



Some bemoan the loss of state's mortgage tax

County officials and editorialists across the state continue to bemoan the loss of the state's mortgage tax this summer.

The editorial writers echo county complaints that it's not fair for the Legislature to take away such a big revenue source for counties, and the tax produced \$47 million last year. One wrote that the tax, assessed at the rate of 26 cents on every \$100 borrowed, was hardly a burden on home buyers or farmers.

But most of these writers are fans of big government spending and never saw a tax they didn't like.

Bankers and real estate agents had pushed for repeal, arguing that the tax did not apply to any federal loans, including those with a federal guarantee or those made through a federal agency, such as Farm Credit.

About that, at least, the bankers were right. It was unfair for private banks to have to compete with federal agencies who didn't have to collect the tax. And on farm loans today, the fee adds up to big bucks.

One argument that county officials and opinion writers alike made was that repealing the mortgage tax would "force" counties to raise their property taxes yet again. Many claim the property tax is "regressive," since it affects those on a fixed income more than the wealthy, but the property levy has the virtue of being noticeable and somewhat painful when people have to pay it.

County officials no doubt liked having a handy source of revenue that most people never saw. Shifting the burden to the property owners will make the bite more real for taxpayers.

That's not necessarily a bad thing.

Left unchecked, county commissioners tend to let spending rise. There's always pressure from employees to raise wages and benefits, while the state and federal government press counties to increase spending on dozens of programs, one after the other.

New federal standards make everything from running an ambulance to operating a sewer treatment plant to paving a road more expensive every year. A host of "free" grants tempt officials to spend more and more, with little thought to how they will pay for programs later.

When counties have money, as in recent "windfall" years when oil and farm assessments have shot up, there's temptation to raise wages, buy new equipment, improve services. Then, a year or two later, when the windfall has blown away, why surprise, they'll "be forced" to raise the property tax.

No one plans it that way, but hardly anyone ever plans for it *not* to happen.

County officials naturally want to make things better. They want to build up the ambulance service, buy equipment for the road crew, start new programs now and then, apply for grants and get federal "funding." "Off-grid" revenue like the mortgage tax makes these things easier.

But if they go raising the property tax now, blaming the Legislature for doing them wrong and shifting the burden, why maybe taxpayers will take notice and demand a stop to ever-increasing budgets.

And that would not be a bad thing at all. — Steve Haynes



The Gardener

Last Editorial

By Kay Melia



Last Wednesday evening, my wife suffered a stroke and a serious injury when she fell. We flew her to Denver for treatment. The Doctors have now removed the life saving equipment, and the family is waiting.

I am 84 now, and have suddenly lost my inspiration to continue the garden column. I regret stopping it here in the middle of the gardening season, but just can't muster the strength to do so. We have enjoyed 64 years together, but it now

appears to be over. I sincerely thank you all for allowing me to write about my hobby and also for the subscriptions to your fine papers.

Kay Melia

Open Season

Grandchildren

By Cynthia Haynes



Spending a week in Augusta, Ga., with our grandchildren was a dizzying experience. The big occasion this time was grandson Grayson's first birthday.

The party was a small family affair with just us, his mom and dad, sister, Aunt Fisha and Uncle Nik and favorite babysitter Kim.

Daughter Lindsay and I went to one of those party stores in a strip mall and bought dinosaur balloons and streamers. Then we grabbed a dozen overly frosted cupcakes at the cake store down the street.

I was charged with making fried chicken, a ritual we've developed for mother-in-law visits to our children in the South. Both the guys love fried chicken, but their wives won't make it because it's not good for them. When we visit, however, all bets are off, and I've learned to bribe my way into their hearts and stomachs with fried chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy and green beans.

Grayson did not partake of this feast, however, because he's still resisting solid food — much to his daycare center's dismay. His 4-year-old sister tried a bite of chicken but she doesn't eat much meat. Her preferred meal is a grilled cheese and her mom made

her one of those.

Everyone got their favorite cupcake, from German chocolate to strawberry. Grandson got a strawberry one.

He stared at it for a while, then decided to pat it. He soon was covered in crumbs and icing as everyone took pictures. We're going to save those for blackmail when he gets old enough to date.

Grayson wasn't quite ready to walk on his own when we were there in early May. He held on to something most of the time and occasionally took several steps unaided, but mostly his walking style was to grab someone's leg and walk around them in a circle, then sit down.

The granddaughter was something else, however. She was a blur. Run, jump, skip.

She's a perpetual motion machine until she runs out of gas. Unfortunately, she has a bigger tank than I do, so she had both Steve and me worn out pretty much all the time.

One especially busy day we took her to the zoo in Columbia, S.C., an hour away, just the three of us. Mom and Dad had to work and baby brother went to daycare.

We took off at midmorning. First stop was the drive-in, where

we got burgers and she got fries and a chocolate shake. Nothing like a little sugar to slow an active 4-year-old down, right?

We did see a couple of animals at the zoo, but mostly we rode the carousel and the little train. Remember, I said this was a dizzying trip. All I did was go in circles.

After the third trip around on the merry-go-round, I suggested we go see the tigers. She reluctantly agreed, but the tigers were hiding. One lady said she'd been there since 9 a.m. with her young son and still hadn't seen them.

My thought was, "Goodness, lady, it's 3 p.m., go find something else to look at." But I didn't say anything.

After about an hour, five carousel rides, two train rides and the tough decision of whether to get the stuffed snake or the giraffe toy as a souvenir, Taylor was ready to go home.

All in all, it was a fun trip, both to the zoo and to Augusta.

Lindsay sent us a short video on Sunday showing grandson running across the living room at the grandparents' house near Chicago, Brad's folks. Looks like we'll need another seat on the carousel when we visit in the fall.

Casey's Comments

Ann B. Davis



By Casey McCormick

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It's a sad thing that we often don't give people much thought until they are gone.

Ann B. Davis passed this last Sunday at the age of 88. She is best remembered for her role of Alice, the housekeeper, on the television show The Brady Bunch. The original program lasted from 1969 to 1974, although several spin-offs followed.

There was something about the characters of that series that we could connect to. Many of the situations the kids and parents dealt with seemed to hit

close to home, at least at our house it did. Along with that there was the similarity of humor throughout.

Davis's portrayal of Alice made her inviting and her comic talent came through. That probably explains how she won two Emmys earlier as a supporting actress in a comedy series with the Bob Cummings Show before becoming Alice.

In 1972 and 1973 she also played in the Broadway musi-

cal No, No, Nanette. The show included the songs, "Tea for Two" and "I Want to Be Happy." Luckily the production traveled and our parents took us to see it when it came to Denver.

It was a treat to see a familiar tv star play in a live performance and this certainly helped cement the bond with her fans.

And, for the record, the middle initial "B" stood for "Bradford."

Iron is dangerous

The Number 1 cause of poisoning deaths in children under age 6 is something most parents would never guess: iron.

An accidental iron overdose often the result of "trying" a parent's iron pills can seriously harm or even kill a child, said Mike Bradshaw, K-State Research and Extension health and safety specialist.

• "Over the past 10 years, more than 110,000 such overdoses have

been reported. They have led to 33 youngsters' deaths," Bradshaw said.

• Parents and other caretakers should keep all medicines out of children's sight, as well as out of reach, he advised.

• "And keep iron tablets in their original container with the lid tightly closed. Child-resistant packaging can't work without our help," Bradshaw said.

GOD SAYS
He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.
Proverbs 13:20

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