

commentary

from other pens...

Gov. Graves' legacy as leader lies in tatters

The Iola Register on Gov. Bill Graves' legacy:

As the 2002 session of the Kansas Legislature sputters to a close, Gov. Bill Graves' reputation as a political leader lies in tatters.

Riding the crest of a wave of prosperity that lasted six years, Gov. Graves became immensely popular as a tax cutter who also was able to achieve unified governance of the state's higher education system and a new 10-year transportation program...

But those achievements began to lose their luster last year and seem hollow to the core as final months of his eight-year reign dwindle down...

It is unfair, of course, to give Gov. Graves all the blame for the downward course of Kansas government these past two years. The legislators who agreed to deficit spending last year when tax collections began to lag and who promised to spend money in the out years for higher education and highways based on extravagant revenue projections, share the responsibility — as does the slowdown in the state's economy.

These caveats won't matter much when the governor's reign ends and Kansans sum it up. What happened, happened on his watch. When he hands the baton off, where will Kansas stand?

The short answer is "under siege, scrambling for cover before 2003 hits."

But Gov. Graves doesn't have to exit on a down note.

He could use the remaining seven months of this final year tackling the big problems Kansas faces...

It would be a positive way to end a negative year.

The Wichita Eagle on the budget debate in the Kansas House:

Some members of the deadlocked Kansas House surely believe they are acting on principle rather than refusing to act out of partisanship.

Conservative Republicans don't want to raise taxes — no matter the circumstances or consequences.

Democrats, vastly outnumbered, don't want to raise taxes that they view as unfairly burdening low-income Kansans, preferring higher income taxes to higher sales and cigarette taxes.

Such convictions are admirable in theory. And they may play well in re-election later this year. But as legislators drag out the session ... they are putting their state's operation at risk — at the wasteful cost of an estimated \$50,000 per extra day of the session.

The House holdouts have made their point. It's past time to ... cut a deal to raise the necessary extra revenue, and go home.

In truth, the motives behind this costly obstinacy may not be so pure. Senate President Dave Kerr, R-Hutchinson, has said that legislators who are standing in the way of adjournment privately "admit that gubernatorial politics are entering into it. They brag to us."

The thinking is that the messier the session, the better it will stand as testament to the need for Kansas voters to try something other than the mild-mannered moderate GOP leadership ... namely conservative Tim Shallenburger or Democrat Kathleen Sebelius.

Then there's the blame game: The GOP's two wings and the Democratic camp each believe they're innocent victims of the other groups' hypocrisy.

Whatever the motives, the outcome is the same: a near legislative train wreck ...

The pleas for the necessity of tax increases have bombarded House members for months now, coming from Mr. Graves, House leadership and assorted Capitol watchers. The only Kansans who may still have the power of persuasion are constituents.

