

The loss of a good leader hurts us all

The untimely death Saturday night of Oakley's Stan Clark closed a remarkable political career. In a decade in the Kansas Senate, Mr. Clark surprised us again and again. He won the 40th District seat in a coup against the "moderate" wing of the Republican party, regular Republicans who thought the post pretty much belonged to them. He won re-election twice, and likely would have won again this fall. His quiet demeanor and serious nature belied a keen political sense. Opponents usually underestimated him. He won the seat in a special Republican convention called after Sen. Sheila Frahm of Colby resigned to become lieutenant governor under Bill Graves. Mrs. Frahm, who left the statehouse to replace Bob Dole in the U.S. Senate when he ran for president, was a key figure in the moderate wing in these parts. And that group thought it had a lock on her seat. When the delegates convened, though, Stan Clark had the votes. When he ran for re-election, the moderates usually thought they could beat him. The were wrong. His position as a conservative left Mr. Clark at odds with the more liberal Senate leadership much of the time, but he became an effective and knowledgeable senator. No one had a better grasp on the state budget or what it meant to people in this area. Colleagues remarked that he actually read all the bills and caught many errors. Stan Clark grew to know the budget and the legislative process as well as anyone. Even those who disagreed with him knew him as a man of good will and personal integrity. As a legislator, Mr. Clark was available to those he represented. He spent long hours on the road, traveling to Topeka and back, and toured his vast 18-county district — covering the entire northwest corner of the state — each year. In Topeka, he gained seniority and became a committee chairman. The moderates may have thought him a bumpkin, with his thick glasses and his personal commitment to his religion — he was a member of the Dunkard Brethren Church — but those who knew him called him a kind and decent man. His boyish grin and sandy hair won many friends. Stan Clark was a rare politician, honest, hard-working, knowledgeable. His passing leaves his seat up for grabs. The voters will pick a suitable candidate to take his place, but it will be some time before his successor can fill his shoes. There was even talk that he might have run for president of the Senate next year. His opponents, undoubtedly, would have underestimated him. — Steve Haynes



Ah, the recovery is almost complete

Just give me one more really long night, plus a couple of naps, and I think I'll be caught up on my sleep and over my jet lag. Travel experts tell you to keep your body on the same "clock" as where you live. That's fine if you're staying in a hotel where no one else is disturbed if you are up and rambling about. It's entirely different if you are a guest in someone's home and your internal clock wants to get up at 6 a.m. (which is not an unusual hour), but it's only 4 a.m. where you're staying. I did a lot of early-morning and late-night reading while I was at Patty's last week. In fact, I finished a book I picked up at Halley's house called "The Red Tent." It was a fictional book based on Biblical fact, written from a woman's point of view. The time frame began with Jacob's appearance at the well of Laban. Then it covers his marriages to Leah and Rachel and to secondary wives, all the children begat through those marriages, and finally the family's ultimate downfall.

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



Strange, I could never keep all the children and wives of Jacob straight, but after reading their history written this way, relationships are a lot more understandable. —ob— When I was a kid, my family would sit on the front porch and watch the thunder and lightning during rain storms. So, I've never understood people's fear of weather, but Saturday night almost changed my mind. Jim and I had been in town, 20 miles west of our place, when we saw the dust cloud boiling up in the south. Heading for home, we kept watching the storm, which was keeping up with us at 65 miles per hour. I dashed into the house just as the

wind hit, but Jim was determined to cover some lumber and secure the garbage cans. All I could do was watch as he leaned into the wind, trying fruitlessly to lash things down. I had visions of tree limbs knocking him senseless. (It didn't help that the night before we had been to the movie, "Day After Tomorrow," with its doomsday storm scenes of destruction.) Jennifer and Alex were camping with friends at the lake and I called to warn them of what was heading their way. Jennifer said later that they barely had time to stow their gear and get inside their vehicle before it hit. I know she got tired of me calling to check on them, but when your kids are "in harm's way," you can't help it. The only fatality was their dome tent. She said the fiberglass poles snapped like toothpicks. —ob— A little kid was asked, "Why did God make mothers?" His reply, "She's the only one who knows where the Scotch tape is."

Lots of things are going on in the Kansas Legislature

This was the last newsletter sent to us before Sen. Clark's death this weekend.

What did the Kansas Legislature accomplish in 2004? Really a number of bills that addressed substantive policy issues are now law and I thank you for your involvement and assistance. Many of you were personally involved in specific legislation this session and you are to be commended. I know I was asked to review and edit more testimony this session that probably any since I have had the pleasure of serving in the Senate. I personally believe that citizen testimony is the best because you not only know the facts but also speak from the heart relating stories of personal experience. It is always special when other legislators approach me after a hearing where someone from my district has testified

and says: "The citizens know their subject, they are informative, they get to the heart of the proposal and they can relate personal experiences on the impact of this legislation."

