

## Gateway fund donation not for operating costs

The City Council ought to reconsider the way it is frittering away the Bremer fund, which comes from a gift of about \$1 million from the estates of Fred and Henrietta Bremer.

This generous gift was made for the upkeep and improvement of the civic center. The council proposes to begin using it to cover operating costs, but that probably won't last more than four or five years at current spending rates.

It's one thing to use such a gift for major capital improvements. The first time the city tapped the fund, it used the money to replace air conditioning units at the center, now more than two decades old.

In past years, the city has tapped the surplus in its electric fund to keep The Gateway going. Losses have averaged \$50,000 to \$75,000, but for a few years got out of hand. Since then, city administrators and the council have cut staff and spending and kept it more in line.

One truth is that the center never will make money; civic centers seldom do, even in larger towns. However, the city does get the benefit of having its offices and meetings in the center. That has to be worth something.

And it's true, The Gateway does attract business to town. Supporters always have justified the city subsidy to the center on that basis. It's hard to put a dollar figure on that value, but it's there.

One option for the council, when it first received the Bremer gift, would have been to

invest the money and use the interest for improvements to The Gateway. The fund would have lasted nearly forever that way, and the income would have paid for improvements far into the future.

Faced with some big needs, however, the council then chose to spend the money a bit at a time. Much of that spending could be classified as ordinary upkeep, not improvement, but the Bremers did not restrict their gift.

The latest tap on the fund was for \$62,000 to preserve the pavement surface around the center, really a maintenance expense.

The Gateway has always been the center of a storm. Many opposed building it, or even accepting the \$1 million gift which helped build it, on the ground that it would lose money.

The Bremer fund will disappear some day, but using it to pay the subsidy will hasten the reckoning. One thing the council must consider is, will anyone else make such a gift, given the way this one is spent?

It's a question we can't answer. We can only say the city must do its best to spend all its money wisely.

Our view is that, first, The Gateway is a prize, a jewel to be maintained. It's a centerpiece of our community.

That said, we'd advise saving the Bremer money for major improvements and not spend it on operations. That only puts off a real solution to the problem.

— Steve Haynes

## The trials of feeding the birds

I love feeding the birds. I enjoy watching them get the seed out of my feeders. I'm not so crazy about the mess they make of the yard underneath, but that's just part of the deal.

I started feeding birds when we lived in Colorado. Everyone put up hummingbird feeders each summer, and so did we.

After moving back to Kansas, I gave up on feeding the birds. We just didn't have enough hummingbirds to make it worth my while.

Then when we started going back to Colorado on vacations and had a place to stay that wasn't a motel room, I started putting out hummingbird feeders again.

It's fun to watch these bright little bundles of feathers land on their perches and poke their impossibly long snouts into the feeder for a beakful of sugar water.

With hummingbirds, though, it seems they spend more time defending their territory than eating. It's still fun to watch them buzz around.

Then a year or so ago, I decided to feed the hundreds of other birds that swarm around in the summer. I got a shepherd's crook, a pair of tube feeders and 10 pounds of bird seed.

It took a couple of days for the birds to find the food. When they did, they came in droves. My next purchase was a bird book to identify the species.

Now, I have a pair of tube feeders at home in Oberlin, which I have to refill about every other day during the summer, and a set of tube feeders and three hummingbird feeders in Colorado, which I have to fill almost daily when I'm out there.

The hummingbirds must be suf-

fering from the drought as much as the rest of us, because they aren't even fighting over territory much this year. They're just lining up like street people at the soup kitchen. All three feeders are abuzz with birds almost all day long.

The seed feeders have also had their share of birds, but there have been other problems out at the shepherd's crook.

Two years ago, Steve's sister was staying here and she called to say that a doe and her fawns were feasting on the seeds.

Sure enough, when we got out to Colorado, the first day the birds found the feeders and ate about half the seed. The next morning, they were empty.

We refilled and watched. The birds came again and so did the deer.

She licked at both feeders until they were empty. When we walked out into the yard and shooed her off, she'd move away a short distance, give us a dirty look and come back as soon as we went back inside.

I soon started bringing in the feeders at night.

Last year, it was the same thing. The feeders had to come in each night.

This year, I got some new feeders with rims around the bottom to catch

the dropped seeds. The deer has yet to find my new feeders and seeds. We did see her out eating the neighbors flowers one morning, however.

This year, it's a chipmunk or a golden-mantled ground squirrel or something like that. Whatever, it is, the little devil hops across the yard, shimmy up the narrow pole, hops over onto the rim of the feeder and starts stuffing himself.

I guess I'll have to go back to tube feeders without a seed catcher on the bottom. That will mean more seeds on the ground, but at least, the chipmunk will have an easier time of getting his lunch.

Maybe, I should just give up, and get a book on mammals so I can identify what's out in my yard eating the bird seed.

### From the Bible

Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

— John 6: 28-29



## Don't let outsiders sway vote

Republican voters in northwest Kansas got their first taste of "attack" ads this season a week or two ago when a flier arrived in the mail denouncing state Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer.

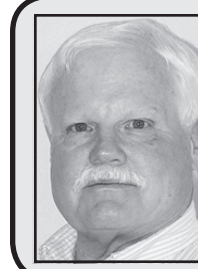
The mysterious oversized postcard appeared in mailboxes with no real explanation of where it came from. The required "credit" line says the mailing was paid for by the "Kansas Jobs PAC (political action committee), William Wilson, treasurer," nothing more.

