

Speaking of Kansas

Washburn Center for Kansas Studies



Kansas Studies Newsletter

Fall 2012

Kansas Studies Courses Spring Semester 2013

EN 199A ,	CRN 12544,	Kansas Characters	R 1-3:40, Averill
HN 201D ,	CRN 11901,	Kansas Characters	R 1-3:40, Averill
HN 202D ,	CRN 12246,	Kansas Characters	R 1-3:40, Wynn
HI 300STA ,	CRN 11191,	Kansas Characters	R 1-3:40, Wynn
HI322A	CRN 10914	Kansas History	TR 11-12:15, Mactavish
TH 399A ,	CRN 12161,	Kansas Characters	R 1-3:40, Weiner
EN 138A ,	CRN 12106,	Kansas Literature	T 1-3:40, Averill
EN 399STC ,	CRN 12107,	Kansas Literature	T 1-3:40, Averill
PO 107VA ,	CRN 12125,	American State & Local Government	
	(with Kansas emphasis)	Online-web, Hamilton	
GL 103C ,	CRN 11347,	Historical Geology (with Kansas emphasis)	MW 5:30-6:45, Gilliland

2012 Election: Exit Polls Enable Comparison between Nation and Kansas

by **Bob Beatty**, *Political Science*



Since 1968 Kansas has voted for the Republican nominee for President and the 2012 election was no exception. By a wide 22% margin (60%-38%), Mitt Romney defeated President Barack Obama in the Sunflower State, an increase of eight percentage points over John McCain's vote share in 2008. Nationally, Obama defeated Romney by 3.3% (50.8%-47.5%). Beyond the election results, presidential election years also offer an opportunity through exit polling data to analyze any similarities and differences between group preferences in Kansas versus national group preferences. On the whole, the 2012 election produced more differences than similarities.

First, on election day, 48% of Kansas voters identified themselves as Republicans, the highest percentage of Republicans voting as a percent of state voters in any state except for Wyoming. Only 27% identified themselves as Democrats and 24% had no party affiliation. Nationally, the numbers were 38% Democrat, 32% Republican and 29% independent. One similarity in this category is that nationally independent voters went for Romney 50%-45% and in Kansas they went for Romney 51%-43%.

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Polls —cont.




Nationally, in terms of race, white voters made up 72% of all voters, and they went for Romney by 20 percentage points (59%-39%), whereas in Kansas they were 87% of all voters and went for Romney by 31 percentage points (64%-33%). White men went for Romney by 27 percentage points nationally (62%-35%), but in Kansas 74% of all white men voted for Romney, giving him a 50 percentage point advantage over Obama (74%-24%).

One of the reasons that Obama was able to win a second term was the support he received from women, winning that group of voters nationally by 11 points, 55%-44%. In Kansas, however, Romney won the female vote by 4 percentage points, 51%-47%, and won the male vote by a whopping 40 percentage points, 69%-29%. Nationally Romney won men by much less, 7 percentage points, 52%-45%. An interesting subset of the female vote that has received much attention is unmarried women. In this category Kansas lies a bit closer to the national numbers, with Obama winning by 19 percentage points in Kansas, 58%-39%. Nationally, he won unmarried women by 36 percentage points, 67%-31%. Romney won married men by 22 percentage

points nationwide but by 46 percentage points in Kansas.

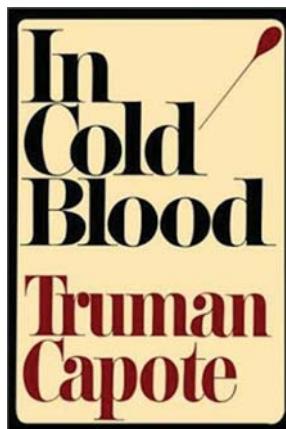
One very large divergence between Kansas and the nation in terms of the Obama vote lies with different age cohorts. Among them Romney significantly outperformed Obama in Kansas compared to the President's national numbers. Among younger Kansas voters, aged 18-29, Romney won by 13 points, 54%-41%, whereas nationally Obama won those voters by a 23 percentage point margin, 60%-37%. Among Kansas voters aged 30-44, Romney won by 20 percentage points (59%-39%) whereas nationally Obama won by 7 percentage points (52%-45%). Among Kansas voters aged 45-64, Romney won by a massive 27 percentage points, whereas nationally he won that group by a much smaller 4 percentage points. Among voters aged 65 and older, Romney won in Kansas by 22 percentage points and won nationally by 12 percentage points.

Finally, in what should not be a big surprise given the actual results, the Kansas exit polls showed that the majority of voters here did not think too kindly of the president, whereas nationally, the opposite was true. In Kansas 60% of voters had an unfavorable opinion of President Obama whereas 39% had a favorable opinion. Nationally, 53% of voters thought of the president favorably whereas 46% thought of him unfavorably, a 7 percentage point positive margin. 

Provenance of our copy of *In Cold Blood*, a gift to the Thomas Fox Averill Kansas Studies Collection from Lynn Gleckler Wilkerson (Washburn University, B.A., 1995)

In Cold Blood, by Truman Capote (New York: Random House, 1965), Seventh Printing. Inscribed by the author to Maxine Manchester, who worked at the KBI from 1959-1967. Also signed by: Logan Sanford, KBI Director; Roy E. Dyer, Assistant Director, KBI, who retired in 1961; and investigators Alvin Dewey, Roy Church, Harold Nye and Clarence Duntz. The investigators are all mentioned in the book.

The Seventh Printing of the book




likely appeared around the summer of 1966. According to Patrick Quinn, of Lawrence, Kansas, who helped in researching the book, the First Printing of *In Cold Blood* was in January of 1966,

but had a 1965 copyright because of its appearance as a series of articles published in *The New Yorker* that year. Patrick researched and confirmed that Maxine Manchester of Topeka was indeed a KBI employee and Roy E. Dyer signed the book because of his longtime employment with the KBI—he retired two years after the Clutter murders, which occurred in November of 1959.

