



Governor criticized for not having better plan

While we will wait for history to judge Gov. Sam Brownback's plan to appoint Kansas judges, with approval from the state Senate, the governor could and should have done a better job of setting up and selling his plan.

Kansas once elected Supreme Court judges, as some districts still do their trial-court judges. We gave that up for a supposedly better plan, where appellate judges were nominated by a panel made up mostly of lawyers, who supposedly knew a good judge when they saw one.

The governor got to choose from among a panel of three nominees to fill each post, but the process actually left the state's chief executive with little real power in the matter. Left completely out of the process were voters, who get only to approve "retention" of judges at the end of their terms.

This year's Legislature changed the process, at least for judges of the state Court of Appeals, whose selection is governed by state law. (Supreme Court judges are chosen by the same process, but under a section of the state Constitution, which cannot be so easily changed.)

First of all, after promising openness, the governor made his selection almost completely behind closed doors, revealing only the name of his ultimate nominee. Despite calls to disclose the names of other applicants, the governor refused.

While the way he went about the nomination

is the same as governors have used to fill most state jobs for many years, the secrecy looked bad when compared to the open nature of the old application process for judges. It just didn't look good, and there was no reason not to keep an open list of applicants.

Then, the governor chose one of his closest associates to fill the first post. While there was nothing "wrong" with that, nothing illegal or unethical, and while the new judge, Caleb Stegall, seems well qualified, the appointment left both open to charges of cronyism. Stegall was the governor's office attorney and a close adviser.

Better that the governor had chosen someone with more academic or judicial experience and fewer ties to him personally.

While Sam Brownback is a good enough politician to have gotten elected to most everything he's run for, including the U.S. Senate twice, at the Statehouse, he's shown some ineptitude. His series of closed-door meetings with legislators last year, in possible violation of the state Open Meetings Act, showed that. While there was much argument about the possible violation, both he and the Legislature should have avoided even the appearance of impropriety.

Same with the judicial appointment. It just muddied the water for his change in the selection process. And government just runs better without this sort of thing. - Steve Haynes



The Gardener

Gardener thinks about swimming

By Kay Melia



kvmelia@yahoo.com

I started to swim out to the garden this morning to pick my long green peppers for roasting, but quickly realized that over six inches of rainfall in the span of 36 hours changed my mind, and I turned around and swam back to the house!

Maybe I exaggerated a bit, but not much. And while I actually have not yet ventured out to check my rain gauge, reports of up to 8 inches of rain and more are being reported within a few miles of my garden. And it's still raining out there as I speak. Wonder of wonders!! After more than three years of drought around here, record amounts of rain have come tumbling down in just a couple of days. Lagoons are full. Long time dry creeks are running. Wheat farmers are jumping for joy. Corn farmers have turned off their irrigation engines.

And gardeners? We'll just wait a few days to pick those long green roasting peppers, but will probably find a way to pick those ripe tomatoes. And I, for one, will not wait too long to finish digging that last row of potatoes that I should have dug two weeks ago.

Before all this rain excitement, I had intended to spend most of my space today talking about pepper roasting as you may have guessed, but will delay that excitement until next week, unless it rains.

You know, most of our gardens have seen limited production these past two weeks as another season

comes to a close. And before we forget just how good or bad things were out there in the backyard, we should make a few notes.... actually take pencil and paper in hand....and write down some information that will remind us what we should do and not do in next year's garden. This idea has proved to be very valuable for me over the years.

First and foremost, we should jot down the locations of exactly where certain crops were grown this year, so that we will move them to another location next year. It is notoriously wrong to plant tomatoes in the same spot that they were this year. It is almost as important to remind oneself to move the broccoli and cabbage to another location. And sweet corn, a heavy feeder of fertility, must also find another place to grow in the coming season.

All this movement will help deter soil borne disease problems too, as well as prohibiting overwintering insects to climb right back on their favorites next spring. Make notes about vegetable varieties. Should I try to find a more productive cucumber? Surely I can find a longer keeping onion. Why do I continue to plant slow-maturing tomatoes? Or make a note to plant everything just a little earlier next spring so that you might get good growth and earlier harvests of your favorite vegetables.

Note making right now, today,

not next week, is just a plain old solid good idea and will put you on the road for a more productive garden next year. Keep in mind that you must put those notes in a location that is easily accessible when planting time rolls around in 2014. Just don't leave them out in the rain!

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Casey's Comments

Writer digs into his history

By Casey McCormick



mccormickcasey@rocketmail.com

It does not happen every day, but once in awhile our lives can make a connection with history.

I recently talked to area resident Alan Russ, national secretary for the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, about his group. Over the years I had heard family members comment about having relatives who fought in the war.

The time came for me to dig a little deeper.

Luckily I had aunts on each side, McCormick and McIntyre, who delved into our genealogy. Unfortunately my dad's sister, Aunt Sissy, is gone. But my sister has copies of her work. As it is, all the soldiers on that side of the family fought for the Confederacy.

So I turned to my mom's sister, Cynthia Braton, and she got me on the trail of John C. Conn. His relationship, my great-grandfather three times over, was a revelation.

Born in 1829, he joined the Ohio 64th Infantry as a private in 1861. His regiment fought at Shiloh and the siege of Corinth, Miss. Rising to the rank of corporal, John Conn became one of the many casualties of the war at the battle of Stone's River near Murfreesboro, Tennessee. He died on the cold and bitter New Year's Eve of 1862.

I can't describe the odd sensation of unexpectedly touching the past. After seeing a photo of his grave stone there were mixed emotions. To suddenly find that personal link in time was both exciting and sorrowful.

I would encourage others who have relatives of the Union Army to contact Alan Russ. There have been chapters of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War in our county before and it would be gratifying to have another begun to honor these men. He can be reached at 785-332-2118.

Book Review

Winter Garden

By Kristin Hannah

Meredith and Nina Whitson are as different as sisters can be. One stayed at home to raise her children and manage the family business; the other followed a dream and traveled the world to become a famous photojournalist. But when their beloved father falls ill, these two estranged sisters will find themselves together again, standing alongside their disapproving mother, Anya, who even now offers no comfort to her daughters. On his deathbed, their father extracts a promise: Anya will tell her daughters a story; it is one she began years ago and never finished. This time she will tell it all the way to the end. The tale their mother tells them

is unlike anything they've heard before—a captivating, mysterious love story that spans more than sixty years and moves from frozen, war-torn Leningrad to modern-day Alaska. Nina's obsession to uncover the truth will send them all on an unexpected journey into their mother's past, where they will discover a secret so shocking, it shakes the foundation of their family and changes who they believe they are.

Mesmerizing from the first page to the last, *Winter Garden* is that rarest of novels—at once an epic love story and an intimate portrait of women poised at the crossroads of their lives. Evocative, lyrically written, and ultimately uplifting, it will haunt the reader long after the last page is turned.



GOD SAYS
 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.
Romans 12:9, 10

The Saint Francis Herald

(USPS 475-960)

A Century of Service to Cheyenne County

P.O. Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050
 Published each Thursday by Haynes Publishing Co., 310 W. Washington, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050. Entered as periodicals matter at the post office at St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050, and at additional offices.

Official newspaper of Cheyenne County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year \$38 (tax included) in Cheyenne and adjacent counties; \$42 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$48 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$28 extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050



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