

Springtime in Kansas

Dear Readers,
Our weather keeps vacillating between hot and WINDY and cold and WINDY, and every-temperature-between-hot-and-cold and WINDY. It's springtime in Kansas. Which has me recalling spring afternoons yesteryear, of Grade School recesses and High School track practices—all that time in the playground and track behind the Healy Elementary School. The slipper slide gleams in memory...OUCH!

I wince at thought of its heat by mid-day And that ole dirt track, tamped down by years of generations of feet. These days I walk or stroll along a creek upon grass that's soft as a pillow but one never forgets hours pounding the miles around a hard earthen track.
I was never a sprinter. I dabbled with hurdles, high jump and long jump, but I lacked drive and ambition (and most of all the coordination) for those events.

Distance running came as naturally to me as swimming and I particularly enjoyed the distance relays. It was not a matter of skill to be chosen for a relay team. My school was so small and coaches worked to fill events depending on the day and who was healthy. For that reason, practices often opened with us trying our hand at EVERYTHING. I remember this because when it was my turn throw the discus, the rest of the team backed up...

and ducked. After we'd made our hands, we'd practice relay handoffs before we all separated to practice for a specific event.
A relay handoff is a thing of beauty when it's done practiced until it's performed right. On a small team, where you might run any leg, relay runners must be proficient at BOTH handing off and receiving. The interesting thing in hindsight is how small a role SIGHT plays compared to those sports where I

by Gaille Renee Pike



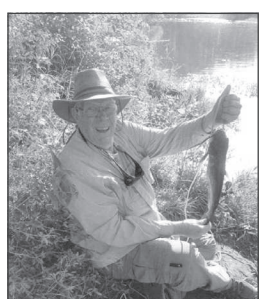
was taught to keep my eye "on the ball." In this critical moment of a relay race, performance comes down to practice: matching motion and pace repeatedly.
As memories washed over me, I reflected on how relays prepared me for those times when life

tests the spirit and others share the burden of endurance. Training does not ensure perfection. But with mindful practice, we can stumble less whether we're passing the baton or holding on.
Keep your eyes on the stars and your back to the wind.

Obituaries

JOE FREEMAN

Feb 18, 1946 - Mar 23, 2026



Joe David Freeman of Augusta passed away on March 23, 2026. He was born on February 18, 1946, in Wichita, to Joseph and Marjorie (Wilson) Freeman. Joe grew up in Kingman and graduated from Kingman High School before attending Kansas State University where he earned a degree in Architectural Engineering.

Joe spent over 30 years as the Chief Architectural Engineer and Plant Engineer with Beech Aircraft, demonstrating a strong work ethic and commitment to excellence. Prior to joining Beech, he served as a County Engineer in Sedgwick, Lyon and Kingman Counties.

Joe was a member of Central Christian Church of Wichita and found great joy in simple and meaningful things. He loved spending time outdoors hunting, fishing, and gardening, and also enjoyed woodworking. Joe also had a deep appreciation for the arts, regularly attending concerts and participating in local theater productions.

Joe remained a loyal KSU fan and will be remembered for his steady presence, kind spirit, and the many ways he connected with those around him through his interests, his faith, and his community.

Survivors include his son, DeWayne Freeman; daughters, Jennifer, Kimberly and Amy; grandson, Connor Freeman; siblings, Jim (DeeAnn) Freeman, and Gene (Peggy) Hoffman; and cousin, Beverly Wilson.

Joe was preceded in death by his parents; and a special friend, Leah.

A graveside service will take place at 1:30 p.m. on Friday, March 27th, 2026, at Walnut Valley Memorial Park in El Dorado.

DUSTIN THOMAS

Nov 26, 1984 - Mar 21, 2026



Dustin Elliott Thomas went to his heavenly home on March 21, 2026. Dustin was born on November 26, 1984 in Hutchinson, to Don Eugene Thomas and Nancy June (Schadler) Thomas, the youngest of three children.