Maxine Manchester, then, was first owner of the book. Another owner was

Zula Bennington Green, also known as “Peggy of the Flint Hills,” longtime daily columnist for the *Topeka Capital-Journal*. At her death in 1988, her estate sale included the book, which was purchased by Lynn Gleckler Wilkerson for some-

where between one and five dollars. After seeing the Thomas Fox Averill Kansas Studies Collection, Lynn Wilkerson decided to make a gift of this book, which rare book dealers consider a one-of-a-kind. 

The New Border War

Comments by **William Jennings Bryan Oleander**,
Honorary Mayor of Here, Kansas

by **Tom Averill**, *English*

Well, folks, with all that conflict between Kansas and Missouri, there’s one thing I miss. Let me explain. I was at the Here, Kansas, Co-op one Saturday not too long ago, invited to watch a little college football with Claude Anderson. Claude’s cousin was in Here for a visit—drove all the way from the Show Me State.



I can’t remember which Big 12 game we watched, but all of us took to lamenting that we’d have no more Border War Game between the University of Kansas and the University of Missouri. “People got pumped up,” said Claude.

“That’s right,” said his cousin, “though the true Border War was a long time ago.”

“Jones, that Missouri sheriff that burned down the Free State Hotel,” said Elmer Peterson.

“John Brown, dang him,” said the Missourian.

“Charles Hamelton and the Marais des Cygnes Massacre,” said Claude.

“Jayhawkers,” said the Missourian.

“Quantrill and his Bushwhackers,” I said.

“Like I said, a long time ago,” said the Missourian.

“Our former Governor remembered it,” I reminded him. “Told the audience at the Symphony of the Flint Hills one year that Kansans don’t want to spend money in Missouri, and he said it with the Kansas City Symphony right behind him.”

“No way to top politicians,” Claude said.

“That’s true,” said his cousin. “Didn’t Kansas have one taking a skinny dip in the Sea of Galilee?”


Elmer thought about that one. “Well,” he said, “that’s no worse than your Missouri candidate, the one who said a woman could shut down legitimate rape without birth control.”

The Missourian had to pause. Or maybe I should say “re-load.” Because we’d started a new Border War. “What about your fella?” he finally said. “The one who will never quite trusts Obama’s birth certificate? Had to think about whether the president should be on the Kansas ballot.”

“That blew over quick,” said Claude to his Missouri cousin. “Quicker than your native son Limbaugh bust in the Missouri statehouse. I hear it has a security camera trained on it to discourage vandalism?”

“So you’re sure Obama’s going to be on the Kansas ballot?” asked the Missourian.

“Yep,” I said. And he was, folks. I voted for him on November 6, as a matter of fact. “But,” I told the Missourian, “Kobach had his little fun with it. And that won’t change. Our politicians will keep on entertaining us. They may not give us as much fun as football, or whupping up on the Tigers in basketball, as so many Jayhawk teams have, but looks like they’re the only Border war we have.

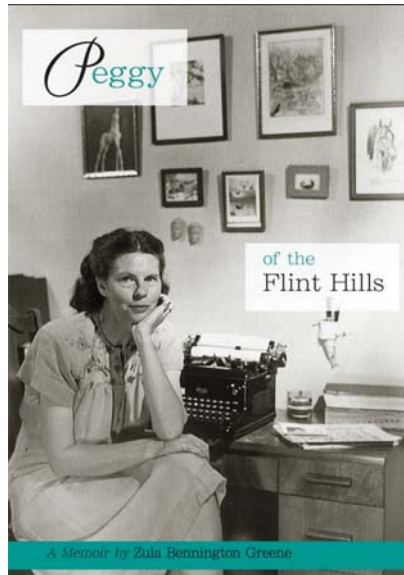
Folks, a Jayhawk is a mythical bird said to “worry its prey before it devours it.” Are we going to become a mythical bird that gets its prey to laughing and shaking its head? You know, we used to shoot each other. Now we’re seeing who can make the other die laughing. 



Peggy of the Flint Hills: a memoir

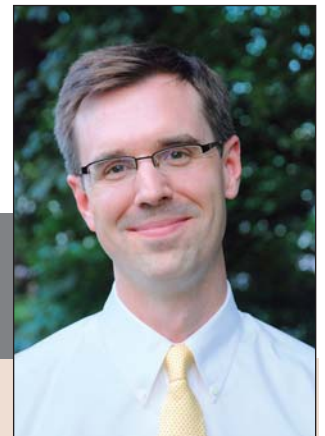
In December, with the help of a Center for Kansas Studies grant, Woodley Press will publish *Peggy of the Flint Hills*, a memoir by the beloved Topeka newspaper columnist Zula Bennington Greene.

Fellow Eric McHenry, who grew up next door to Mrs. Greene, edited and wrote an introduction to the book. Written in the 1970s and the 1980s, it's a brilliant and moving recollection of Greene's childhood in the Ozark foothills and young adulthood in the Kansas Flint Hills. Many of its chapters appeared in Little Balkans Review in the early 1980s, but



nothing had been done with the manuscript since Mrs. Greene's death in 1988.

Eric and Dotty Hanger, Mrs. Greene's daughter, will be giving readings from the book at Mabee Library on Thursday, December 6th, at 4 p.m. and at the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library on Saturday, December 8th at 3 p.m. Both events are free and open to the public.



Introduction, Peggy of the Flint Hills

by Eric McHenry

Unlike the other houses on the 1200 block of Mulvane Street, the one immediately north of ours faced south—the view from its large living room window was of our front porch. And I knew from an early age that its occupant, a kind old woman with owlish glasses and three feet of silvery hair gathered up in a bun, was, in fact, watching us, because if my brother or I tried to sell rainwater from that porch, or saved a butterfly from our cat, or said something endearingly insensitive, a few days later grownups would start telling us they'd read about it in the paper.

