

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Rasure, Ostmeyer and now Peterson

One would think that an office seeker who carried his own county impressively and also carried the county of his opponent would have had an easy victory on election night.

But that was not the case for Dan Rasure of Goodland in his quest to win the Republican primary for State Senator/District 40.

Mr. Rasure lost to Ralph Ostmeyer, 8,553-7,385, a shortage of 1,168 votes.

In his loss, Rasure carried Sherman County, his home county, 1,010 to 415. And in Gove County, Ostmeyer's home, he won by 11 votes, 368-357, which, we are sure, was a concern to Ostmeyer. Although losing at home had no bearing on the outcome, it had to be somewhat of a surprise, maybe even an embarrassment for Ostmeyer. Maybe, like most of us, it was just a matter of taking the home folks for granted.

Ostmeyer carried 12 counties to Rasure's six.

Dollars figured in this race. Rasure raised considerably more funds than did Ostmeyer and spent considerably more. He needed to. Many people had never heard of him and it was imperative that he get his name around the district. Ostmeyer didn't face that problem. And Rasure had to deal with something else: age, experience. Rasure, at 22, was seeking his first political office with little experience, other than working in the offices of Sen. Sam Brownback and Rep. Jerry Moran. Ostmeyer, on the other hand, is completing his second, two-year term as a member of the Kansas House of Representatives from District No. 118.

Waiting in the wings to challenge Ostmeyer is Democrat Tim Peterson, a Monument farmer. Peterson has a long history of political involvement and is currently serving as chairman of the First District. He's rested up and ready to go, not having had any opposition in the primary.

It will be interesting to see how *united* the Republicans in the 40th District are come Nov. 2. The conservatives and moderates of that party have had their share of fist fights over the years and in a way it showed in the Rasure-Ostmeyer primary. Will it spill over into the general election? That's a question that can't be answered this soon after the primary wounds were inflicted. Time may heal. *May*.

As a Democrat in a Republican stronghold as is the 40th District, Mr. Peterson can only hope that dissension in the ranks of the opposing party prevails throughout the fall and into the voting booth on Nov. 2. It worked for Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

But back to Dan Rasure: we haven't heard the last from this energetic, now politically tested young man. You can bet on that.

