

Polls don't tell all when it comes to election

We're just about two weeks out from the primary election, and there is one race that will be particularly interesting to watch: the U.S. House of Representatives.

Candidate Marck Cobb, a former pilot and planner at the Pentagon said that now is the time when a lot of people are just starting to be interested in the race. That's probably true. If you drive around town there are twice as many lawn signs (and a few almost-billboard sized banners) as there were a couple weeks ago. Beyond that, there have been television and newspaper ads, radio spots, televised forums and volunteers knocking on doors to try and get the word out. But what really has people talking are the KWCH polls.

The most recent one puts Cobb dead last, with Sue Boldra, a Fort Hays State civics professor, also in single digits.

Cobb and Boldra, have both staked their candidacy on trying to prove you can win a seat without raising the most money. Cobb drives himself around the district in a high gas-mileage car. Boldra said she only takes individual donations as a civics experiment. Unfortunately it doesn't seem to be paying off.

Rob Wasinger, a former aid of Rep. Jerry Moran, is at 10 percent. Tim Huelskamp, a state senator from Fowler, was a front runner but has had to go on the offensive recently since he slipped to third. Huelskamp was in the area this week, holding poorly-attended meetings in Norton, Colby, Oberlin and others. Huelskamp is one of only two candidates in the race who does have a voting record, which he says is far more consistently conservative than Jim Barnett, also a state senator, from Emporia.

Locally, the best thing Huelskamp has going for him is the endorsement of our state Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, with whom he shares an office in Topeka. Barnett has not been through the area much recently.

The real surprise of this campaign has been the Mann Surge. Tracey Mann was an unknown, having never run for political office. But he has scored big with effective communication and clever slogans, not to mention a big door to door push by both the candidate and his volunteers. He has drawn criticism by underdog candidates like Cobb for farming his campaign management to out-of-state firms, but if his numbers are any indication, they must be doing something right.

And through it all is Democrat Alan Jilka, former Salina mayor, who has been waiting quietly for whomever will emerge as his actual opposition.

Polls are tricky, especially in "smaller" races. It's a big district, but this isn't New York City where you can't swing a dead cat without hitting a political action committee with their own polling numbers - this is rural Kansas. We get pretty much the one poll, and we have to take it with a very large grain of salt. The poll sampled 516 likely voters out of 1,315 registered voters. Who knows where they are from, and who knows if that would really represent our area.

We think there are far more undecideds than the KWCH poll indicates, particularly in this region of the state, where the none of the candidates had great amounts of name recognition before the election. That number is shrinking, however, and will continue to do so before the election.

In any case, the only stats that matter will be released on Wednesday, Aug. 4.

— Kevin Bottrell  
editor Colby Free Press

Great-grandma not so old

Maybe it's because my great-grandparents were all gone long before I was born that I had this preconceived notion that great-grandparents are supposed to be old. But, as of 7:30 a.m., Monday, July 12, I have had to re-think that concept. Our oldest granddaughter, Angelia, gave birth to a little boy she has named Kayden Jason. So, even though, we are definitely senior citizens, I don't feel like an "old" great-grandparent. Pictures of Kayden prove he is as adorable as his mother and grandmother say he is. He has all his fingers and toes and lots of dark hair.

We are planning a trip to see him in a couple of months. He'll be past that "new baby" stage and more responsive by then. Perhaps he'll do more than just eat and sleep. His mom is working towards a degree in nursing and will probably need it if he's like most little boys I know. There will be plenty of skinned knees and boo-boos in his future.

After working outside the last two weeks I have a whole new appreciation for my husband and anybody else who earns a living by the sweat of their brow. Believe me, there was a whole lot of sweatin' goin' on.

It was hot, hot hot. Not only that....it got hot early and stayed hot late. Plus, there

