Will poverty and decline become the norm?

Or will progress continue unabated, humanity solving our problems even as new ones appear?

Will we travel to other galaxies, or be

bound to our terrestrial home? Will we imagine a great frontier and dominate the old one?

Who's to say?

But history tells us the human condition has, in fact, improved throughout time. We are more civilized today, we have more, we have the ability to create more than ever before.

And, despite all evidence to the contrary, war and pestilence are fading away. Social scientists and statisticians find that we live in the most peaceable era in time. We certainly live with the most technology.

You have to believe that human ingenuity will keep us one step ahead of our mistakes, help us solve our problems and reach even higher. That's the curve of history, not even or linear, but always higher.

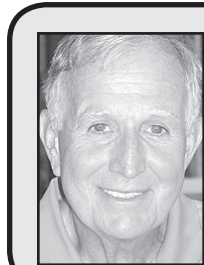
Just imagine what might be, 150 years from today.

Representative senses foul mood among area voters

I traveled to Lawrence on Oct. 20 for a two-day meeting with the House Republicans to discuss the upcoming session, which begins Monday, Jan. 9. It is nice to feel much more comfortable with my duties as a representative.

I have spent quite a bit of time since May traveling the district and visiting with people about their concerns. It is a bad time to be a politician, as the general mood is that politicians are doing a bad job, especially the ones in Washington. It was quite a debacle this summer watching Congress and the President. Now we are treated to the open warfare of selecting a Republican nominee for president.

A politician I know who has the best interests of western Kansas in mind is Sen. Jerry Moran. We are



Letter from Topeka

By State Rep. Ward Cassidy
ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov

about to lose three post offices in the 120th District. He has proposed the "Protecting Rural Post Offices Act," which would prohibit the U.S. Postal Service from closing an office if there is no alternative access point for postal service within 10 miles. Whether you agree or not, if it was your post office about to close, it would be nice to know someone is fighting for you.

A good friend of mine has asked for help against the Environmental Protection Agency's new regulation forcing farmers to have containment for any fuel tanks holding 1,300 gallons or more. I have talked to representatives in Arkansas and Missouri who are going to attempt legislation to fight this regulation. I brought it up this weekend and was told it is quite an uphill battle to

fight the agency or we would have a power plant in Holcomb. I still will do everything I can to help a constituent.

I also plan to work with several legislators to change the laws so that parents will have to report missing children immediately.

House members were given a brief heads-up as to what to look for from the Brownback administration this session while we were in Lawrence.

First, the "super committee" in Washington is saying that it could cut Medicaid by a half billion to a billion dollars per state. As it is, Medicaid and the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System are big items that draw down the entire budget. Medicaid will change drastically this coming year.

I was told the retirement plan will not change for current members for 25 years but that new members could have a new plan. After working all summer, the retirement committee still does not have a solution. The system pays out 6 percent of the fund and returns 2 percent. That is not a statistic members like to hear.

The two major administrative actions that will have everyone talking are the governor's proposal for a flat income tax rate and a new school finance formula. I'll write about these proposed changes as more information becomes available.

The state Board of Education has applied to drop out of the federal "No Child Left Behind Act." We will have to follow four principal standards once we are out to get

federal money. I am surprised that has not made big headlines, but I am sure it will in the weeks ahead.

We listened to top economists from all over the country telling us what should be done to grow our state so we can pay for the necessary state responsibilities. All I can say is that what has been done in the past by Kansas government has not been effective; the can has been kicked down the road too often. Now that money is short, we are all going to see changes we might not agree with.

I will keep the 120th District informed to the best of my abilities. I will continue to have a weekly column during the session. My e-mail address is ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov.

Remember when just steering your car was hard work?

Remember when turning the steering wheel on the family car was somewhat of a challenge?

Many times it would take both hands. Trying to park parallel was like churning ice cream in the old wooden freezer with a frozen handle. Trying to make a quick U-turn on a street where U-turns were not allowed usually ended in embarrassment as you jumped the curb.

But then came a big breakthrough: (drum roll) the "steering knob!"

To make turning the steering wheel a lot easier, someone invented a device that you attached to the steering wheel, allowing you to use your fisted right hand to grab the knob and turn the wheel in a complete circle with what looked like ease. Wow! No way could they ever improve on that! And it also allowed you more time with your arm around your honey.

If you remember these things, then you were part of the "good old days!"

Those were the days when cars came in two colors, or so it seemed - black or brown. When tires were black. And with the advent of more colors showing up on cars, the tires took on a new look, too - white-walls! How fancy was that?

