

commentary

from our viewpoint...

Sebelius should allow sunshine into meetings

Not even waiting to be sworn into office, governor-elect Kathleen Sebelius has shown she has little regard for one basic principle of democracy.

After winning the election handily this month, she wasted no time naming team leaders for her promised review of state government.

Though state-sponsored and at least party state financed, she said meetings of her team could be conducted behind closed doors.

Say that again?

Closed to the public.

She trots out the same old tired excuses used by every other public officials who tries to close a meeting:

“We want to make sure that they can operate with as much independence and ingenuity as possible,” the governor-elect said, “and sometimes that’s a bit hampered if they’re being observed by people they may be critical of.”

In other words:

- The task force members are so timid they can’t criticize state agencies in the open.

- They have things to say they’re embarrassed by.

- The people of Kansas don’t deserve to know what’s going on, or aren’t smart enough to understand it.

- They want to spring a package on us without any petty arguments and bickering by those who don’t agree.

- The new governor and her team know what’s best for us, so why don’t we just sit back and wait for it?

Oh, that’s democracy in action.

Ms. Sebelius is making a terrible mistake here. In fact, you could argue that closed meetings by a state-sponsored committee would be illegal under the state Open Meetings Act, the so-called Sunshine Law.

If the Legislature were setting up the panels, the law would require the sessions to be open. But the real point isn’t legality; it’s what’s right.

This entire process ought to be conducted out in the open, where the entire state can watch and evaluate it.

What Ms. Sebelius is saying, simply, is that she doesn’t trust us to understand what is going on. That’s wrong.

It’s our state, not hers, and we deserve to know what these people are up to. If the effort really is aimed at reshaping state government and making it more efficient, the governor-elect has nothing to fear from openness.

If she truly believes that she, and her team, know what’s best for us, she should reverse her stand and make these meetings open.

It might be more efficient to draw up a plan in closed sessions. That’s how it’s done in your average dictatorship. But it’s not the best way, not the way we would like to see Kansas operate. It’s no way for a governor to start her term.

Open the meetings, Ms. Sebelius, and let the sun shine in. — *Steve Haynes*

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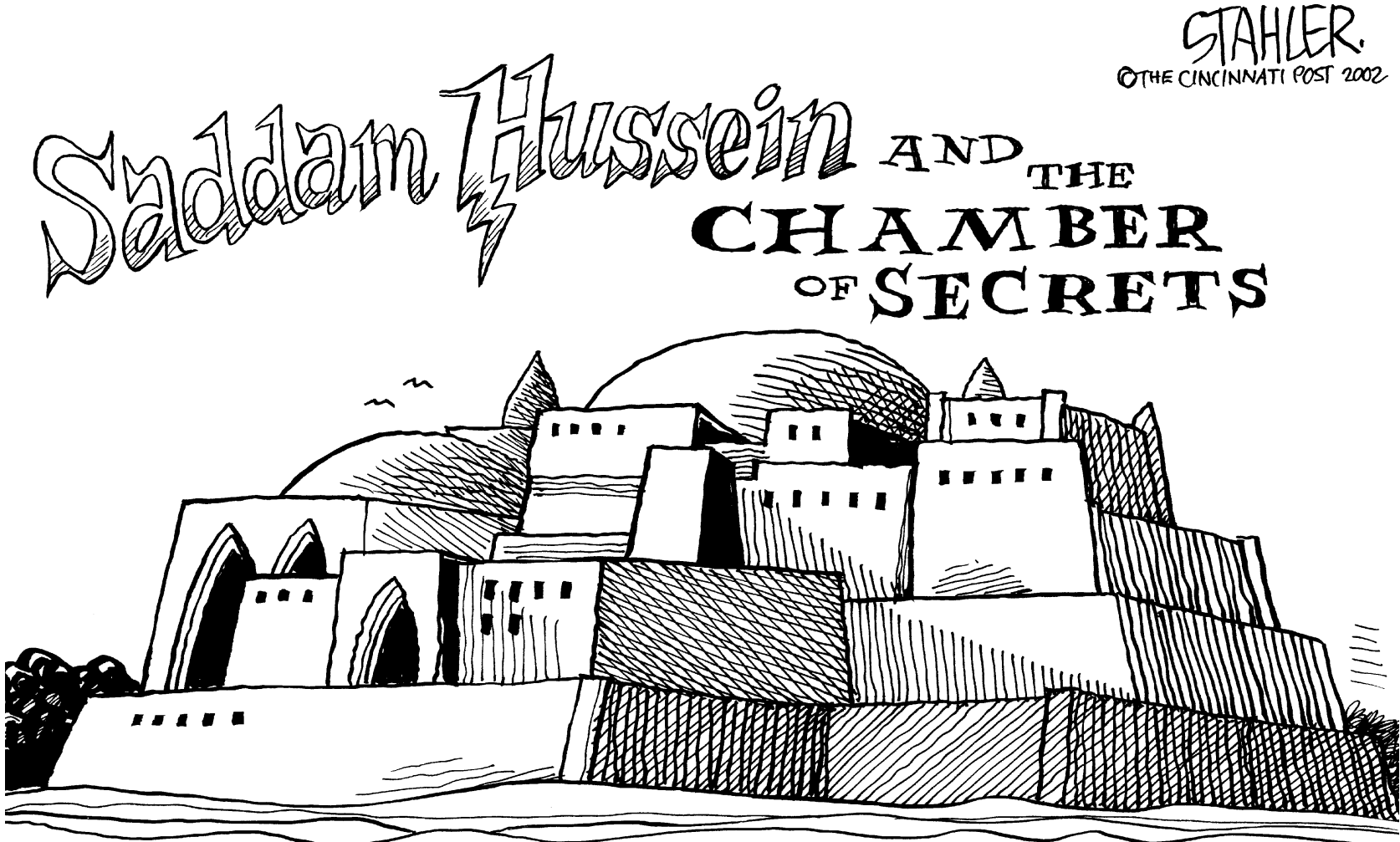
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Trouble follows when specific routine is disrupted