Our next-door neighbor was Zula Bennington Greene—"Peggy" to all but her oldest friends, and "Peggy of the Flint Hills" to the rest of Topeka. From 1933 until her death in 1988 she wrote six columns a week for the *Topeka Daily Capital* and its successor, *The Topeka Capital-Journal*—about 17,000 columns altogether. They weren't political columns or sports columns or arts columns, but old-fashioned general-interest columns: wise observations and wry musings about whatever was happening in the world and the neighborhood. It was a job that required her to pay attention

to everything from wars and elections to what the neighbor boys were up to. And it was the perfect job for Peggy, who had no grand theories or inflexible opinions but who had something interesting to say about everything.

That's because she was genuinely interested in everything. A Missouri farm girl who had grown up wondering if she'd ever see a house with a doorbell, Peggy loved to seek out the novel and scrutinize the familiar, and to see each in the other. One week's writings might include a portrait of her grandmother, a critique of the president's recent speech, a story she'd heard at a dinner party, and a eulogy for a movie star. When the Beatles came to Kansas City for the first time in 1964, Peggy accompanied her granddaughter, Melissa, to the concert: "In time the curtain parted and the Beatles were bowing as a great scream tore from young throats and bulbs flashed like heat lightning."

Peggy was easily dazzled, as the truly observant often are. She missed no nuance and made startling connections, and she was uncommonly skillful with a simile. A few weeks

Introduction, *Peggy of the Flint Hills*

— Cont.

before the Beatles concert she had written that “the japonica and forsythia are lazy this year. The blooms come slow and scattered, like the first grains of popping corn.” Nor were her descriptions merely decorative. Twenty-two years earlier, in the depths of World War II, blooming japonica had prompted a very different meditation:

There is one pleasant association this spring with the name “Japan”—the Japan quince, or japonica, that sturdy pioneer shrub with its rose-red blossoms peeping out from the green leaves like shy children. The Japanese people have a deep love for flowers and are famous for their arrangement. Perhaps the sight of a blossom on the stem is gladdening their hearts this April, for their sons and husbands too are at war and they too suffer grief and deprivation.

This was not an easy or an idle empathy. Her own son, Willard, was serving overseas at the time, and fellow feeling for the Japanese people must have been at a historic low in Middle America. Yet Peggy could look into her own garden and see their troubled faces. “A pair of eyes like Peggy has is worth far more than a college education or a trip around the world,” her friend William Allen White wrote. “She can get more out of life staying at home than most people can traveling.”

Needless to say, as a child I had no idea that Peggy was a brilliant prose stylist. What was that? I knew only that she was the grandmotherly neighbor who took care of my brother and me when we were sick and our parents were working, and who invited us over to watch TV movies and Royals games and, at 3 in the morning, the Royal Wedding, and who made us pancakes in the shapes of our initials, and who shared our love of cats, and whose laugh made me want to laugh, and who seemed just a little more celebratory than most of the grandmotherly types I knew. (When my mother turned 40 and joked about feeling old,

I reminded her that Peggy had turned 40 in 1935.) And of course I knew that she was well-known—an Important Person who from time to time would lend a little of her celebrity to my family. But I hadn’t given much thought to why she was important.

It wasn’t until the slow afternoons of my late adolescence that I began to pick up *Skimming the Cream*, a book of her selected columns, from our coffee table, and to consider its author as an author. Having a short attention span, I started with the shorter excerpts, which were invariably funny, but in an understated way that challenged my unsubtle brain: “A new use has been found for the manure spreader, which stands idle much of the time. Two different aspirants to public office have plastered their posters on one such machine standing near the highway.”

Eventually I graduated to the longer columns, lingering over the ones that recorded Peggy’s reactions to historic events: the Dust Bowl, the rise of Hitler, the assassinations of the Kennedys, the resignation of Nixon, the bicentennial, Three Mile Island. I read “Great Soul,” her elegy for Gandhi, so many times that I committed passages to memory: “Gone to join the select company of the great is the little dark-skinned man whose ashes are being borne out to sea by the old sorrowing waters of the Ganges.” And I marveled at her column of June 13, 1966, for which she had strolled the streets in the eerie aftermath of the great tornado: “A bath towel was driven into a door at the Embassy apartments so firmly that a man could not pull it out.” At a time when most of Topeka was preoccupied with the loss of property, Peggy foresaw that another loss would shape the city even more indelibly:

It was a tragic destruction of trees in the scorching sweep across the city. Estimates have been made of the number of homes and businesses destroyed, but there is no way to count the death of the trees.

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Introduction, *Peggy of the Flint Hills*

— Cont.

If money is available, houses can rise quickly again, but the trees cannot be replaced in a generation.

In the final paragraphs Peggy exchanged her point of view for a child's, concluding the column with the gentlest of gestures:

Children played on fallen trees, making believe they were bridges. A small girl on West 17th spoke to me, "You know what I got from the tornado?" I asked what it was.

"A piece of tree," she said brightly. "I'll run and get it." She proudly brought a little chip, fresh from inside a tree, as her cherished souvenir.

In a deracinated city, this was the necessary voice of rootedness — steady, alert, tender, the tiniest bit ironic, but mindful too of the beauty and wonder that can be salvaged even from devastation. Reading these columns, I came to understand why so many Topekans would stop what they were doing once a day and listen to Peggy. She said things no one else in town would think to say — or, in any case, to say so well. She wasn't just my family's loving and level-headed friend, she was everyone's.

Even so, I wasn't sure what to expect when her daughter, Dotty Hanger, asked me recently to read an unpublished memoir of Peggy's early years and help prepare it for print. I didn't think of Peggy as a book author. Granted, she had produced the equivalent of *War and Peace* twenty times over, but her *métier* was the column. Would her sketch-artist's style work on such a broad canvas?

