

How does Gingrich, Gore sound to you?

What, then, if it turns out to be an Al Gore-Newt Gingrich knock down, drag out? There is some thinking in both the Republican and Democratic parties that the current crop of candidates fall into the "surely-we-can-do-better-than-that" category. Of course it's not too difficult to understand just why that comment is surfacing. Rudy Giuliani, the front runner for the GOP nomination, viewed as the most capable, is also viewed as the most vulnerable, thanks to a probable "F" he would get on the "family values" test. Democrats, on the other hand, have a similar situation with Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, their front-runner. Her husband's baggage could be awfully tough to carry back into the White House. Although it is SHE seeking the presidency, it was HE who created a situation that led to his impeachment. Yes, the House impeached the sitting president, but the Senate didn't go along. Still, First Lady Hillary certainly had to have had some clue as to husband Bill's *intern program*. Questions will arise in wild should Bill's Hill win the nomination.

Sen. John McCain, we thought, was a shoo-in. Right now the polls aren't projecting that. He went from leader of the pack to a rather small showing of late. But that could turn around. The Democrats have a young, rising star in Sen. Barack Obama. But his youth and inexperience cause many Democrats to worry. Can he handle it?

If questions continue to persist, and one-by-one the current crop of candidates, waiting in the wings are two veterans of the political stage, former Vice President Al "global luke-warming" Gore, and former speaker of the House Newt "compassionately deficient" Gingrich. Make no bones about it, they both want the office. Badly. With California moving its primary up to Feb. 5, 2008 and several other big states following suit, the field of candidates for president in that state could be trimmed to two, maybe three at most after those caucuses are in. California used to hold its primary in June. What are we going to do between Feb. 5, 2008 and the party conventions in the summer of 2008? Just maybe the party conventions will eventually become a thing of the past.

The Feb. 5 primary nationwide could involve up to 23 states, but not Kansas. The \$2 million price tag is apparently more than the Republican-controlled Kansas Legislature wants to spend, although it could have worked in Republican Sen. Sam Brownback's favor as he seeks the presidency. What were they thinking? Or were they?

Rep. Kay Wolf, Prairie Village Republican said, "I think we can utilize that \$2 million in a much better fashion." Never do they say what a "better fashion" they are talking about. Two million dollars is nothing when you look at the overall budget.

So, there you have it. The latest on a campaign that really shouldn't have started much before Labor Day 2007.

—Tom Dreiling

Making a case for journaling

A journal is a continued series of writings made by a person in response to their life experiences and events. A journal may include a description of daily events, but also contains reflections on what took place and expresses emotions and understandings about them. Many people find benefit in expressing their feelings in "journaling." Each writing is personal and usually limited to only the person doing the writing. Sometimes journal writing is used by members of a support group as a means of sharing some of their thoughts with others, and receiving encouragement in return.

Journal writing is not something that everyone would enjoy or benefit from. For those who do, journal writing can be used as a format for organizing thoughts and ideas, addressing specific questions and problems, and evaluating goals and plans. Through "unsent letters," a person can express feelings to a particular person in the form of a letter, then keep it for future reference, or destroy. The process of

putting feelings into words can be an emotional release for some people, as well as the opportunity to re-read and try to make sense of the feelings and issues involved. Journal writing also provides time for self-reflection: an opportunity to note the positive aspects of one's life, to reflect on the little things that make a difference, and to give self-praise.

In 1977, at the age of 68, Elizabeth Layton, a woman in Wellsville, began to use drawing and writing as a way to deal with grief and loss. She found these combined activities to be a means of expressing her innermost thoughts and feelings, and eventually helped her to overcome depression. She continued, until her death at age 83, to use these techniques to examine her own aging issues, as well as many other personal and social issues including women's rights, racism, poverty, homelessness, AIDS, and terminal illness.

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We're back from Mexico (I think)

You could say, "The wind has gone out of my sails." We returned from our Mexico mission trip late Saturday night. Got up pretty early Sunday for church and then conducted chapel services at the prison in the afternoon. By 5 p.m. Sunday I was like a Zombie, stumbling through the house.

Naturally, I wasn't too happy when two rambunctious cats decided to play "Let's Bite Her Toes" at 6 a.m. Monday. But, I'm up now, have a cup of coffee in hand and bracing myself to get back in the saddle of every day life.

I can't help but imagine what "our" family in Mexico is doing today. The man of our family, Rogelio, is a very hard worker. He pitched in and helped mix cement and then gave the team members a lesson in how to finish stucco. We learned his wife had died in September and he was raising his 15 year old son by himself. Also living with him was his daughter and her son. That makes four people living in

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



a 450 square foot house.

I know Rogelio raised chickens, pigs and sheep. Can't really call him a farmer because he certainly couldn't "farm" anything. Cactus is about all that grows in that part of Mexico and water is too precious to waste on anything but survival.

