

February 25, 2005

36 HOURS

In Lawrence, Kan.

By **SETH SHERWOOD**

IT sounds like a setup: "So Bob Dole, William S. Burroughs and Wilt Chamberlain walk into a bar." These three former Lawrence residents probably didn't share too many Boulevard Pale Ales in the noisy collegiate pubs along Massachusetts Street. Separately, however, each represents a key element of this laid-back university town's vibe. Senator Dole, a former University of Kansas student and namesake of the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics, embodies the Great Plains values and civic engagement that date back to the town's origins before the Civil War. Mr. Burroughs, the Beat Generation writer and a presence in Lawrence the last 16 years of his life, is the uncontested symbol of its bohemian and creative set. And Mr. Chamberlain, a product of the university's legendary basketball program, remains among the most towering figures in a sport that has obsessed and defined Lawrence for a century. Add the lovely campus, many funky shops and a top-notch regional music scene, and Lawrence, a leafy city of about 80,000, seems to bulge beyond its borders.

Friday

4 p.m.

1) The Strip of Hip

Named for the home state of Lawrence's abolitionist founders, lively Massachusetts Street offers a stroll through the city's past and present. Start at the Beaux-Arts Liberty Hall (644 Massachusetts Street; 785-749-1972), where Oscar Wilde lectured on decorative art in 1882 (in "a not disagreeable sing-song," one paper reported) and Mr. Burroughs received his wake in 1997. Continue past backpack-hobbled students and inhale the Americana of the street's venerable brick buildings, many dating to the Civil War era. Places worth lingering include Love Garden Sounds (936½ Massachusetts Street; 785-843-1551), the state's coolest record store, and the Arizona Trading Company (734 Massachusetts Street; 785-749-2377), full of retro-vintage fashions. Finish at the Watkins Community Museum of History (1047 Massachusetts Street; 785-841-4109), where the real draw is the building itself - an 1880's Romanesque mansion.

6 p.m.

2) Cattle Country

Midwestern meat is best appreciated at the Hereford House (4931 West Sixth Street; 785-842-2333). The self-designated "steakhouse of record" in Lawrence, the Hereford features cowboy art and chummy service. To start, try mushrooms fried in a wonton coating and served with ponzu sauce (\$6.95). The main event is the 20-ounce T-bone (\$29.95), a diptych of cuts half filet mignon and half Kansas City strip, that's perfect for the indecisive. Finally, loosen your belt and devour a white-chocolate bread pudding (\$5.95).

7:30 p.m.

3) That's Show Biz

Metabolize your meat from the footlights. From "Carmen" to David Sedaris to "Miss Saigon," all manner of touring shows and spectacles pass through the University of Kansas' Lied Center (1600 Stewart Drive; 785-864-2787; www.ku.edu/~lied). Performances take place several times a month and almost always begin at 7:30 p.m. Tickets can be purchased at the box office (Weekdays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.), by phone or through the Web site.

Saturday

9 a.m.

4) Get French-Toasted

At Milton's Coffee (920 Massachusetts Street; 785-832-2330), above, an arty take on a diner, thick-sliced challah is soaked in brandy-nutmeg batter and cooked into a French toast (\$3.75) that feels more like filet mignon. More savory but no less inventive is the prosciutto omelet (\$6.95), which is jazzed up with leeks and Gorgonzola. A bottomless coffee (\$1.50) will jump-start your Saturday.

11 a.m.

5) The Public Life

From World War II soldier to Senate majority leader to presidential candidate to pitchman for Viagra, the many careers of Bob Dole are displayed at the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics (2350 Petefish Drive; 785-864-4900; free). Opened in July 2003 and dominated by an enormous stained-glass American flag, it has videos and personal mementos that guide visitors through Mr. Dole's life and try to explain the inner workings of the American political system.

1 p.m.

6) To Beef, or Not to Beef?

At Gran-Daddy's Que Meats & Sauces (913 North Second Street; 785-830-8665), that is definitely the question. Is it nobler to suffer the succulent brisket on bread (\$3.99) and full rack of baby back ribs (\$17.99), or just have the chicken sandwich (\$3.99)? Next to a strip club and indifferent to décor, Gran-Daddy's has ghastly lighting and a linoleum floor, but it is the hidden gem of a respectable Lawrence barbecue scene.

2 p.m.