I was unprepared, in other words, for the small masterpiece that follows this introduction. In the summer of 2009 I sat down with the manuscript and my red grading pen, which I ended up using mainly to put exclamation points in the margins. Peggy had a preternatural memory, and could call back every hue and texture of her childhood in the Ozark foothills and her young adulthood in the Kansas Flint

Hills. Here was 19th-century life — for, truly, life on a Missouri farm in 1905 was 19th-century life — recollected in rich detail and a thoroughly modern voice:

The Hopewell church held its baptizings at another spot in Hogle's Creek. Spectators rattled down to the water in wagons and buggies, in hacks and on horseback, tied the horses to trees, and assembled on the bank. The song was always "Shall We Gather at the River," sung in voices that quavered and were lost in the distance of the outdoors. In a shirt and an old pair of pants with suspenders, the preacher waded out, leading the candidates in a line, hand in hand. The women wore several petticoats to save themselves the embarrassment of clinging skirts and they kept pushing down the skirts that floated up. The preacher took hold of a person's hands, folded them over his chest, lowered him into the water, and brought him back up again. When all had been baptized they waded out dripping. Members were generally admitted into the church during the summer, but there was always someone who bragged that they had to break the ice to baptize him. After a baptizing I always went home and baptized my rag dolls, forgetting in the excitement my distress at the length of time it took for them to dry.

"People who live in a Golden Age," Randall Jarrell wrote, "usually go around complaining how yellow everything looks." Peggy was the opposite — a woman who lived through the Depression and the Dust Bowl, two World Wars, and several lifetimes' worth of personal tragedy, and yet who could always see the world's gold gleaming through. She simply loved life, and the source of that love was an astonishing ability to recognize blessings where the rest of us would see deprivations. "People who have dining rooms do not know the sensuous pleasure of eating in the room where the food is cooked," she wrote. Losing a year of school

Introduction, *Peggy of the Flint Hills*

— Cont.

because of the whooping cough had given her the rare privilege of observing the daily routines of her parents. Losing her home to a fire was, ultimately, a merciful simplifying of material existence. Even losing a child — which she did twice — was in its way liberating, because after a year of wanting only to die she wasn't afraid of anything anymore.

I find it difficult to believe that Peggy is gone, even though I was only 16 when she died and it's been nearly a quarter-century. I still walk down Mulvane Street and think of her, still hear her voice and her laugh, especially her laugh, still wonder what she would have said about this or that. I sorely wish I could have heard, or read, her thoughts on the election of a black president, or the struggles of her beloved central Topeka neighborhood, or the internet. I'd have given anything to be in the room when Peggy learned that she could now look up the ending to "The Laurel Bush," a sentimental love story she had read as a girl

while covering the walls of her farmhouse kitchen with the newspaper in which it was serialized. When her mother pasted the final installment to the wall story-side-down, Peggy "stood wretchedly looking at it, as though the intensity of my desire might burst through the paper and make the words visible." Now someone has transcribed the whole fusty old tale and posted it on a web site — I got curious on Peggy's behalf and looked it up. I'm sure she would've been tickled to know that it was out there, waiting for her, the solution to a lifelong mystery. But I also suspect she might have declined to look — believing, as she did, that unfulfilled desire was one of life's richest gifts. I've never known another person like Peggy, and I know of no other book like this one.

Eric McHenry

Topeka, Kansas

July 15, 2011

History Day, 2013

Annual District 3 History Day competition for students in grades 6-12 is being held on the Washburn University campus on **Saturday, February 23, 2013**, with the theme "**Turning Points in History: People, Ideas, Events.**"

Volunteer judges are needed; please contact Rachel Goossen (rachel.goossen@washburn.edu) to help.


About Leonard Zeskind

Fellows of the Center for Kansas Studies have chosen **Leonard Zeskind** as speaker for **Kansas Day 2013**. Our event is scheduled for Monday, January 28, 2012, in Henderson 208, Washburn University campus, at 3:30 p.m. Zeskind's talk is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served after the presentation.

Leonard Zeskind has testified before a Parlia-

mentary Subcommittee in the United Kingdom, given public lectures at universities in London and Berlin, and worked for more than three decades to curb the influence of racism, anti-Semitism and white supremacist groups in the United States. He is a lifetime member of the NAACP, and has served on the board of directors of the Petra Foundation and the Kansas City Jewish Community Relations Bureau. He is now president of the Institute for Research & Education on Human Rights (IREHR). He is an internationally recognized expert on the history of the white supremacist movement as it's evolved over the last three-plus decades.

His book, ***Blood and Politics: The History of White Nationalism from the Margins to the Mainstream*** was published in May, 2009, by Farrar Straus & Giroux.

Prior to 1982, Zeskind worked in heavy industry as a first class structural steel fitter, on automobile assembly lines, as a welder and at other jobs. 

Kansas Connections: Teutonic Visions and the American Open Road

This summer my wife and I traveled to Germany to fulfill a long-held desire on my part to trace my father's path in World War II when, during the winter and spring of 1945, he was a member of Troop B of the 88th Cavalry Armored Reconnaissance Squadron Mechanized. Another member of the Troop, Hathaway Turner, wrote an inspirational account of the day-to-day experiences of the men as they moved northward from northeastern France into southeastern Belgium near Bastogne, and then into the Dutch province of Limburg where they engaged in their first combat.¹ They then moved eastward into Germany, crossed the Rhine River and skirted the northern part of the Ruhr Industrial District (*Ruhr Gebiet*) in west-central Germany. The last month of the war found them inside the Ruhr Pocket and then scrambling northeastward to just beyond the Harz Mountains into a region of Germany that was soon to become the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR) or East Germany. Hathaway's account continued in a more condensed version after the war ended when a division of Army Command ordered the Troop into Bohemia, now the western part of the Czech Republic, where they disbanded in early September. Hathaway was an excellent descriptive writer of the geography of war faced by the Troop and his logistical details and accompanying maps allowed us to travel from town to town on more or less the same routes utilized by the Troop.