Dustin graduated from El Dorado High School in 2004, where he participated in cross country, track and swimming. He was a conductor for the Union Pacific Railroad.

Dustin was blessed with three wonderful children, Lily, Eli and Riley who were the loves of his life. Dustin loved sports, especially Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls, watching the KU Jayhawks (especially with his sons), the Butler Community College Grizzlies who he watched play football and basketball with his dad, his sons, and many friends. But most of all, he loved watching his children in all their sports and activities. Dustin was a daredevil and very competitive and would try anything (skydiving, bungee jumping, para-sailing, etc.) but he especially loved being on the water. He was an avid swimmer and was on the El Dorado Sea Dragons summer team and was a member of the El Dorado High School swim team.

When Dustin was a teenager, he made the best decision of his life, to accept Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. He was currently attending Gospel Life Church, Wichita. When Dustin was twenty years old, he made the decision to be an organ donor. Through this decision, eight other lives were blessed with another chance at life.

Dustin is survived by his children, daughter Lily, and sons Eli and Riley, all of Sedgwick; mother, Nancy Thomas of Kechi; sister, Erika (Jason) VanFleet of Topeka; brother, Randall Thomas of Whitewater; maternal grandmother, Doris Schadler-Clark of Hutchinson; aunts, Melanie Hef-ton and Rhonda (Arley) Philbrick, both of Hutchinson; uncle Melvin (Donna) Schadler of Sterling, uncle James (Teri) Thomas of Hutchinson; eight nieces and nephews, many cousins and friends, and Lily, Eli and Riley's mom Pamela.

Dustin was preceded in death by his father, Don Thomas; sister-in-law, Stephanie Thomas; maternal grandfather, Melvin R. Schadler; and paternal grandparents, Clifford and Edith Thomas.

A celebration of Dustin's life will be held at 10 a.m. Friday, March 27, 2026, at Westside Baptist Church, 400 W. 12th Avenue, Hutchinson. Friends may sign his book from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday at Elliott Mortuary.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be directed to Gospel Life Church, Wichita, in care of Elliott Mortuary, 1219 N. Main, Hutchinson, KS 67501.

The family requests that you wear red and blue for KU or purple for the Butler Grizzlies.

CRAIG FRANK KOBEL

Sep 14, 1940 - Mar 21, 2026



Craig Frank Kobel, of El Dorado, Kansas, passed away on March 21st, 2026, at the age of 85.

Craig was born on September 14th, 1940, in El Dorado, Kansas, to Frank Tomlinson Kobel and Audrey (Teeter) Kobel. He graduated from El Dorado High School with the class of '58.

Craig spent most of his life farming, dedicating himself to

the land with a strong work ethic and great determination. In addition to farming, Craig was passionate about antiques, becoming a knowledgeable collector and dealer over the years. Craig found great joy spending his time outdoors. He could often be found hunting, fishing, or trapping. He loved the thrill of the hunt in a different sense - spending countless hours attending auctions, exploring garage sales, and browsing flea markets in search of unique treasures.

In Craig's quieter moments, he enjoyed watching his favorite Westerns, especially "Lonesome Dove" and "Yellowstone."

Craig will be missed by all who were blessed to know him. He is survived by his children, Dan Kobel, of Blue Springs, Missouri, and David Kobel (Heather Ranger-Kobel), of Tulsa, Oklahoma; his granddaughter, Lila Kobel; his nephews, Mike and Eric Biltonen; and the mother of his children, Brenda Kobel, of El Dorado.

Craig was preceded in passing by his parents, and his two sisters, Jane Biltonen and Mary Ellen Chollett.

Visitation will take place on Wednesday, April 1st, 2026, from 5-7 PM at Carlson Funeral Home. Funeral service will take place on Thursday, April 2nd, 2026, at 1:00 PM at Trinity Episcopal Church in El Dorado. Craig will be entombed at the Belle Vista Mausoleum in El Dorado immediately following the service.