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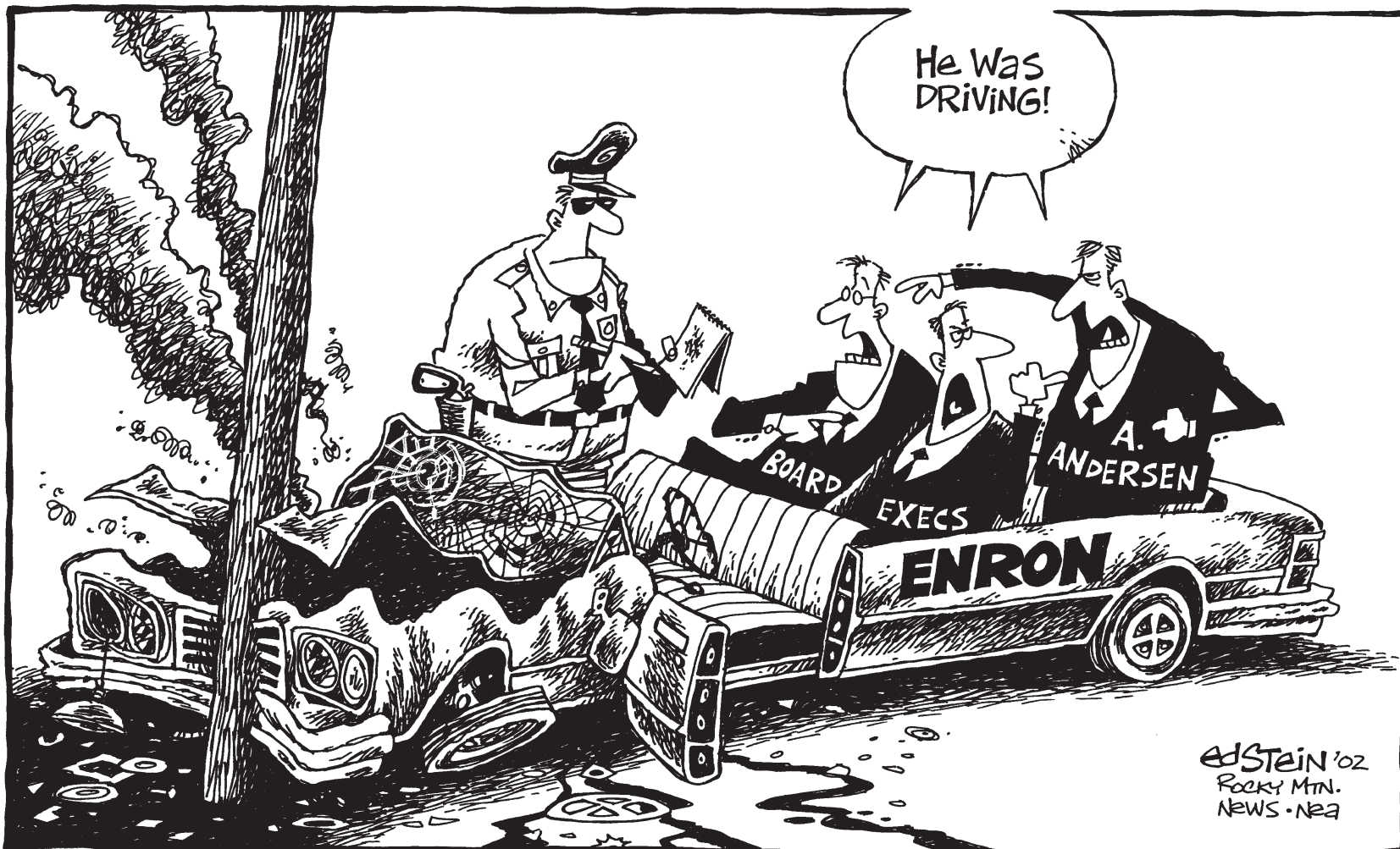
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Eyes open on May, June, July, August and Autumn

April's kittens have their eyes open now and are beginning to move around.

We still don't see much of them, because she keeps them in the back of the very narrow, dark closet where we store suitcases.

For the last week, one of us has gotten down on his or her stomach and crawled into the back of the closet and handed out the five little bundles of fur to the other, who puts them tenderly on our bed.

As soon as we have all five kittens removed from their nest, we get on the bed and pet and play with them.

Everyone has been asking what we are calling the little ones.

I figure they'll each get a new name when they go to their permanent homes, but for now, I'm calling them May, June, July, August and Autumn.

May, June and July are calico females. August and Autumn are the boys. Having calicos helped to determine sex, since it's really hard to figure out such little bundles of fur. Since calicos are almost always female, the only two we had to check were the yellow tabbies.

August is a standard yellow tabby and Autumn is sort of blond. He looks just like his mama.



cynthia
haynes

• open season

While we only get a few minutes each day with the kittens, a few personality traits are emerging.

May is the adventuresome one. She takes off as soon as she hits the bed and we have to watch that she doesn't crawl right off the end.

Last week on a nice sunny day, I opened the closet just to see the little ones and was doing those cooing noises girls make when they see any kind of baby. May heard me and was ready to play. She started right out towards me, trying to climb over the suitcases. She fell between two and I had to rescue her. She's got good, healthy lungs though.