We traveled over a thousand miles on a variety of roads though we could only imagine the location of the dirt tracks separating farm fields occasionally taken by the Troop; for instance, the one on which they approached a pontoon bridge over the Rhine hastily laid by army engineers just south of the industrial city of Wessel where the bridge had been destroyed by bombing. When they and their vehicles went on long "marches" travelling quickly and often under the cover of darkness to some distant rendezvous point, Hathaway only sketched their route. Along these long segments and whenever we needed to make time, we took to the modern marvel of German road engineering, the legendary autobahn.

by **Tom Schmiedeler**
Professor of Geography,
Dept. of Political Science

Of course, the autobahn is linked to World War II because, thanks to the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, Hitler and the Nazis are usually credited with its beginning, but short segments had already been constructed be-

fore their terroristic reign began in 1933. The first section of autobahn completed under the Nazi regime was from Frankfurt am Main to Darmstadt, a distance of about 25 kilometers that opened in 1935 and a segment I had driven many times in the 1970s while employed briefly at Nathan Hale Depot in Darmstadt (see Figure 2, p. 9). Although comparatively few cars were available to use this and other segments of the autobahn before the war began, the German construction industry had completed about four thousand kilometers by 1940.

The general consensus today is that from a military perspective, the autobahn was not particularly important for the German army during the war because in a time of acute gasoline shortages, trucks were less efficient conveyers of freight (especially bulk goods) and military supplies, and they were needed more frequently in direct support of military operations. Then, too, the weight and tracks of tanks damaged the road surface and allied bombers also took a toll. The highly mechanized American army, however, found segments of the autobahn useful for pursuing the German army deeper into Germany, though Hathaway did not write of its use by Troop B.

The Eisenhower Link

Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, General of the Army, and native Kansan, Dwight Eisenhower was impressed with the autobahn and used it many times after the war, but his inspiration for improved roads dated far back to 1919 when, as a 29-year-old army major, he became a member of the U.S. Army's Coast-to-Coast Motor Transport Train, a convoy of military vehicles that, among various purposes, was to promote the good roads movement and to test the Army's vehicles under field conditions by travelling from Washington D.C. to San Francisco primarily by the Lincoln Highway. In his memoir *At Ease: Stories I*

Kansas Connections: Teutonic Visions and the American Open Road

Tell to Friends, Eisenhower wrote “The old convoy had started me thinking about good, two-lane highways, but Germany had made me see the wisdom of broader ribbons across the land.”² After World War II, the demand for housing construction and then the Korean War delayed the implementation of Eisenhower’s vision of what was to become the Interstate Highway System until 1956 when Congress passed the Federal Aid Highway Act, popularly known as the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act.

Both Missouri and Kansas have laid claim to construction of the first segments of the interstate highway system under the Federal Aid Highway Act. Missouri claims the first interstate highway project to begin construction, whereas Kansas claims the first interstate highway project completed, located a few miles west of Topeka.

“The construction was under way before the enactment of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, but paving under the new contract began on September 26. Because this was the first paving to be initiated after the 1956 act, First District State Highway Commissioner Ivan Wassberg wrote “9-26-56” in the fresh cement to mark the historic day. On November 14, Governor Fred Hall participated in a ribbon-cutting to open the newly paved road, and a sign was posted, identifying this section of I-70 as the “first project in the United States completed under the provisions of the new Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956.”³ (Figure 1)



Autobahn: Congestion and High Speed

How does driving that first completed segment of I-70 leading west from Topeka compare today with driving the first completed segment of the Hitler era from Frankfurt am Main to Darmstadt? Perhaps the most succinct way I can describe the difference is cruise control: you can use it almost anywhere on

I-70 in Kansas much to your relaxation but rarely, if ever, on the autobahn. The difference revolves around two issues: congestion, a function of German geography, specifically density of vehicles; and speed, a function of German culture, specifically car culture. Let’s first consider congestion. Suppose you were to land at Flughafen Frankfurt am Main (Frankfurt International Airport), pick up your rental car and head south to Darmstadt on that old stretch of autobahn, you would notice immediately that there are cars and trucks everywhere, despite the fact that this road has been thoroughly modernized and is one of the longest eight-lane stretches of autobahn in the country (Figure 2). Germany is an affluent society with a long history of car manufactur-



ing and it is relatively densely populated so it has an abundance of vehicles. It ranks fourth behind a couple of its neighbors, Netherlands and Belgium, (Japan is sandwiched between) in the World Bank’s statistic known as “Vehicle Abundance by Country” with 124.34 per square kilometer. The United States ranks 18th with 46.56 per square kilometer. Germany also has more cars per 1,000 people (508) than the United States (478), but the United States has far more road kilometers (over six million) compared to Germany (230,000) on which those cars can travel.⁴ Comparable statistics are unavailable for Kansas, but whereas Kansas is “ranked fourth in the United States in terms of its number of highway miles,” it “has only 19 people per mile of road compared with 86 in Illinois, 65 in Texas, and 191 in California.”⁵ These numbers suggest that drivers of vehicles are sprinkled rather sparsely on Kansas roads compared to German roads.

The second aspect of driving that you would notice immediately on the Frankfurt-Darmstadt route is that some of the cars are moving at very high speeds, though there are segments of this route with speed limits. Like bratwurst and beer, unlimited speed on the autobahn is one of the national traits for which Germany is known. Less well known

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is that this right can be exercised on less than half of the autobahn mileage. In fact, the *recommended speed limit* is 130 km/h, (about 80 mph). Let's suppose you are like me, not only unfamiliar with driving at a high rate of speed but also unwilling to do so, preferring instead to drive no more than 120 km/h or about 75 mph, the maximum by law on I-70 in Kansas today. Although we might be quite content to stay in the right lane, designated for slower traffic, we will not be able to do so for long because trucks, which have an 80 km/h (50 mph) autobahn speed limit, tend to become bunched together like mini convoys. Passing them (and slower moving cars) becomes a necessity. The situation is compounded when trucks, plodding along at their speed limit, try to pass other trucks, moving just a little more slowly. Wherever it may occur, a middle lane can ease this congestion, but the minimum standard for an autobahn with no speed limit requires only two separated lanes in each direction and an emergency lane, and there are quite a few miles of the autobahn system still like this. Additionally, the law does not allow passing on the right.