Memorial donations in his name may be directed towards St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Please sign his guest book and leave a memory at www.carlsonkirbymorris.com

SHERRY F. CARMICHAEL

Dec 16, 1952 - Mar 14, 2026



Sherry Frances (Auer) Carmichael, passed away on March 14, 2026, in Hendersonville, NC. Born on December 16, 1952, in El Dorado, KS., she was 73 years old. Her parents were Charles Duane Auer and Martha (Stackley) Auer. She grew up on a working cattle farm with three younger sisters, Kim Auer (Dr. Tim O'Neil), Deana Auer (Mike Garbow), and Duann

Auer (Robert Rhodes).

She went to a country school for grades K through 8 in a one-room schoolhouse. She finished her education at El Dorado High School, Class of 1970. She met her future husband while playing opposite roles in the first ever high school musical, The King & I.

She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music and Elementary Education at Wichita State University. She taught 5th grade off and on over the next 25 years while raising and moving her family four times. Her love for music and children spilled over to her faith, and she started Children's Choir programs in a multitude of churches.

Sherry was taken by technology for use in education. As an early internet adopter, in 1990, she wrote and received grants, and her rural students were soon communicating with pen pals via email on every continent. Sherry was a natural gardener and loved studying landscape designs. She had a passion for quilting and was an active member of the Western North Carolina Quilting Guild.

Known for her sense of humor, loyalty, and commitment, Sherry was a loving mother and wife who cherished her family above all. In 1972, she married Chris Carmichael. They had an adventurous life raising two children, Heather Carmichael-Santini (Greg) and Ryan Carmichael, living in multiple states and abroad - before retiring to New York in 2014 to be present for their two grandchildren, Athena and Neil Santini in their early years before school. Once the grandchildren were in school, she and Chris retired to North Carolina.

Sherry will be remembered for her generous spirit, her contributions to hundreds of children, her faith in God, her beautiful singing voice, her "light up the room smile", and her unwavering love for her family.

Viewing and visitation on Tuesday evening April 7, 2026 from 5-7pm at Forest Lawn Funeral Home located at 538 Tracy Grove Road, Hendersonville, NC 28792. Memorial service on Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at 11am at First Congregational Church, located at 1735 Fifth Avenue West, Hendersonville, NC 28739.



Pecans tweak the flavor profile of a beloved baked good

Metro Creative Connection

When it comes to baked goods, it's hard to deny the appeal of a homemade brownie. Whether eaten on their own or paired with ice cream, brownies are a welcome treat that few can resist.

Though chocolate dominates the flavor profile of brownies, these beloved treats can be enhanced with additional delicious ingredients, like pecans. Anyone who wants to throw a little extra flavor into their next batch of brownies can consider this recipe for "Pecan Brownies" from Lines+Angles.

Pecan Brownies

Makes 12 brownies

12 ounces plain dark chocolate, 70 percent cocoa solids
2 sticks of butter
3 large eggs
1 1/4 cup dark brown sugar
1/4 cup flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
5 ounces chopped

pecan nuts

To decorate:

Icing sugar
1. Heat the oven to 325 F. Grease a 7x11 rectangular baking dish and line the base with non-stick baking paper.

2. Put the chocolate and butter in a pan and heat gently, stirring until melted. Allow to cool slightly.

3. Whisk the eggs in a mixing bowl until pale and frothy, then add the sugar, a spoonful at a time, whisking until thick and glossy.

4. Gently fold in the melted chocolate mixture. Sift in the flour, baking powder and salt and fold in the pecan nuts.

5. Spoon the mixture into the baking dish, level with the back of a spoon and bake for 40 minutes, until the top has a cracked appearance and the center is still a little soft to the touch. Do not overbake, or you will lose the famous sticky brownie texture. Cool in the pan.

6. Cut into slices and sift over a little icing sugar.

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