



## Deb Miller excelled in transportation job

News that Secretary Deb Miller is leaving the Kansas Department of Transportation to work for a private consulting firm does not gladden the heart, because Deb Miller has been good for Kansas.

You could argue that the fact she served three governors over eight years proves she was the right person to lead the agency during a difficult time. Consider especially the fact that those three – Democrats Kathleen Sebelius and Mark Parkinson and Republican Sam Brownback – agreed on almost nothing else.

As secretary of transportation, Ms. Miller has at least two outstanding accomplishments: she shifted the culture of the department from an agency that listened mostly to engineers, to one that tried to listen to people, and she managed the almost impossible when she shepherded a new transportation program through the Legislature in the midst of a recession and massive state budget cutbacks last year.

Ms. Miller did much more than that, of course. She brought a new sense of mission to the department and she brought many ordinary Kansans in to advise the engineers. She lifted the “glass ceiling” for the agency’s women with the appointment of the first woman district engineer, among others. She sent teams out to listen to local public officials about their highways, and made it a point to get to know the movers and shakers across the state.

In our area, after listening to the people, she championed a plan to make low-cost “practical” improvements to rural secondary highways,

starting at K-23 south of Grainfield. Paved shoulders replaced steep dropoffs into the ditch. The department stressed citizen involvement. Local officials helped set priorities for improvements.

It’s high time, we’re sure, that she get out in the private sector and make some money. The state cannot pay leaders of her calibre what they are worth, but in a sense, her contributions have been priceless. She always took time to listen to people’s ideas, incorporating the best of them into the department’s planning.

That alone was a seismic shift in an agency where thinking had become ossified after the last great upheaval, when after years of political influence, the engineers were put in charge and the old state Highway Commission put out to pasture.

If that had to happen, then so did the new revolution of meshing people’s desires with sound engineering.

So, hats off to the departing secretary. She has led the department well, with the good of our state always in mind, and leaves a legacy of good roads, improved rail and airport programs, and strong planning for the future. Those plans range from a network of four-lane expressways to carry ever greater traffic to improved rail lines, a major intermodal hub outside of Kansas City, preliminary talks to extend an Amtrak train from Oklahoma to Kansas City and continued strong emphasis on keeping all Kansas highways in top condition.

So long, madam secretary. And thanks.

– Steve Haynes



## Across the County

### 4-H record books

By Marty Fear



County Extension Agent

The completion of 4-H record books means that the 4-H year has come to an end. For many, record books are something the 4-H'er would just as soon not have to worry about. However, record keeping is an important skill to master and I commend all the 4-H'ers in Cheyenne County that turned their record books in.

The following is a story that ran in a column called “Common Ground” from the *High Plains Journal*. With the permission of the author, Jennifer M. Latzke, associate editor, I am putting it in my column. I thought it was a good read. Enjoy.

Every October the routine was the same. Good intentions, followed by half-jet plans, frustration, tears and finally promises to change my ways and never do it again. What was the cause of so much angst? Three words – 4-H Record Books.

You would think that after 20 years I would have created some hokey spin on the trauma so that I could look back on record books with fond memories of youth. I haven't. Of all the necessary life lessons 4-H teaches you, from leadership to responsibility, I understand the need for record keeping. But as a procrastinator, with procrastination in the genes of both branches of the family tree, filling out record books was a yearly exercise that I could have done without.

It would start when I would come home from school the night before the October club meeting and remind Mom that record books were due. Mom then raced around the house trying to find the records she swore she'd filed away in January while managing to yell at me for putting things off until

the last minute yet again. Finally she'd find them in a disorganized pile on her desk, sure enough right where she's left them in January.

Then, Dad would come in from the field tired, cranky and hungry, and we would sit down to figure the yearly feed costs or breeding records for the livestock projects. Mom would juggle fixing dinner and trying to track down fabric sample and garden plot schematics. I'd bring out a shoebox full of crumpled receipts for cattle feed and project inputs. Dad would ask why I hadn't tallied my expenses through the summer when I was working on my projects. I'd reply that we were a little too busy with other things. He'd grumble.