People of means would drive around in convertibles with the tops down. The envy was as obvious as a streaker running across the football field.

"How lucky they are," was a comment heard time and again.

Despite everything, this "Man of the Plains" still considers "power steering" as the greatest change. You were able to turn the steering wheel with just one finger. The chatter over this invention was deafening.

What sparked this column was a white 1936 Cord 810 two-door convertible that sits atop a bookcase in my front room. It's 11 inches long, 4 inches wide and 3 inches high. The black base it's mounted on is 13 inches by 6 1/2 inches. The convertible's doors open, the trunk lid opens, the hood opens, the headlight covers open, the top is removable and the steering wheel turns the tires. The interior is a rose color.

While looking at that car, my mind started going in all directions, eventually settling on cars during my early years. It's fun to go back in time and then to look at what we see on our roadways today. Never but never could even the brightest engineering minds of that time envision what we see today. And the advances yet to come will provide other generations cause for chatter, comparison and awe.

They will also have their "good old days." But do you think their good old days will match what we've seen during our lifetime?

Of course, we'll never know.

ordering a hamburger at one of those fast food joints a few weeks ago, a friend of mine said the young man behind the counter asked him if he could afford fries with that.

Snippets: "Did you see the debate where Romney and Perry were acting like grade-school kids? And they want to lead our country?"

Never happen."

"I saw President Obama on the 'Ellen' television show. What did that have to do with jobs?"

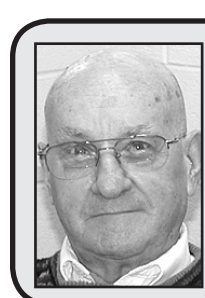
"Have you ever wondered how long it's going to take Obama to find a job after the 2012 election? Maybe that's what he is doing being away from Washington so often...."

"...It would be interesting to know

how many members of the Occupy crowd were also members of the Tea Party?"

"...There is much more to teaching than giving tests... We're missing the boat and our kids will pay dearly... Wake up!"

E-mail Snippets to milehitom@hotmail.com, no longer than three sentences. Names are not used.



Man of the Plains

By Tom Dreiling
milehitom@hotmail.com

There's No Place Like Home

By Eunice Boeve
Illustrated by Michelle Meade

Chapter 11

The Flying Machine

Last Chapter: Escaping from the harrowing experience of being a runaway slave, Jack and Mollie meet a woman who nursed soldiers at Fort Hays during a cholera epidemic. On the time machine's computer, they learn she might have been Elizabeth Polly. The twins put on their glasses and are thrilled to be in Hays, but soon realize that time has stood still and no one can see or hear them.

"Good thing we don't get tired," Mollie said as they walked toward home.

"It doesn't matter how long it takes either," Jack said, shrugging his shoulders. "Time stands still anyway."

A few cars and trucks rolled past the twins, but as usual no one could see them. They stayed close to the edge of the road, wondering if they were real enough to get hit. They laughed a little about it, although being invisible was really not that funny.

The house looked the same and Dog was still on the porch. He raised his head and his tail thumped twice and went still. They reached down to pet him and he sighed, laid his head on his outstretched paws, and closed his eyes.

"I think he senses us," Mollie said. "But he can't see us."

"The door's still locked and the car's gone so Mom and Dad are probably still in town," Jack looked toward the barn. "I bet we're still in there."

"Get the key and we'll look," Mollie said, a strange feeling coming over her. Would it be creepy to see yourself?

"Just a minute," Jack eyes darted from the time machine, still on their right every time they looked, and back toward the barn. "Maybe we should check our departure time."

"We're not going, are we?" Mollie said, as she stood beside her brother in the time machine, her eyes on the computer screen. "We have five minutes to decide," Jack said.

"I vote we don't," Mollie said.

"If we don't, will we be lost in some time warp, unable to go on into another time and not able to come back to this time either?"

"Oh," Mollie's face paled. "We are sort

of like ghosts. If Mom and Dad were home right now, even they couldn't see us."

"The time machine is probably invisible, too," Jack sighed. "So we'd better go on."