We’ve had a little truck trouble lately.

It’s kind of embarrassing, since both incidents were caused by sheer stupidity — first mine and then my husband’s.

I ran out of gas, and it was all my own fault.

I could blame Pat, but since she rescued me, and since I knew I needed gas, she’s not to blame.

I just thought I could get a little bit farther. If I could have just gotten over one more hill, it was all downhill to town.

We always fill the newspaper delivery truck with gas when we return from a run. It’s a rule I instituted years ago.

But last month, the Oberlin delivery truck was hauling our Norton paper. Normally, we only run on Tuesdays. That week, we had four runs. Steve Smith, our regular driver, was off taking care of his wife, who was about to have a baby.

Pat went on Monday. I had Tuesday and Karla had Wednesday. On Friday, Steve Smith was back on the road.

Pat took off for Goodland and picked up the Norton papers, then delivered them to Norton and came back to Oberlin. She forgot to fuel the truck.



cynthia haynes

• open season

Tuesday morning, I immediately noticed that the tank wasn’t full, but knew that I could easily get to Goodland to pick up the Oberlin papers.

I was in a hurry, and when I left Goodland, I didn’t stop for gas, assuming that I could probably get back to Oberlin on what was left.

Assuming and probably were not good.

At Selden, the red fuel light went on, but the tank wasn’t out yet. I ran out one hill before Oberlin. If I could have just made that last hill, I probably would have had enough fuel to coast into town and up to the gas stations.

So it would have been a three-mile coast — so what.

I didn’t make it. It was drizzling and I was late, but I did have my cell phone.

Pat answered my plea and came immediately

with a can of gas to get me on my way.

What I learned: When the little needle on the gas tank hits the red E, it isn’t kidding. There isn’t another gallon in there. There isn’t another hill’s worth and trucks don’t run well on good intentions.

That was my lesson.

Steve was luckier.

We had just gotten out of the car on the road into Sappa Park about a week ago and started walking when it started to rain. Steve had left his coat in the truck about a block back.

At that point he also remembered that he had locked the doors and left the keys in the truck.

No, he hadn’t brought another set. What about me?

I hadn’t even brought my purse. I was, however, wearing my coat.

We turned around and walked back to the truck, dodging the droplets.

Some people have just dumb luck.

The truck window was down.

Steve not only retrieved his keys and coat, he got the window rolled up.

Oh well, town was just over the next hill.