Mom would cut in and ask if I'd found the pictures of my projects we'd taken at the fair so that she could paste them on the record for me. I'd reply that we hadn't gotten around to developing that roll of film yet. She'd then scramble to find the camera and use up the last of the film. She'd spend her lunch hour the next day at the one-hour counter developing pictures in time to include them in my record before we turned it in. (I still believe the Polaroid camera

was invented by a frantic 4-H parent the night before record books were due.)

Then, Dad would ask if I could remember when we'd vaccinated my heifers and I'd remind him that that event was in his little red calving book – which his dog had eaten a couple months before. He'd grumble. Mom would then change the subject to my permanent record and we'd spend the next 30 minutes trying to track dates of 4-H activities from her official calendar, the sticky notes that covered it and the receipts that were paper clipped to its pages.

Eventually, between the time the casserole made it to the table and the time dessert was served I'd become defensive, Mom was in tears and Dad was ready to swear off 4-H altogether.

Fortunately, selective amnesia would make everything better the next morning. Mom and Dad would help me out of my jam, and the record book made it to my club in time for judging.

And, all was forgotten until next October. Till next week - Marty

## Honor Roll

New and renewed Herald subscriptions: Lavon Schlittenhardt, St. Francis; Brenda Benhower, Angola, Ind.; Chas Oldenburg, Flower Monund, Texas; Mike Pettijean, Hutchinson; Ryan Weeks, Wamego; Carol Weems, Gladstone, Mo.; First National Bank, St. Francis; Esther Semler, St. Francis; Bernice Zweygardt, St. Francis; Fred Klie, St. Francis; Dorothy Shields, St. Francis;

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## Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



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Once more I find myself pleasantly surprised by another unique feature of the beautiful state of Kansas.

Recently we traveled to Stockton to watch some sub-state volleyball action. The drive east of Colby along Highway 24 was perfect as the fall colors added to theazy, rolling hills that surround the Solomon River.

Having never been east of Hill City along that road, the new experience brought us along side the old town of Nicodemus.

Founded by African Americans in the Post Civil War period, the

town was born in 1877. Now a National Historic Site, it was once home to some 700 residents.

The original settlers came from Lexington, Ky., and pushed their way across the wide-open plains, searching for a more prosperous life away from a former slave state. Living in soddies, the first generation in Nicodemus worked to conquer the land.

With the help of some agricultural success, the town had grown by 1886. The 200 residents enjoyed a bank, four general stores, three grocery stores, four hotels, three pharmacies, two millinaries,

two liverys and a couple of barbershops.

Today only 36 people remain, of which 30 are direct decedents of the original settlers.

It is an interesting common thread to see the struggles that faced those who came before us to break the ground and build communities for future generations. All wanted a better life for themselves and their loved ones.

You just don't know what you'll find next out here in Kansas!

## Cool season lawns need feeding again during fall

Tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass lawn owners know September is fertilizer time.

What they may not realize, however, is that September's meal typically gets used up by Thanksgiving. It's gone into helping the cool-season turfs not only green up again, but also recover from summer stress.

So, the plants have limited help when the time comes to get ready for winter.

“That's why some people call a second application in November the turfs' winterizer fertilizer,” said Rodney St. John, turfgrass specialist for K-State Research and Extension.

The turfs' top growth slows down as the weather cools. But, so long as the plants are showing some green, they're still making carbohydrates – food. And, an application of nitrogen will boost

their photosynthesis rate, he said.

A second feeding also helps tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass stay green longer. In turn, the plants become stronger by improving their root growth, shoot density and winter hardiness, he said. Any food reserves that remain will help the lawn green up earlier the following spring and sustain growth into May.

St. John recommends applying 1 to 1.5 pounds of soluble (quick-release) nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn. If lawn owners choose a turfgrass 'winterizer' formula, it will have nitrogen as its major ingredient. But, owners will have to do some math to figure out how much to apply, based on the size of their yard.

**GOD SAYS**  
 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.  
 Ecclesiastes 9:10

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 www.sfccfamily.com  
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 Wednesday Bible Study 7 p.m.

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