I testified personally in six different legislative committees this session, in some of those committees I testified multiple times and in all but one instance I was testifying in support of the proposed bill. I can tell you that an offense is more enjoyable than testifying against various proposals and trying to minimize the adverse and generally unintended effects on rural Kansas.

Insurance

Health Savings Accounts will be available in Kansas within the next 6 weeks. Health Savings Accounts are similar to Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA's) except that the money is used for medical

Senate Doings Sen. Stan Clark



expenses rather than retirement. An individual can put \$2,600 tax free every year and a family \$5,150 into these accounts. The contributions can come either from the employee, proprietor or employer.

All unused amounts can be carried forward year-to-year-to-year. At retirement age any amount due the employee from unused vacation or sick leave can be placed in this account tax free and used to pay Medicare premiums. Money in this account will be used to pay medical expenses and can be used to pay long-term care insurance premiums.

The goal is to make individuals more responsible for their medical expenses and to make health care insurance more affordable. Everyone that opens a HSA has to also have a health plan with an annual deductible of at least \$1000 for individual coverage and at least \$2000 for family coverage. My wife and son have a \$7,500 deductible health insurance policy whose premium is \$2,050 per year. We see Health Savings Accounts working hand in hand with major medical insurance as part of the solution to provide health care for working Kansas. Dollars in your personal HSA create the incentive to closely monitor the cost of our individual health care.

Personally I would like to see the State of Kansas, and a number of schools across our state utilize this combination. President Bush has also introduced legislation which allows a refundable tax credit to encourage the purchase of health insurance. His proposal provides for up to a \$1,000 deduction for an individual and up to a \$3,000 deduction for a fam-

ily. If adopted, if an individual owes Uncle Sam \$5,000 on his 1040 income tax return, you would subtract the \$1,000 and cut a check for \$4,000; for a family under the same scenario, you would subtract \$3,000 and cut a check for \$2,000 to Uncle Sam.

The individual person has to have a personal stake in the costs of their health care. The responsibility is just as great for the wise use of health care dollars for the family with a BC-BS health insurance plan as it is for a Medicaid recipient. We have to inject a strong dose of responsibility and there has to be tangible consequences to those choices which encourage long-term changes in our individual health and relieve the demands placed on our safety net, the Medicaid system.

Public Safety

Provided an approval process and funding mechanism so that our local emergency dispatch centers will have the equipment to locate where an emergency cell phone call is coming from. Each cell phone will pay 50 cents per month to pay for this equipment; one-half of this fee will go directly to the dispatch center and the other half will be grants awarded to rural dispatch centers. Urban legislators realized that they were more a risk needing emergency services in rural Kansas because they generally cannot direct emergency vehicles to where they are located. This is an example of money coming to rural Kansas to help everyone. I was very involved with this legislation for the last 4 years. Also, this should aid in better cell phone reception with the construction of more cell phone towers.

Encourage and help provide resources so that local emergency radios can utilize Kansas Department of Transportation's communication towers and assist those local agencies in moving to the 800 megahertz communication channels.

Oil, Gas & Electricity

Kansas entered the competition with a number of other states for a \$1 billion experimental, emission-free, coal-fired

electric generation facility. Our central location, national rail lines, our existing oil fields make us a viable candidate. The site selection criteria is still being developed by the U.S. Dept. of Energy but at least one location in my Senate District looks like it meets the preliminary site selection criteria. I am a member of the Kansas site selection committee.

Established wind lease filing criteria for the Register of Deeds. This change will allow future owners, title examiners and lenders to fulfill their responsibilities. Our goal is to increase the level of knowledge to where a standard legal form will be acceptable by parties entering wind lease agreements that provide equitable terms and conditions that everyone accepts in common usage.

Provide a remedy to clear titles that were clouded by other parties filing "Mineral & Royalty Deeds" on land they had no legal interest in. The legislation requires the offending party to clear the titles within 30 days of notice by the owner. If that doesn't happen they are subject to the court awarding up to \$10,000 in damages plus attorney fees. There are over 60 such deeds filed in Rooks County and several hundred are known in 10 additional western Kansas counties.

There are a number of challenges remaining; chief among them is writing a constitutional school funding formula. It has been personally rewarding to serve the citizens of Cheyenne, Decatur, Gove, Graham, Greeley, Logan, Norton, Rawlins, Scott, Sheridan, Sherman, Thomas, Trego, Wallace and Wichita counties in the Kansas Senate the past 10 years. The district expands to also include Lane, Ness and Rooks counties.

I really appreciate the newspapers that print my articles and the broadcast media that allow me time to explain issues before the legislature. There is a direct correlation between this coverage and the involvement of the citizens. Thank you editors and newscasters!

STAFF