When we dedicated the house to the family and gave them the keys, there were lots of tears shed. Not only from Rogelio's family, but from the 25 young people and adult leaders who helped build the house. It is always a moving moment. And even though we have done this 16 times now, it still touches our heart. That's why we

keep going back.

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I have to confess, it wasn't all work. We had made plans before we left for Mexico with our daughter, Jennifer, to meet us in Odessa, Texas on the return trip. She brought her two daughters, Alexandria and Aniston, and we had a mini-reunion. Alex is 12 and Ani is eight months. What fun we had together. We played miniature golf, went swimming and even managed to get in a little shopping. It was only for a day, but we crammed lots of memories into a short time.

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Little Taylor, our eight year old granddaughter, had an assignment at school. She was to complete a well-known adage.

The first was, "You can't teach an old dog — new people."

"If you lie down with dogs you'll — get up dirty."

And our all-time favorite: "Don't underestimate the power of — me."

Reality of a modern day school teacher

When asked to name a person who has made a difference in one's life, the most common response, other than a family member, is that of a favorite teacher. This simple response speaks volumes about the influence educators have on the lives of young people. The education profession has long been known for inadequate pay but high job satisfaction. Teachers have been willing to forfeit material gain for the joy of seeing the eyes of their students light up as they grow and learn.

Lately, the job satisfaction that brought so many teachers into the profession seems to have left the classroom. Unfortunately, much of this development can be attributed to No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The joy of teaching has been replaced by pressure-filled staff meetings where educators talk not about how to help a child learn, but rather their school's test scores. Morale in the education world has diminished, and more teachers are at wits end.

Recently, a teacher in Lindsborg told me of her frustration. She wrote, "I am a

Capitol Views

Rep. Jerry Moran

first-year teacher, and I am beginning to get very discouraged. I went into the teaching profession to help students learn and to encourage them to follow their dreams. However, I am finding that more and more of my time is spent preparing students for standardized tests. These tests do not prepare students for any career. They only teach students how to take a test.

With all these tests, we don't have time to teach. I truly feel that the time and effort I put into teaching is not worth my while. No Child Left Behind is wonderful in theory, but impossible to carry out. Not every child is equal in ability, and no teacher should be expected to make it so."

With the number of teachers leaving the

profession exceeding the number of teachers entering the profession by 23 percent, this young educator's thoughts should be a warning. If we have to shut the doors on schools in Kansas it will not be because of lack of students, it will be because we cannot find the teachers to fill the vacancies. Congress must be sensitive to the responsibility we hold in encouraging educators to stay in the classroom and continue their chosen profession.

We need to strive for improvements in our education system, but we must make sure we do not overregulate the classroom. We must not take the joy and passion out of this noble profession by requiring things that are simply not possible.

This year, Congress is set to examine NCLB and potentially reauthorize it. While I voted against NCLB, I look forward to hearing from Kansans about how we should reform and change this policy. My hope is that Congress will make the changes necessary to help teachers succeed as they educate our greatest asset - our young people - and fulfill the jobs they love.

Senate Bill 123 sparks many questions

Water issues have dominated legislative discussions these past couple years, and rightly so. Senate Bill 123 is an act that establishes an upper Arkansas River Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. This area includes Hamilton, Kearny, Finney, Gray, Ford, Edwards, Pawnee, Stafford, Barton, and Rice counties in Southwest Kansas.

The purpose of this CREP is to reduce withdrawal of the aquifer, improve water quality, protect public water supply, and enhance wildlife habitat. This program will also provide for voluntary retirement of water rights in the Arkansas River Corridor.

To put this into perspective, you could say that this issue is twelve inches deep, and this bill addresses about one quarter inch of the problem.

More importantly we must not forget the negative economic impact this bill will hand to businesses in these small commu-

Senate Doings Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer



nities. In my District I can use Ness County as an example. After a two-year sign up of dryland acres being converted to CRP acres, it is evident how this type of program has affected the business community.

There is always the question of how these counties plan on recovering property tax revenues to support local and county services when values of those acres will be taxed as dryland once implemented. There is no proof that water will actually be saved. Only three other states have a CREP program in place, and none

of them has had it long enough to have any documentation. Grain elevators, automotive stores, grocery stores, small locker plants, furniture stores, and the list goes on of the potential negative impact to our rural communities.

These businesses will either work for less or shut completely down. Kansas State University has conducted a study that predicts 119 lost jobs and \$14.8 million annual negative economic impact to the Arkansas River Corridor region upon implementation of this program.

Originally this bill would have forced these acres into the CRP program, but I am hoping to get a dryland provision added to the wording. We are still working on this with these communities.

The CREP program in Southwest Kansas may not directly affect my district right now, but I fear what it could mean for us in the future. I also question whether SB 123 will help encourage the next generation to return to the farm.