7) It's Game Time

Few American universities have as much basketball in their DNA as Kansas. The game's inventor, Dr. James Naismith, became the school's first basketball coach in 1898. Since then, Jayhawk men's teams have won two N.C.A.A. tournaments (1952 and 1988), and this year's team was No. 8 in this week's poll by The Associated Press. Tickets for games at Allen Fieldhouse (1700 Naismith Drive; www.kuathletics.com; 800-344-2957) mostly go to season-ticket holders and students, though seats are sometimes available to the public. Check the Web site or call. Otherwise, Ace Sports and Tickets (647 Massachusetts Street; 785-856-5400) resells seats bought from season-ticket holders. Prices start around \$30. You can get your Kansas jersey (\$49.99) at Jayhawk Spirit (935 Massachusetts Street; 785-749-5194). Only two men's regular-season home games remain and no women's games, but the Big 12 Conference tournaments are in nearby Kansas City, Mo., the second week in March.

6 p.m.

8) White Tablecloth Kansas

In Lawrence, fine dining starts at Pachamama's (2161 Quail Creek Drive, 785-841-0990). In a vaulted dining room that's part ski lodge and part Arts and Crafts house, the chef, Ken Baker, unfurls monthly menus full of clever

combinations. Starters could include the pumpkin and sage-pesto tart in vinaigrette (\$7) or a chive-buttermilk poached pheasant breast in Madeira and truffle honey (\$11). Characteristic main dishes range from coffee-rubbed fillet of venison in fig-balsamic glaze (\$25) to pan-roasted striped bass with smoked-ham Beaujolais sauce (\$23). The ice creams and sorbets (\$3) are all hand-churned.

9 p.m.

9) Cue the Music

It may only be rock 'n' roll, but Ghosty, the Applesed Cast, the New Amsterdams and other young bands are playing it with such virtuosity that Lawrence is now perhaps the most vital music scene between Chicago and Denver. To gauge the local talent, hit the pinball-stocked Replay Lounge (946 Massachusetts Street; 785-749-7676), which plays host to local bands and small-label touring acts, as does the kitschy, Western-themed Jackpot Saloon (943 Massachusetts Street; 785-832-1085) across the way. Independent-label stars play the Bottleneck (737 New Hampshire Street; 785-842-5483), a splendidly grimy club that's the hub of rock on the plains, or the Granada Theater (1020 Massachusetts Street; 785-842-1390).

Sunday

10 a.m.

10) A Liberal Portion

Lawrence's left-leaning students, ardent recyclers and community activists flood WheatFields (904 Vermont Street; 785-841-5553) on weekends, gobbling frittata sandwiches (\$4.95) and oatmeal-currant waffles (\$4.25) in its clean, bright confines. But the bakery's real standouts are its brick oven-baked pastries and breads. Get a Kalamata olive loaf (\$5.50) or blueberry muffins (\$1.35) for the road.

Noon

11) Big Plan on Campus

Kansas may be the last place you'd expect to meet Claude Monet or Dante Gabriel Rossetti, but canvases by both are hanging in the Spencer Museum of Art (1301 Mississippi Street; 785-864-4710; free) on the university campus. Head to the stately building, where you'll also see Buddhist statues, Italian Renaissance paintings and modern works by Larry Rivers, Robert Motherwell and others. If you've wondered who lived in Kansas tens of millions of years before Dorothy and Toto did, tread up the hill to the imposing Natural History Museum (1345 Jayhawk Boulevard; 785-864-4450; free).

Visiting Lawrence

Kansas City, Mo., 40 miles east, is the best gateway to Lawrence. Most major airlines serve Kansas City International Airport. You can rent a car there or take the shuttle to Lawrence (\$27 one-way) operated by Midwest Transportation (888-467-3729). Shuttles leave roughly every two hours from 6 a.m. to midnight. Shuttles from Lawrence to the airport also run regularly. Book in advance.

Cozy and charming, the Halcyon House Bed and Breakfast (1000 Ohio Street; 888-441-0314) offers nine rooms and suites, most with private baths. Rates are \$49 to \$149. The all-suites Eldridge Hotel (701 Massachusetts Street; 785-749-5011), closed for renovations until May, is a historic property in the heart of downtown. The 48 rooms are sizable and reliable, and the Jayhawker bar is a classic. Rates are \$89 to \$235.