Tom A. Dreiling
Free Press Publisher

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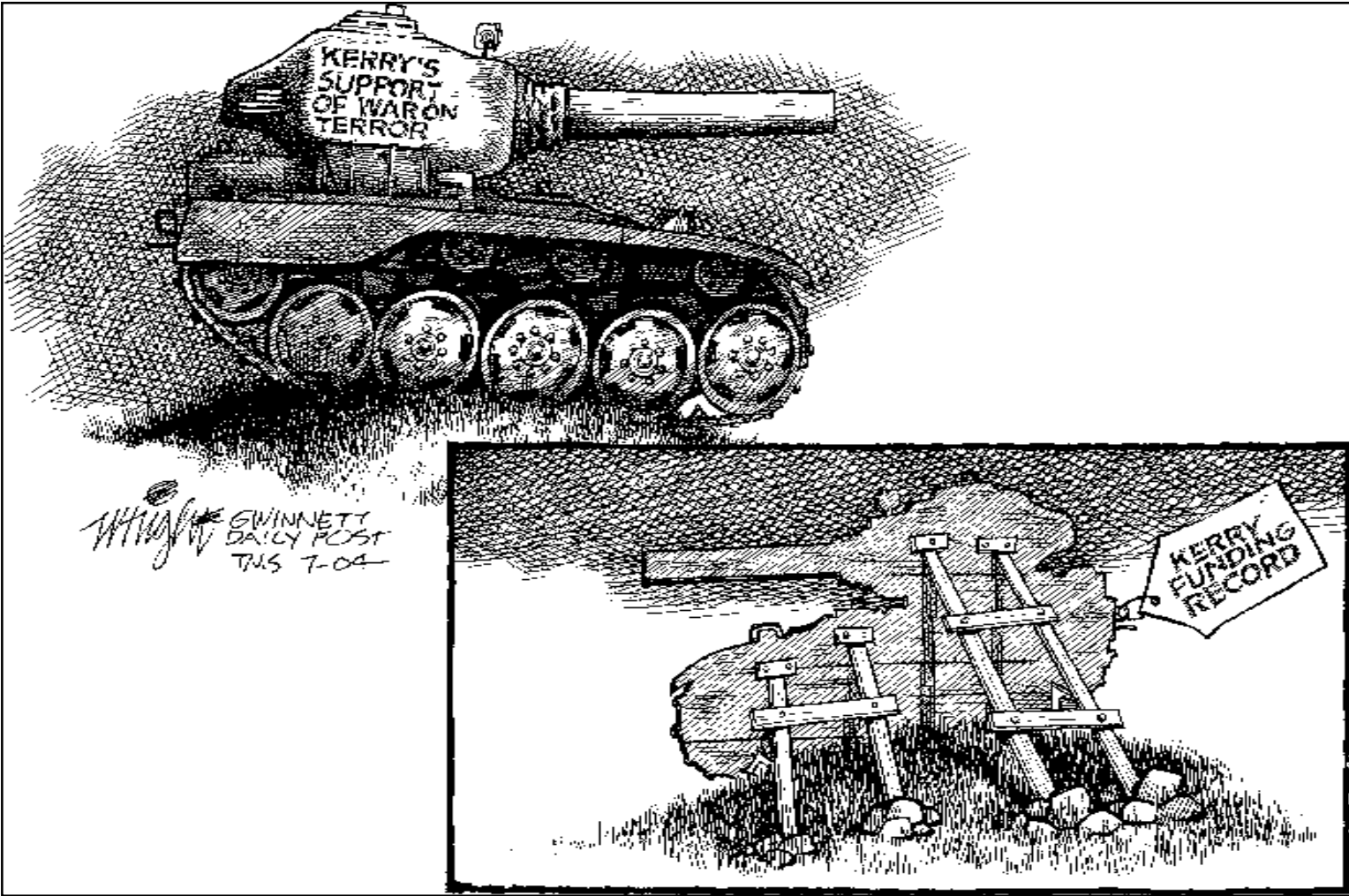
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Nor'West Newspapers
Haynes Publishing Company



Someday, we may regret this loss

Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa



The decision by Greyhound Lines to abandon most of its stops in the Tri-State area smacks of desperation.

The company is closing most of its stops along the Interstates. In western Kansas, there will be only two stops, Hays and Colby. People will no longer be able to catch a bus in Ellsworth, Russell, WaKeeney or Goodland.

In Nebraska, there'll be no stops west of Lincoln as the firm aims, apparently, for the long-haul market.

One big loss: prisons in Ellsworth, Burlington, Colo., and elsewhere in the area won't have an easy way to ship parolees back home after their release.

Greyhound claims it'll save millions because buses will stay on the freeway and arrive sooner at their destination. Our guess is the savings are mostly illusory.

Maybe they figure people will get a ride to the next stop. Maybe they think they'll hitchhike. But it sounds like the dog may be close to its last lap.

There aren't that many people who want to ride a bus cross country, after all. Most of us, given the choice, would fly or take a train or drive — anything but the bus.

With air fares nearly as low as the bus on a good day, the Hound makes the most sense in country towns where people don't have a choice. And those are the markets the firm is giving up.

So there's no money in serving rural America? In the city, they can choose. Let's see, Kansas City-Denver, 13 hours by bus, less than two by air. Price, \$74 and \$155.

Greyhound often is left with the passengers who can't or won't fly or drive: a few elderly with a fear of flying, the poor and the disenfranchised, students without cars (not many of those these days) and others who don't quite fit the mainstream of America.

The firm admits it has problems. They've cut jobs and canceled an order for 200 new buses. And yet, Greyhound, after absorbing Continental Trailways, is by far the country's biggest over-the-road passenger carrier.