The Apostle Paul made changes and sacrifices

Most people are at least somewhat familiar with the apostle Paul’s letters to individuals and congregations which are recorded in the Bible, but some may be unaware of the changes the apostle made in his life to become a Christian.

The Bible at Acts 23:6 says, “Now when Paul took note that the one part was of Sadducees but the other part of Pharisees, he proceeded to cry out in the Sanhedrin, ‘Men, brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees.’”

Paul’s parents were of the powerful religious leaders of the day, the Pharisees. He would have had power, prestige and was likely wealthy, as the Bible said he was educated by Gamaliel at Acts 22:3. This indicates he was from a prominent family and received what would today be a university education. He spoke at least Hebrew and Greek fluently.

As a man zealous for Jewish traditions, Paul persecuted and even killed Christians as he himself indicated at Acts 22:4, 5. That scripture says, “And I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and handing over to prisons both men and women, as both the high priest and all the assembly of older men can bear me witness. From them I also procured letters to the brothers in Damascus, and I was on my way to bring also those who were there bound to Jerusalem to be punished.”

Paul, also known as Saul, took part in stoning Stephen to death as indicated in Acts 7: 58, 59: “And after throwing him (Stephen) out of the city, they began casting stones at him. And the witnesses laid down their outer garments at the feet of a young man called Saul. And they went on casting stones at Stephen as he made appeal and said, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’”

How did the man, Saul, who killed and imprisoned Christians become a Christian himself? Acts 22: 6-11 tells us Paul had a vision while traveling near Damascus and that a great light flashed out of heaven and a voice out of heaven asked him, “Why are you persecuting me?”

When Saul asked who he was, the voice said, “I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.”

Saul was blinded and had to be led to Damascus



sharon corcoran

• use it or lose it

where he was taken to Ananias, who restored his sight.

In Acts 22:14-16, Ananias said, “The God of our forefathers has chosen you to come to know his will and to see the righteous one and to hear the voice of his mouth, because you are to be a witness for him to all men of things you have seen and heard. And now why are you delaying? Rise, get baptized and wash your sins away by your calling upon his name.”

After Saul’s conversion, he began an entirely different lifestyle. He went from a man of wealth and influence to being part of a group that is hated, persecuted and, at times, put to death. He went from being a killer of Christians to risking his own life for Christianity.

In 2 Corinthians 6: 4-6, Paul says, “But in every way we recommend ourselves as God’s ministers, by the endurance of much, by difficulties, by beatings, by prisons, by disorders, by labors, by sleepless nights, by times without food, by purity, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by holy spirit, by love free from hypocrisy.”

Paul had endured much as a Christian and had built such fine qualities as love, kindness, long-suffering and purity. The former murderer of Christians had been reformed.

Why did he tell other Christians they recommend themselves as ministers by enduring such hardships? When Christians in the first century were willing to put forth such effort and suffer from hunger and maltreatment, they demonstrated how important God’s will was in their lives.

None of those Christians wanted to do without food, be imprisoned or suffer beatings, but they would not give up preaching, as Jesus had commanded them, in order to avoid such suffering.

Likewise, Christians today have to make sacrifices in order to have time for God. Television

shows, movies and advertising entice many people to want wealth and prominence and to desire immoral relationships.

But, Christians will not have time for God while working overtime to pay for the biggest house, the fanciest car or the most new gadgets and won’t have room for God in their lives while deliberately disobeying his commandments.

To be a Christian requires sacrificing personal desires when they conflict with God’s commandments or require more time to fulfill than we can spare. But being a Christian is not merely about suffering.

Psalm 97: 11 says, “Light itself has flashed up for the righteous one, and rejoicing even for the one upright in heart.”

Christians gain spiritual light from reading and understanding God’s word in the Bible and have many reasons to rejoice. We can also enjoy the company of fellow Christians, who are often referred to in the Bible as brothers.

Psalm 133: 1 says, “Look! How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!”

Being a Christian requires effort and sacrifice, but it brings rewards, not the least of which is a long and rewarding future.

John 17: 3 says, “This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ.”

The apostle Paul sacrificed a prominent position and wealth to be a Christian, and we will likewise have to make sacrifices to be Christians today. But, Paul knew it was worth it, and gaining knowledge from the Bible will help us see it’s worth today.

berry’s world