Autumn is the biggest of the litter. He is also the laziest, but if you scratch his belly, he'll roll over and just enjoy it.

Several years ago, we had a 21-pound cat named Spot. Spot's claim to fame was he made a great

doorstop. I think the Autumn may be planning on taking his place.

August is the runt of the litter. He was the smallest but is gaining weight nicely and is inquisitive and noisy.

I haven't noticed anything special about the other two girls, but I think that July is the prettiest. She's a very nice mixture of black, white and yellow spots.

After about five minutes, April can't take it any more. She grabs one of the kittens by the scruff of its neck and hauls it back to the nest. Then she returns for another and another. She never seems to try to "save" more than three. She's a little cat and maybe that's all she can handle.

We always give the last two back by kneeling down and wiggling to the back of the closet with one kitten at a time.

Our son Lacy will take one kitten and a friend has asked for one of the males. That leaves three. They're going fast folks. Better get your order in while they last.

The price is right — free — and they'll be ready for their new homes in about a month.

Remember, call (785) 475-2206. Take two; they're small.

Reality of rumors better than 'telephone game'

Anyone who has played the "telephone game" understands that it's possible for the truth to become severely distorted as it's passed on from person to person.

The popular kids' game starts with a group of children sitting in a circle. One child thinks of a message and whispers it to the kid sitting next to him. The message is passed around the circle that way until it comes back to the one who originally thought of it.

The game is fun because the message is usually way different after it has been passed around the circle, and everyone has a good laugh when they hear the difference.

The message might have started, "I like to make cakes," and end up, "Hike to fake rakes."

The telephone game teaches kids that what you hear isn't always what was said, and may not even resemble the truth. Or, don't believe everything you hear.

Adults play a more advanced version every day, and some of us don't remember the moral it's supposed to teach.

Working at a newspaper, I often hear the message after it has gone around the circle. Then it's my job to figure out what the truth is.

The craziest rumor I've ever heard is when a woman came into the Oberlin newspaper office, where I used to work, to say a group of illegal aliens had been caught poaching deer from an airplane.



rachel
miscall

• unraveling

After a little investigating, I discovered the rumor was based on a real story that had been wildly distorted.

What actually happened was that some college buddies of a man who lived in Decatur County illegally bought a hunting license using his name and then went out and bagged a couple of deer. The game warden found out about it and arrested the group.

The men weren't illegal aliens, but a couple of them were from New Mexico, and their friend in Decatur County was related to a man who owned a helicopter — thus the airplane part of the rumor.

It happens in Goodland, too.

In March, a teen-ager accidentally ran her car into a woman crossing the street in front of the newspaper office. The teen-ager was turning a corner, so she wasn't driving very fast, and though the woman was taken to the hospital, she wasn't severely injured.

I recently heard a rumor that the woman had died and the teen-ager was being charged with vehicular homicide. I doubt it's true, since a couple of co-workers said they've seen the supposedly-dead

woman walking down the street.

Some rumors I hear have no basis in truth at all. Many of those involve the giant sunflower painting in southeast Goodland.

Before the huge replica of a Van Gogh sunflower painting went up, I heard that the fiberglass canvas had fallen over and shattered into a million pieces. That rumor actually had some truth to it, because the painting was damaged a little when it was being mounted on the steel frame.

Other rumors I can't believe are that there are bullet holes in the painting, someone ran into it with their car and that it's being taken down because it's not attracting enough people.

One I know for sure isn't true is that the painter — Cameron Cross from Canada — is in jail for copyright infringement. First of all, you can't go to jail for that. Second, I told him the rumor while he was standing in his living room.

He laughed and said something like, "How did that rumor get started?"

Sometimes it's impossible to trace a rumor's roots. Once a man told me that he had heard I was planning to marry a man from Colorado with a flashy red car — and that was *before* I got engaged.

I've been considering starting a rumor just to see if it'll be distorted by the time it makes its way back to me.

Sort of like the telephone game, except I'd probably be the only one laughing.



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