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



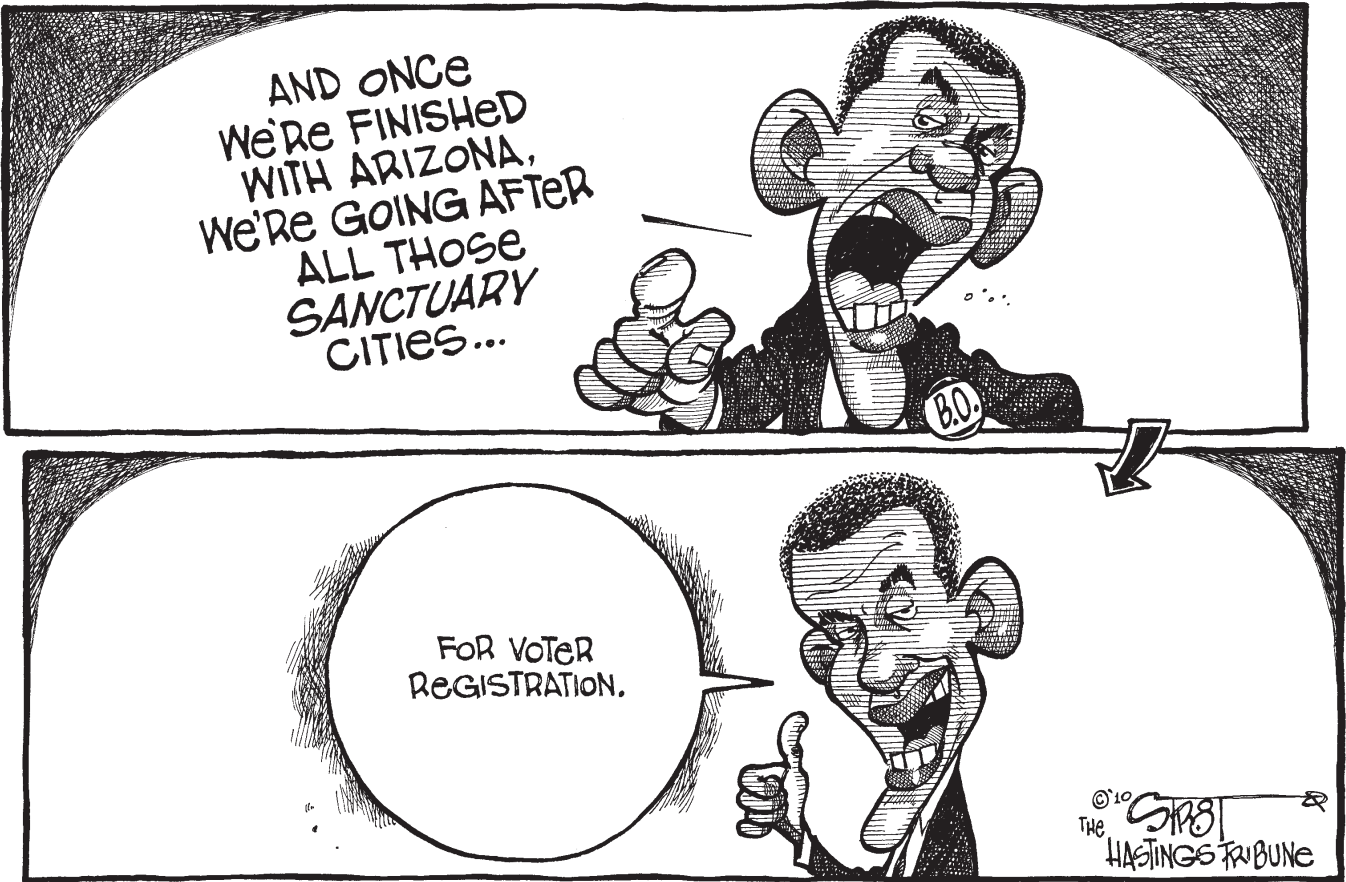
was something western Kansans aren't used to...humidity. Jim can tell you I get a little cranky when I'm hot and sweaty. The heat, literally, zaps the strength out of a person.

At least, we had enough sense to shut down every day by 1 p.m. By the time we would get home all I could think to do was get a cool shower, put on clean clothes, turn on the A/C, aim a fan directly on me and collapse in my recliner for the remainder of the day. I don't think I've cooked a real meal in days. It's been drive-through breakfasts, restaurant lunches and sandwiches for supper. It's okay for a few days but, I wouldn't want to live like that for very long. Jim wouldn't either.

He's to the point where I can't help him much on the job, so I'm finding other things to do today. One will be to cook real food tonight. Maybe tacos with a side of those stuffed jalapenos. Can't go wrong there.

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Only the faint of heart have central air

Funny what we pride ourselves on. For instance at our house it is a badge of honor that there is no central air conditioning.

Built in the twenties, it's fortunate the heating system is as good as it is. The layout of the duct work has never been changed and the original grates add charm. Only two rooms on the second floor are heated but we manage to stay toasty-winter and summer!

Oh, there is a window air conditioner, an attic fan, ceiling fans and a lot of other fans but on this matter I remain firm "Central Air is for Whussies!"

The furnace has been in service going on 30 years and with an energy tax credit being offered it seems like a good time to replace that. The hubby said, "Maybe we should get central air!"

WHAT?

I like opening the windows at night! Fresh air is good for you!

Somehow it makes me feel like a genius to outsmart the weather and keep some semblance of comfort in the house by pulling the shades up and down as the sun progresses throughout the day, closing off rooms, moving fans, etc!

June storms caused a power failure. The computer on my stove got fried! So even when the power came back I could not use it. I managed most of harvest with an electric fry pan, a crock pot and the microwave! Not fun but doable! I was so glad to have the stove fixed as was the hubby. He said "now you can quit complaining about not being able to bake cookies!"

No doubt you've noticed all the soft drinks, flavored water and sports drinks today. They're everywhere.

You can't walk into a supermarket or convenience store without bumping into the many drink offering displays.

And flavors. Wow.

Just think of some taste you desire - fudge malted gumball, cheese yogurt yummy or silvery satin strawberry. It's out there and you can buy it and drink it down.

Without question, the best part of these drinks for me is the packaging.

It's unbelievable. And the creativity? Almost too much for one to digest.

Anymore, I don't even care what's in the container.