So our autobahn driving scenario can be a geographic blur where some discerning judgment, uncharacteristic of driving in Kansas, must be exercised. One has to have eyes focused on two views: the one, obviously, of the heavy traffic ahead; the other, of the traffic approaching from behind where a passing glance at one of the rear mirrors just won't do because it takes some time, relatively speaking, to judge how fast that Mercedes is approaching regardless of how distant it may at first appear. When it does appear safe to pass, one should not dilly-dally because even a gap of a half mile can be closed quickly by a car going 150 mph. And if you think that speed is stretching the truth a little, than you have not seen the numerous You Tube videos posted by giddy, mostly foreign drivers who have experienced the excitement of a speed rush for the first time.⁶

Rules and Regulations

With high-speed driving must come responsible drivers and to ensure that they are, the German government has imposed on its citizens some of the most rigorous licensing requirements anywhere. They can include courses at a *Farherschule* (driving

school), a mandatory first-aid course, and a tough driving exam, which, if you fail, can lead you back down the road to the *Farherschule*. Beginners can expect to pay over €1,000 for their license, though those from other countries would typically pay far less.⁷ With a .05 blood alcohol limit, drinking and driving are simply out of the question, but what that really means is drinking *anything* while driving. As *Open Travel Info* reports "Car reviewers in North America have often criticized German cars for their lack of cup holders, but Germans simply do not eat or drink while they drive." They need to have their total concentration on the road because at fast speeds, a "car can travel large distances during a short distraction."⁹ Better to finish lunch at the table because when the mustard slips off your bratwurst while cruising down the autobahn, you may have much more to worry about than a stained shirt. And forget about talking on your cell phone; that is absolutely verboten!

Cars, too, must be roadworthy. As the web site *The German Way and More* reports:

It is rare to see a dented, smoking junk car in Germany. This is not just due to typical German neatness or pride of ownership. It also has to do with a German institution that is as feared and respected as is perhaps the Internal Revenue Service in the U.S. The Technische Überwachungsverein or TÜV is an agency that must approve the roadworthiness of German cars and trucks. Without a TÜV sticker, a vehicle can't be licensed or driven. Cars have been known to fail TUV inspection for having a single rust spot or dent in a critical location.⁹

The very roadworthy cars that whizzed by us most frequently were primarily German-made: Mercedes, BMWs, Audis and, surprising to us, numerous Volkswagens. Interestingly, unlike what one sees frequently on I-70 in Kansas, there were relatively few Japanese cars on the autobahns or on other German roads primarily because Germans buy German-built cars. The Volkswagen Golf is "Germany's favorite car for the first nine months of 2012. It was followed by the VW Passat, Polo, and Mercedes C Class."¹⁰ In contrast, the market for electric and hybrid cars, though continuing to grow in Germany, is


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still less than one percent of the German car market, a surprising statistic from a country that is ranked as one of the most energy efficient.¹¹

Energy efficiency appears to take a back seat to the German lust for high-speed driving, but one should not rush too fast to judgment because the German government has imposed nationwide speed limits in the past. For example, “in the wake of the first Oil Crisis of 1973, a federal speed limit of 100 km/h (62 mph) on autobahns was imposed to help conserve fuel for fear of impending future shortages (not for environmental or safety reasons).” A Sunday ban on driving accompanied the speed limit law but the measures lasted only from December 1973 to March 1974 when the oil spigots opened once again. As a compromise among the administration, and the Bundestag and the Bundesrat, the two legislative bodies of the German government, the aforementioned recommended speed was introduced along with standards for autobahn construction.¹² (Figure 3)

These changes are more or less in effect today but the clamor for speed limits on the autobahn has been heard recently again, this time in response to climate concerns related to CO₂ car emissions. In 2007, Stavros Dimas, the European Union’s environment commissioner from Greece lit a political fuse when he suggested that the German government introduce a general speed limit on the autobahn. “Speed limits are useful for many reasons,

and are the order of the day in most of the E.U.’s 27 member states and the United States,” Mr. Dimas said in an interview with the mass-market newspaper Bild. “Strangely enough, it is only in Germany where they are controversial.”¹³ The response was ballistic on the part of the German Association of the Automotive Industry which stated that “Germans need “no coaching” from other Europeans on how to protect the environment.” Of all people, the environmental minister, Sigmar Gabriel, said that the demand was a “trivialization of the climate problem.” Others argue that it would only reduce emissions by a few million tons a year or about 0.5%. The opposition countered that even that amount is worth it and reducing speed limits can be more easily implemented than building clean coal plants or encouraging sales of hybrid cars.

This situation shapes up to be quite a cultural war. On the one hand, the Germans are in fact ahead of almost every country in legislating and implementing environmental protection specifically related to green-house gas emissions and clean energy. On the other hand, German culture has so much formality about it, so many rules and proper behavior exuding from it, that to many Germans, driving like hell in a precision engineered car on some of the world’s most exquisitely designed roads is so close to the essence of personal freedom that it is viewed as an inalienable right. 



¹ Turner, Hathaway. *The Diary of Troop B: 88th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron Mechanized*, (Montour Falls, N.Y.: Cronk Press, Inc.), 1946.

² Eisenhower, Dwight. *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday), 1967: 166-167.