At this point, you really have to ask if the bus business will be around that much longer. It still does well in a few concentrated markets, but out here, people drive.

If Greyhound were to go under, then the au-

tomobile will have polished off its last and final alternative. That may or may not be a bad thing — few people get nostalgic about a ride on an old Silversides or a Super Scenic Cruiser, like they do for a train — but we've pretty much lost our public transportation outside the urban corridors.

In a way, it's the end of an era for rural America. Oh, it's been coming on for years. How long, for instance, since Trailways ran out U.S. 36? Or since a passenger train stopped in Oakley or Hays?

This is a matter of choice and policy. Choice, because Americans choose their cars, and policy, because the government pours billions into highways while spending next to nothing on trains and busses and other public transportation.

Sure, there are a few subsidized options, but we no longer have a ground transportation system for public use, at least not in most of rural America.

You can still drive to McCook and catch a train, or to Colby for a bus, but more and more, people — once they get in the car — just keep on driving.

Someday, we may regret what we lost.

Steve Haynes and wife Cynthia own Nor'West Newspapers, including the Colby Free Press.

Weather relief in sight?

John Schlageck

• Weekly Insight

For farmers and ranchers with row crops in the field, moisture is always welcome but in July and August timely rainfall is critical if these producers are to harvest fall crops.

That said, what can Kansas farmers expect in the way of moisture in August, September and October?

"We're seeing a pretty good area of moisture in the middle of the country," says Mike Akulow, National Weather Service meteorologist from Topeka. "The big high ridge of pressure is parked over the four-corner region of Arizona and New Mexico. This allows weather systems to penetrate much of our state especially the northern and eastern regions."

The weather systems Akulow talks about bring with them a "fairly good chance" of rains like the state has witnessed during June and July.

While the meteorologist says the eastern half of the state has the best chance of moisture, the computer models indicate that all of Kansas except the extreme southwestern region of the state have a good chance of above normal moisture in August. This could continue into September and October.

"In general the western third of Kansas will be dryer, but this part of our state will have a more favorable chance of moisture than the previous three summers," Akulow says.

The drought that has gripped northwestern Kansas is not as bad as it was last year, the meteorologist continues. The last couple of summers this same high-pressure area was camped

over Kansas and Oklahoma. Twenty plus days of 100-degree days and 20 mile-per-hour winds baked the northwestern part of the state.

Looking at the computer models that were released in mid-July, the drought has been changed from "severe" to "moderate."

"This area of the state received decent moisture throughout the period from April into mid-July," Akulow says. "June was above-normal precipitation and the first part of July was good also."

Take Goodland for example, areas around there had up to four inches of rain in June, Akulow says. Quinter had six inches and Tribune reported seven inches of rain in June.

As of the middle of July, Goodland had reported 1.23 inches which is near normal and a whole lot better than last year, the meteorologist says.

Temperatures should be "pretty much seasonal" or below normal almost into southeastern Kansas, according to the meteorologist. With more frequent weather systems and cold

fronts, temperatures generally don't become as hot or for as long a period of time as the state experienced the last two or three years. This doesn't rule out a few 100-degree days, particularly in the west.

Another factor to consider is the possibility of the monsoons coming in out of the west, according to Akulow. That could mean good general rainfalls across the High Plains and this system usually kicks in during August and September. It could also mean high-level moisture, with lower temperatures and more cloud cover.

With the potential for less sunshine and more cloud cover, the winds won't howl like the last couple of years either, Akulow says. The state won't see the desert effect like last year when the sun beat down, the ground was hot and the moisture evaporated quickly. That afforded the worst possible situation for growing crops.

"What we have shaping up for the next couple months isn't a perfect scenario, but it shows promise for near-average rainfall," the meteorologist says. "I know farmers would rather hear about a potential for crop-saving moisture than some of the dry, hot windy forecasts of the last two or three years. At least this summer we have opportunities."

John Schlageck has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

About those letters . . .

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Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