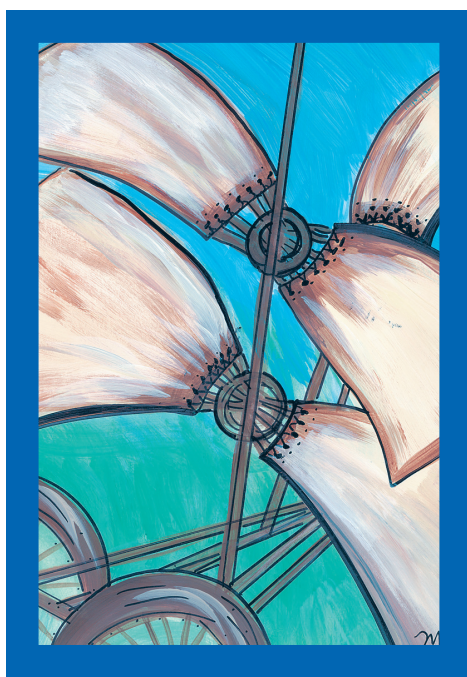
Mollie nodded, tears stinging her eyes.

As they waited, Jack tried to cheer up his sister and himself as well. "Maybe this time we'll go flying with Amelia Earhart. She grew up in Atchison, you know."

"I'd rather just go to her museum," Mollie said. "Although, I bet she'd be fun to know. Wouldn't it be something if we could find out what happened to her?"

"Her plane went down somewhere over the ocean. The time machine doesn't go beyond Kansas."

"I know," Mollie said. "Grandma Andrews is a big fan of hers. I bet Grandma would love to fly around the world."



"Maybe," Jack said, "But I think she likes her because she's named for her. Her mother listened to the radio every day for news of her progress. She even drew a map and marked it every day. Grandma was born a few days before the plane disappeared."

Jack sighed. "It's too bad she didn't make it. A few men had flown over the top of the world, but she wanted to go the longer way, around the equator."

"Maybe we'll go back to her time and meet her," Mollie said. "It would be sad

though, knowing what was going to happen to her."

Mollie was still thinking about Amelia Earhart when the ticking sound began.

This time the twins found themselves standing just inside the open doorway of a huge airport hanger where two men stood beside an odd looking machine.

"You weren't far off," Mollie said.

Jack grinned. "It's some kind of a flying machine anyway."

"It looks like a go-cart with double wings," Mollie turned to question a man beside her. "What is it?"

The big man smiled. "That, little lady, is Purvis and Wilson's flying machine. It's going to put Goodland, Kansas, right smack on the map and be written up in all the big newspapers just like the Wright Brothers were seven years ago."

"Seven years ago?" Mollie said.

"Yep, little lady. In 1903."

A sudden silence fell over the crowd as one of the men beside the machine stepped forward and raised his hand.

"Most of you know me, William Purvis, and my partner here, Charlie Wilson."

"As you'll recall from seeing the model launched last Thanksgiving, this machine is designed to go straight up in the air, fly to its destination, and then set straight down on the ground. It'll be handy for getting in and out of tight places."

Earnestly, he continued to praise the gyrocopter as he called it, and the crowd cheered and clapped when he finished.

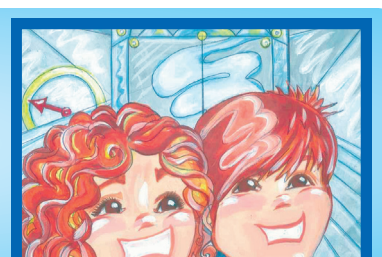
Eagerly the people moved back to give them room as the two men rolled their machine out into the open field next to the hanger. They waited in breathless silence as the men readied their gyrocopter.

The motor roared to life. The gyrocopter lifted ... maybe a few feet, maybe not. Afterwards, the twins weren't sure. Then it tipped over and the two sets of huge double blades smashed onto the ground.

A cry went up from the crowd and the two men stared helplessly at the ruined machine. Jack looked at Mollie and shook his head. "Let's go," he said.

They had come to this place with their glasses in their pockets and now they slipped them on, glad to escape what had to be embarrassing, as well as a huge disappointment, for the two men.

Inside the time machine they went to the computer to read about the gyrocopter. They were pleased to see that Goodland's High Plains Museum had a full-sized replica



and they thought it would be fun to come see it someday when they were back in their real lives. But they were sorry to read that the gyrocopter broke the men financially and they never realized their dream. The men's loss made them think of their parents and their struggles to build the time machine. Imagining their parent's joy when they returned, both Jack and Mollie hoped they could soon go home in real time.

They were happy to read that the two men had taken out a patent on their machine, the first ever for a vertical flying machine. At least the men had that distinction. They were surprised that it had taken 40 more years before a working helicopter was invented.

Now they remembered that their mom had mentioned that Goodland had a huge replica of the famous Van Gogh's painting titled Sunflower. The twins stepped outside the time machine and looked through their glasses at the famous painting.

"I wish Mom could see this," Mollie said. "I..." She stopped, tears choking her voice. She had never been so homesick in her life.

To Be Continued.

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