I just want to hold it in my hand, caress its coolness, admire its latest, unique logo and look good doing so.

While many are content with the multitude of diet sodas, and flavored waters like blackberry blush, my drink of choice is chocolate milk. I really enjoy it by the way. I have since I was a small child.

Today's explosion of new soft drinks, flavored waters and sports drinks has one major worrisome aspect I cannot help but point out.

Pitchmen, women and yes kids are filling our heads with the idea these flavored drinks can be part of a well-rounded, balanced diet. Their ads and infomercials are as numerous as the products they're selling-and it's working.

The most alarming part of this sales pitch is that so much of it is aimed at our youth. In case you haven't been in today's schools this drink deluge is very much a part of the contemporary scene.

Soft drinks have no business being considered part of a balanced diet at our

Back Home Nancy Hagman



Hmmmm-I may complain a lot but I don't remember fussing about that!

The days we were without power I found plenty of people willing to commiserate with me but it was mostly about the heat. "How do you sleep without air-conditioning?" I'd smile smugly and say, "We don't have air-conditioning!"

You know they say-it's not the heat, it's the humidity! Well, after 6-10 inches of rain we arid, high plains folks got a lesson in that! My salt rock candle holder not only wept-it left a puddle.

Then it dried out and that is why I say, "Humidity, nonsense! It's the heat!" Did you know titanium melts at 3020 degrees F or some such ridiculous number? They cast it in molybdenum which melts at- well, who even knows if it melts? Unless it is in Kansas on a mid July day!

So I said to the eldest daughter, who was staying at our house in one of those bedrooms without any ductwork to carry air-conditioning, "Do you think we should get central air?"

And she said, "Well, mom you guys aren't getting any younger, so it might

not be a bad idea!"

THE NERVE!

Though I found myself agreeing, in fact I went even further: the whole house and three acres of yard is far from a good idea at our age (or any age)!

Why don't we just go find a nice condo with a 10,000 square foot shop for the hubby to mess around and store his stuff in? If only some enterprising developer started building those. I'm sure the condo at least would have central air, so I'd no longer feel like I'd been lured into some sort of senseless luxury!

As the conversation continued (before she packed her bags and headed to own air-conditioned house) we covered all the positives and negative of central air. One interesting point is the central air-conditioning units are supposedly more efficient than what we are doing now; saving us money and energy!

Then I unplugged the vintage oscillating fan to move it and realized the wire on one side of the cord was no longer connected to the plug in! I had thought the fan as charming as the 1920 heater grates in our house, but it occurs to me it just may be a fire hazard! I already replaced one fan this summer: fried at the same time the stove got it. Insurance adjustor never has returned my call! GRRRR

There is a time and a place for everything. Never mind my age or my silly notions about outsmarting the weather! It's time for central air!

I can't wait!

Water is best sports drink, you can buy

Insight John Schlageck Kansas Farm Bureau

schools or anywhere else. These drinks have little, if any nutritional value.

Look at the ingredients in a soft drink the next time you pick one up. Most people wouldn't have a clue what these ingredients are, myself included.

If students or adults want a treat - something out of the ordinary - that's where soft drinks play a part. To be part of a balanced diet, a food product must have nutritional value. I believe soft drinks have such a negligible amount, if any, they cannot be considered seriously as part of any "balanced" diet.

Unlike water, soft drinks won't even quench your thirst. They leave you longing for a tall, cool glass of water.

Talk to a nutritionist or physician and what's the ingredient they'll tell you we're supposed to drink at least eight glasses of?

That's right. Nature's own liquid - water.

What about that wonderful white liquid chocked full of calcium we call milk? Where does it fit in our daily diet?

Milk belongs in almost everyone's diet. Nutritional research has stressed that men and women between the ages of 11 and 24 need the equivalent of five servings of dairy products daily.

This can be milk, yogurt, cheese, ice cream and a whole array of other good-tasting dairy foods.

Juice from oranges, grapefruit, lemons, strawberries and other fruits is another

item that belongs as part of a balanced diet.

Food products from natural primary crops - not always secondary, highly processed food products - are essential to our youngsters' diets. We owe it to them and their good health.

Other vegetable drinks made from tomatoes, carrots, celery and other vegetables are loaded with vitamins, minerals and fiber. Vegetable drinks also belong as part of our daily diets.

But let's return to soft drinks. What a brilliant stroke of marketing, linking soft, sports and flavored drinks with a well rounded, nutritionally balanced diet. Infer something often enough and people will begin to believe.

Soft drinks linked with a balanced diet and nutrition is about as palatable to me as the drink manufacturers laughing all the way to the bank.

There is no substitute for healthy, nutritious food in our daily diets. Students and adults should reach for a tall glass of water, juice or milk the next time they're thirsty.

These are truly nutritious products that belong in a daily balanced diet.

If you need to treat yourself, add chocolate to the milk. Mix a couple of the fruit juices together or just drink water. You'll be doing yourself a favor and you'll be supporting farmers and ranchers who supply these fresh, tasty, nutritious drinks.

Bottoms up.

John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.