³ Weingroff, Richard F. “Three States Claim First Interstate Highway,” *Public Roads*, 60(1)1996.

⁴ *Nation Master*, “Transportation Statistics, Vehicle Abundance by Country,” http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/tra_veh_abu-transportation-vehicle-abundance

⁵ *Kansas Department of Transportation*, “Kansas Rail Feasibility Study,” 2000: p.4 http://www.ksdot.org/burrrail/rail/publications/krpt6_1.pdf

⁶ For some real autobahn cruising in a Lamborghini see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYPCLtA-ETk>

⁷ *How To Germany*, “Driving in Germany,” n.a. <http://www.howtogermy.com/pages/driving.html>

⁸ *Open Travel Info*, “Autobahn Survival Guide,” n.a. <http://www.opentravelinfo.com/area/europe/germany/autobahn-survival-guide.html>

⁹ *The German Way and More: Language and Culture in Germany, Austria and Switzerland*, n.a., “Driving in Germany,” <http://www.german-way.com/driving.html>

¹⁰ *Car Sales Statistics: Lists of the Best-Selling Cars around the World*, “2012(Q3) Germany: Best Selling Car Models,” <http://www.best-selling-cars.com/germany/2012-q3-germany-best-selling-car-models/>

¹¹ American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy’s (ACEEE) first International Energy Efficiency Scorecard, ranked Germany second behind the U.K.

¹² “Speed Limits in Germany,” n.a. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speed_limits_in_Germany

¹³ Landler, Mark. “Call for Speed Limit has German Blood at 178 M.P.H. Boil,” *New York Times*, March 16, 2007.

CKS Meeting Summaries

November 15, 2012

Fellows for the Center for Kansas Studies met for a breakfast meeting on Thursday, November 15 beginning at 7:30. Present at the meeting were Tom Schmiedeler, Tom Averill, Marydorsey Wanless, Will Gilliland, Jennifer Marsh, David Winchester, Rachel Goossen, Bradley Siebert, Eric McHenry, Carol Yoho, Marguerite Perret and Chris Hamilton. **Director Tom Schmiedeler** spoke briefly about the budget and announced that the Kansas Day speaker, **Leonard Zeskind**, has been contacted and will soon submit a title for his presentation scheduled for Monday, January 28 beginning at 3:30 in room 208 of Henderson Hall. Tom also encouraged Fellows to submit their contributions to the fall Newsletter to Carol Yoho as soon as possible.

On behalf of the **Mulvane Museum**, Tom introduced a funding proposal in support of a catalogue which will accompany an exhibition titled "William L. Haney Rediscovered" featuring the American realist artist William L. Haney. The exhibit and catalogue, which will introduce the extraordinary vision of an artist who took a sharp and critical look at American culture of the 1970s and 1980s, will be at the Mulvane Art Museum from February through June of 2012. The funding request of \$700, approved by the Fellows, will partially pay for the cost of catalog printing costing about \$3,000.

On behalf of **Mark Peterson** and **Bob Beatty**, Tom introduced another funding request for the amount of \$600 to support "A Post-Election Roundtable" featuring renowned scholars from across the state who will be at

the Washburn University Law School in room 102 on Thursday, November 29, from 5:30 to 7:00. Scholars include Drs. Burdette Loomis (K.U.), Ed Flentje (Wichita State), Chapman Rackaway (Ft. Hays State), Joe Aistrup, (Kansas State University), Gwyn Mellinger, (Baker University), Michael Smith (Emporia State University) and Fellows Mark Peterson and Bob Beatty of Washburn. Fellows approved the requested amount, which will be used for honoraria for the invited speakers.

Tom Averill introduced another in absentia funding request for **Matt Porubsky** who, Fellows will recall, produced the documentary *Porubsky's Transcendent Deli* that was partially funded by the Center. Matt wants to begin publication of the *Proletariat*, an international publication that will feature writers "from Kansas and beyond who will publish their work as art, poetry, fiction, non-fiction and essay." *Proletariat* will be published tri-annually. By financially supporting this first issue for the amount of \$421, the Center will be noted in print as a supporter for the remaining issues of 2012. Matt expects additional support from advertisements and from arts and humanities sources. Fellows approved his request. Tom also requested \$200 for an honorarium for **Joan Stone** who will perform for Tom's Kansas Characters class in the spring semester. Ms. Stone will portray Mary Carpenter Rankin, widow of Judge Louis Carpenter who was slain in Quantrill's raid on Lawrence. Tom also briefly discussed the book *Dragging Wyatt Earp* by **Robert Rebein**. For more information on this book

see: http://www.ecotonejournal.com/index.php/articles/details/dragging_wyatt_earp

Eric McHenry requested an additional \$500 for the publication of *Peggy of the Flint Hills*, a memoir by the late Zula Bennington Greene, which will be published later this month by Washburn's Woodley Press. The first printing will be in hardcover with dimensions slightly larger than those in books typically published by Woodley. In 2009 the Center approved a grant of \$500 toward the project with the possibility of a second \$500 grant. Fellows approved the allocation of the additional \$500 to complete the publication of the book.

In news from other Fellows, **Marguerite Perret** reported that the "Waiting Room Project" road trip will include stops in Groningen, Netherlands, and Athens, Ohio. Rachel Goossen reminded Fellows of the forthcoming History Day on February 23 at Washburn. She encouraged faculty to participate as judges of the students' work based on this year's theme "Turning Points in History."

Catron Professor of Art, **Jennifer Marsh**, reported that she has received a grant from the Kansas Humanities Council as the project director for the International Fiber Collaborative, Inc., Topeka. The grant will be used to present "100 Years of Agriculture: Past, Present, and Future" with exhibitions and public programs scheduled for Greensburg, Hutchinson (Kansas State Fair), Kansas City, Kingman, and Salina. The exhibit will feature one hundred pieces of textile art accompanied by interviews and essays from individuals reflecting on how agriculture has affected their families and communities.