No one has ever heard of the committee. State documents online show it was registered June 16 with the state Governmental Ethics Commission by Mr. Wilson. The form lists a post office box in Topeka for an address and a phone in the Tecumseh area east of the capital city, most likely someone's home.

The copy is pure political heat: Over a photo of a magician holding a wand above a top hat, the copy says: "State Senator Ralph Ostmeyer is trying to make his votes for higher taxes disappear. Don't be fooled by his cheap political tricks."

The senator did vote for a temporary increase in the state sales tax a couple of years ago when the state was in a real bind. He never tried to hide that vote, however. He says the more recent votes may have been on amendments to bills that did or didn't pass.

"Tax raisin' Ralph can't be trusted with our tax dollars," the flier says. It cites three votes, including the sales tax issue in 2010, which passed both houses by good margins. It had the



## Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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backing of legislative leaders and Gov. Mark Parkinson.

Sen. Ostmeyer says he's puzzled as to who or what group generated the flier. He estimated it might cost \$7,000 to blanket a district like that.

"I've been endorsed by all the conservative groups," he said. "I'm the conservative in this race."

He speculated that Democrats might want to disrupt the Republican primary, setting up a possible victory in the fall for Sen. Allen Schmidt of Hays, an appointed legislator who has been thrown into Mr. Ostmeyer's 40th District.

The senator said he'd checked with Sen. Jay Emler, the majority leader, and he had heard of only one other district where a senator had been the target of a similar anonymous attack. That was in southeast Kansas.

The problems of farming concerned him more at the time, he added.

"My irrigation well was down yesterday," he said. "I've been busy with that."

He did say he felt good about his campaign.

His primary opponent, John Miller, a long-time Norton County commissioner, said he wasn't a whole lot happier about the attack. "I knew about it when you knew about it," he said, noting that he'd received one in the mail and gotten a phone call.

He said he was campaigning in Logan County when a voter called to say she'd gotten "a postcard from you" that day.

"I just wish people would stay out of this," he said. "Ralph said in the beginning he wanted to keep the primary fair and above board."

"I have no clue (who's behind it)."

Neither, apparently, does anyone else in the 40th District. Sen. Ostmeyer said, though, that he feared there might be radio attack ads from a similar source in the final days before Tuesday's primary election.

When outside forces and outside money attempt to manipulate a legislative race way out here, something is wrong. It'd be a shame to allow anonymous pols hiding somewhere in eastern Kansas to sway our votes.

## Maybe carny is in her future

After this week, I can add "carnival barker" to my resumé.

The church we attend always volunteers to run a carnival game at the county fair, the one where you drop rubber balls into a box with holes in the bottom. Get five balls in a row, and you win. One of the volunteers, using a microphone, calls out, "Drop ball No. 1; drop ball No. 2, No. 3, No. 4, and so on, until there is a winner."

Jim always says I'm dangerous with a microphone in my hand. We volunteered to work the game one night, and I grabbed the microphone. I found myself calling out, "Hey, hey, hey. Step right up folks. Another game of SINKO is about to begin. Step right up. Play a game of SINKO! One ticket a game! There's a winner every game. Get five balls in a row and win a prize!"

I couldn't stop myself. For a moment in time, I was a total "carny."

My 13-year old granddaughter, Taylor, has been here for a little more than a week. So far, every day she has made it out of bed by the "crack of noon."

I'm partly to blame. We've stayed up way too late at night (even considering the carnival) and then can't crawl out of bed the next day.

I've given her fair warning, though. This week is going to be different. We will be getting up at a decent time and we're going to get something accomplished. I want the front porch painted and she said she would help. That's our goal.



## Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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Taylor's Aunt Halley is coming to get her in another week, and I have a special job lined up for her, too. We're going to get the north porch cleaned up and ready for it to be screened in. That's a job I've wanted done for a long time.

Add in the fact that Jim is just about to wrap up the library shelves and cabinets, and I am going to be one happy camper if all those tasks are completed. This might, just might, be the year we finish the house.

If you're a homeowner, I'm not sure you can ever really finish. There is always something needing to be done on a house.

Jennifer called the other day to share another "Ani-ism."

Seems Jennifer was scolding Ani for some misdeed and said, in that tone only mothers have, "Aniston Paige."

To which Ani shot back, in that tone only a 5-year-old can have, "Jennifer Elizabeth."

It's good we weren't there, because it would be hard to maintain discipline while the grandparents are laughing.

I know wildlife officers say there

are no mountain lions in this part of the country. Recently, however, a friend (whose judgment I trust) swears she saw a black panther while driving to work one day. Many people have said they have seen cougars, but no one has ever had a camera to snap a picture for proof.

Another friend who is a wildlife photographer dreams of capturing an image of one of those big cats on film. I, too, would love to snap one of those pictures. That's why my camera is always with me. I'll find out where my friend saw "her" cat and stake out the area. Maybe I'll get lucky.

When I was a little kid, there was a mountain lion marauding our farm community. Several hogs were killed at one neighbor's place and huge paw prints were found in the mud. Everyone was on alert. I was old enough to do chores alone, and I remember running from the barn to the house every night, so scared that the mountain lion was lurking in the shadows, ready to pounce.

The authorities can tell us "mountain lions don't exist out here," but sooner or later, someone (and I hope it's me) will get a picture.

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