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# THE HUTCHINSON NEWS

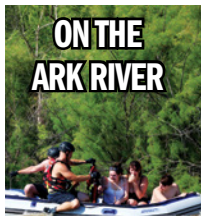
COVERING THE BETTER PART OF KANSAS

## ROYALS 'SAL'VAGE ANOTHER VICTORY

All-Star catcher Salvy Perez comes up big on offense, defense again **D1**

SUNDAY, JULY 10, 2016

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**ON THE ARK RIVER**

Fire crews fished three stuck teens from the river Thursday. See photos, video and hear a portion of the 911 call at [hutchnews.com](http://hutchnews.com)

Read more about the flooded river and how the Hutch fire department prepares **PAGE A2**

Seminary student from Garden Plain missing in river after rescuing a woman **PAGE A2**

# An end to ranch era



Photos by Lindsey Bauman/The Hutchinson News

Phyllis and Dee Scherich walk together down a hill at Merrill Ranch near Coldwater on Thursday. The Scherichs are retiring as managers of Merrill Ranch after 40 years.

## After 40 years on the Merrill, couple retires

By AMY BICKEL  
 Kansas Agland

COMANCHE COUNTY – Getting here isn't easy. This, after all, is open range. You cross a number of cattle guards on dirt-laden Estill Road, past the cattle grazing by the road, past a weathered sign that says you are now entering Comanche County. The roads meander across the rugged terrain, dotted with only a couple of homes before you see a sign that says the Merrill Ranch. It's miles from anything – or anyone. The biggest town, Coldwater, the county seat, has 800 residents. But this spot on the wide-open prairie is where – for 40 years – Dee Scherich and his wife, Phyllis, called home.

Most people his age would have retired long ago. But for 40 years, Dee, 76, has gotten up every morning as the sun is rising – checking on the some 800-plus cattle that roam the 17,200-acre ranch.

He knows every inch of it, too, every wildflower, every grass that grows. This is where he grew up – riding horseback with his father, the previous caretaker. He left for a short while, getting married then teaching high school before he brought his family back to Kansas' Gyp Hills as manager of the Merrill.

It's never been their land – they don't own anything – yet Dee and Phyllis have cared for the Merrill like it was theirs.

But on this June day – Dee stood amid the grass and wildflowers – in a spot where you can see nothing but the Merrill for miles. He reflected back on how the spring wildfire – of historic proportions – narrowly missed the couple's home, as well as the horse-riding accident about a decade ago that nearly took his life.

It's taken a while to let go of the life he and Phyllis love. But he has taken to heart Phyllis' words to him. "I don't want to leave here by myself," she had said.

### The cowboy way

It has been the cowboy way of life here at least 140 years.

The Merrill, as folks call it, rests on the edge of the Gyp Hills prairie – rugged red hills only suitable for



Cows wander along the Salt Fork of the Arkansas River at the 17,000-plus-acre Merrill Ranch near Coldwater on Thursday.

### INSIDE



See more photos of wildflowers at the Merrill, **AD ASTRA, B1**

cattle. Jesse Evans was among the first ranchers – helping form the Comanche Pool – the largest cattle ranching spread in Kansas history. The Merrill was the pool's headquarters, which was called Evansville – a small town that had a post office, store and a hotel.

As the land was fenced, the pool dissolved. Evansville ceased to exist as a town, but the area continued to serve a small population as the headquarters for Mortimer Platt's Ranch, followed by the John Arrington

Ranch and then the West Ranch of Davis, Nolan and Merrill Grain Co., Dee said.

Dee's father, Virgil, started out on the grain company's ranch in Barber County – which is now media mogul Ted Turner's Z Bar Ranch. By 1945, they moved to the site of the West Ranch. A few years later, the three partners separated and the ranch stayed with the Merrill family.

Time and technology advanced since pioneers first settled here. But at the Merrill, like most ranches – there are still some things that are old-school – like using horses as the main means of transportation.

Dee and his brother, Hank, grew up riding the range, helping their dad and the other crew members with farm labor like checking cattle. In high school and college, summers were spent on horseback, searching for cattle infected with screw worms – which burrowed like a screw into the skin.

That was before the eradication of the screwworm fly by the federal government, said Dee.

"We didn't have one critter that had screw worms, you'd have a whole bunch of them," said Dee. "You just would ride until you found (an animal) lying out in the grass."

He would rope it, dig the worm out of the hole, apply a stinky ointment, then go looking for the next one.

See ERA / A6

# Gov's policies at issue in races

Opponents in primary election lash out or laud what legislators, Brownback have done to state.

By MARY CLARKIN

The Hutchinson News  
[mclarkin@hutchnews.com](mailto:mclarkin@hutchnews.com)

Gov. Sam Brownback's name will not appear on the Aug. 2 primary election ballot.

But the administration's policies, largely supported by the Kansas Legislature, sharply divide Republican state legislative candidates in a number of primary contests.

Evidence of the split appeared in completed surveys returned to The News where candidates were asked only one question: "Kansas: Going the right way or the wrong way?"

"Unfortunately the administration, with the guidance of powerful outside special interests has our state on the wrong path," began State Rep. Steven Becker, R-Buhler.

His challenger in the 104th House District is Lowell Peachey, R-Hutchinson.

"I believe the state of Kansas is heading in the right direction," Peachey started his response.

In other races, Republican incumbents described progress, while their challengers criticized the status quo.

"The reinstatement of the property tax lid has been a positive step forward," wrote Sen. Terry Bruce, R-Nickerson.

"Our 'job growth' has recently become 'job loss,'" wrote Edward Berger, R-Hutchinson, running against Bruce in the 34th Senate District.

The candidate surveys appear in today's edition and are available online at [www.hutchnews.com](http://www.hutchnews.com).

All 10 Republican candidates in

See RACES / A3

### REGISTRATION DEADLINE

Tuesday is the last day for Kansans to register to vote in the Aug. 2 primary election. County election officials will begin mailing requested advance ballots Wednesday.



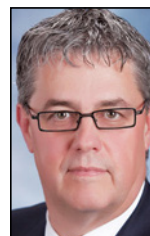
BROWNBACK

### INSIDE

Candidates answer survey question, **A4-A5**



BECKER



PEACHEY



Lip-smacking cold root beer, food on way back to Hutch **C1**

### LONG-RANGE CITY PLANS?

Hutch city council to seek input for what people want **A3**



96 75

TV LISTINGS	B5
CLASSIFIEDS	E1
LOTTERIES	A2
OUTDOORS	D4
OBITUARIES	A9
CROSSWORD	E2
SPORTS	D1
BUSINESS	C1



### INTERCEPTED LETTER

Dee and Phyllis Scherich

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