CKS Meeting Summaries —cont.

Marydorsey Wanless reported that she will be taking approximately thirty students to Malta for a Documentary Art and History Abroad class. The focus of the course can be on either travel photography or art history. **Carol Yoho**, who is now busy assembling the Fall Newsletter, announced that she visited the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art recently in Bentonville, Arkansas. **Bradley Siebert** mentioned that he continues his research on Gordon D. Kaufman the late Mallinckrodt Professor of Divinity (Emeritus) at Harvard Divinity School where he taught since 1963.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45.

—Minutes submitted by

Tom Schmiedeler, Director

September 13, 2012

Fellows of the Center for Kansas Studies met for a luncheon meeting on Thursday, September 13. Present at the meeting were Tom Averill, David Winchester, Will Gilliland, Marcia Cebulka, Rachel Goossen, Leslie Reynard, Dave Kendall, Carol Yoho, Margaret Wood, Jennifer Marsh and Tom Schmiedeler. The meeting began with the **Director, Tom Schmiedeler**, discussing briefly the annual budget and mentioning that he will contact Fellows soon regarding the fall Newsletter and Kansas Day speaker. **Tom Averill** requested funding for presenters as part of the Speaking of Kansas series including Laura Moriarty's three appearances (\$300) on campus October 18; Ralph Voss (\$200) for his presentation on October 29 at Mabee Library; and Larry Welch (\$100), former KBI director and author of *Beyond In Cold Blood* at the October 29 Mabee

Library event. For the spring segment of the Speaking of Kansas series, he requested honorariums for Nick Twemlow (\$200) and Tod Marshall (\$200), two writers with Kansas connections to do classroom visits and readings. Fellows approved all requests for support of these speakers.

Marcia Cebulka announced that members of the Latino community of Topeka have asked to use her play "The Bones of Butterflies" to launch the first *Dia de los Muertos Festival* in Topeka. A free concert reading of the play will be held at the public library on October 28. Marcia requested an honorarium for the director and travel expenses for the actors, most of whom will be coming from Kansas City, of \$300. Fellows approved the funding. Additionally, Marcia thanked the Center for its financial support for her play "Rooted: The Greensburg Odyssey," which made possible the involvement of musician **Kelly Hunt**. She reported on the play's commemoration this past May in Greensburg on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the Greensburg tornado. She also invited Fellows to attend an upcoming First Friday Artwalk event at Warehouse 414 in Topeka on October 5, at which short monologue performances written by Marcia and her colleague, former Topekan Darren Cannady, will be presented.

Bob Beatty and **Carol Yoho** continue to work on the Kansas Politics web site (<http://www.washburn.edu/reference/cks/politics/>) as they upload and make available hundreds of Kansas Political TV ads. The Washburn Political Science Department has supplied a work study to help them with the process, but they requested funding in the amount of \$350 from the Center for Carol's work on the

project. Fellows approved the funding request. Carol also noted that she is looking forward to a repeat visit to the Buster Keaton festival.

Fellows welcomed **Jennifer Marsh**, Catron Art professor, as a new member of the Center. Jennifer is applying for a Kansas Humanities Council grant to bring public art projects on the theme "100 Years of Agriculture" to libraries across the state, and she is involving several Fellows from Washburn's English Department in this outreach program. **David Winchester** highlighted the upcoming I-Read program featuring the author of the book *Our Boys: A Perfect Season on the Plains with the Smith Center Redmen*, which is about small-town life in Smith Center.

Dave Kendall, Fellow, and host and executive producer of KTWU's "Sunflower Journeys" series, noted the successful recent 25th anniversary gala for "Sunflower Journeys" and expressed appreciation for **Tom Averill's** dramatic reading of his novel *Rode* this past weekend at the event. **Rachel Goossen** encouraged people to support the District 3 History Day competition by volunteering as judges. This event for students in grades 6-12 will be held Saturday, February 23, 2013, at Washburn University. This year's theme is "Turning Points in History." Contact her at rachel.goossen@washburn.edu if interested in judging.

Will Gilliland reported that this year's 4-H geological field trip in June attracted hundreds of participants near two locations: Valley Falls and Newton. Next year's event will be based at Hays.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30.

—Minutes submitted by **Tom Schmiedeler & Rachel Goossen**

2013 Kansas Day Celebration

Mark Your Calendar!

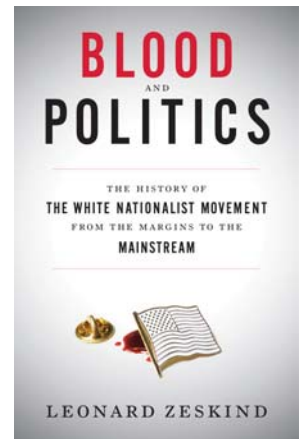
“Hidden, Forgotten and Denied: Racism and Anti-Semitism in the State of Kansas”

Our guest speaker, **Leonard Zeskind**, is author of *Blood and Politics: The History of White Nationalism from the Margins to the Mainstream*

3:30 PM, Mon., Jan. 28, Henderson 208, Washburn U.

Leonard Zeskind, an internationally recognized expert on the history of the white supremacist movement as it’s evolved over the last three-plus decades, ties together seemingly disparate strands—from neo-Nazi skinheads, to Holocaust deniers, to Christian Identity churches, to David Duke, to the militia and beyond. Zeskind shows how factions have evolved into a normative social movement that looks like a demographic slice of white America, mostly blue-collar and working middle class, with lawyers and PhDs among their leaders.

Zeskind has written widely on the radical right for publications such as *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The American Prospect*, *The Nation*, *Rolling Stone*, and the *Forward*. His honors include a MacArthur Fellowship, a Petra Foundation Fellowship, the Paul H. Tobenkin Prize, and the Bayard Rustin Award.



Center for Kansas Studies
Speaking of Kansas
Fall 2012

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