

from our viewpoint...

Kansas missed boat on Interstate system

Kansas missed the boat when other states started expanding their freeways and expressways beyond the basic Interstate system.

Today, a lot the traffic goes through one neighboring state or another, and a lot of money flows with it.

The federal government and the states laid out the Interstate system in the 1950s. It's been both a curse and a blessing, but many states saw that it did not plug all the gaps in the road grid.

Nearly 30 years ago under Gov. Bob Bennett, Kansas drew a freeway system that connected the dots. It included four-lane roads south to Pittsburg and Tulsa from Kansas City, over to Paola, and west from St. Joseph along U.S. 36, among others. A few segments were built, but when times got tough in the 1980s, these were stranded, and remain today as two-lane, limited access curiosities.

The Kansas highway system nearly fell apart in those years. The Department of Transportation was occupied with patching potholes and just preserving what it had. It took the visionary Gov. Mike Hayden to raise the gas tax and save our roads — and it cost him his job.

But the Kansas freeway plan died then. Since those days, it's taken a Herculean effort just to complete a few short stretches of four-lane road, including U.S. 81 north to Nebraska as an extension of I-135, and K-10 from Kansas City to Lawrence.

South out of Kansas City, Missouri completed an expressway along U.S. 71, and today, the Tulsa traffic, along with much freight to the West Coast, flows on the east side of the state line. Little thought it given to parallel U.S. 69, the shorter and more attractive route.

North, I-29 carries the load through Missouri and Iowa. Kansas still lacks a decent route to Omaha, and Nebraska has not seen the potential for an expressway along U.S. 75 north out of Topeka. Kansas does have an expressway, but it stops at the door to a casino.

U.S 54 west of Wichita and U.S. 50 west from Newton and Hutchinson have great potential, but there are no plans to widen either anytime soon. East-west traffic slips off to the south, through Oklahoma.

And there is U.S. 36 across northern Kansas, once part of the freeway plan as far west as Bellville. I-80 thorough Nebraska runs near capacity, and I-70 is overcrowded in eastern Kansas. Traffic needs a bypass route. Missouri has improved U.S. 36 across three-fourth of the state, but Kansas is barely starting.

Our highway engineers, burdened by the cost of an extensive, and expensive, road system, shudder to think about expansion. Their mantra is, "Wait until the traffic comes."

But sometimes, you have to build it, and they will come.

If you want to snare traffic and build business, it seems, you have to put the cart before the horse. — *Steve Haynes*

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I have a curious nature about everything

I don't know about you, but I have a curious nature.

If I'm not at the steering wheel, I can drive the driver crazy asking questions about what I'm seeing. I wonder about crazy spelling on signs, I wonder why streets are named as they are, I wonder why someone would paint their home a bright color, etc.

Once I was driving with a friend, asking several questions over a period of time. Then I asked something, and he gave me some outrageous answer. I said, "I don't believe that." And he said, "Well, I got tired of saying, 'I don't know.'" I took the hint and kept my questioning to myself for the rest of the ride.

But don't you wonder about some things, too?

I realize that there are often good reasons behind what people do; I guess I'd just like to know what they are.

Some things I wonder about:

Why do they call the documents written by lawyers for the court "briefs." They never are!

Why doesn't the ink run through the thin paper when Bibles are printed? I can't prevent that when I use a highlighter.

Why do people stop at the state line going into Colorado to take pictures of their families under the sign? I never see that scene when people go into Kansas from Colorado.

I wonder if doctors ever stop practicing and begin to get it right.



lorna
gt

• commentary

Why do so many older people waddle back and forth sideways as they walk?

Why young people are educated in almost reverse proportion to the amount of money we pour into public schools? It seems educators think the only solution to students' poor grades is to get more money from the government.

Why do some people turn away from God when they have problems? It seems like they ought to recognize their own inability to handle them and be willing to ask for help.

Why is soda called "pop"? The Midwest seems to use that popular name for soft drinks more than other parts of the country. Maybe it's because we're simple folk, and "pop" is the sound of the bottle being opened.

We live in a wonderful world. There are so many things about which to wonder. There are miraculous things happening around us all the time. Yet too many of us are too busy with humdrum lives to notice. God asks us to approach life like little children. The only way we learn is to observe and to question. Are we too proud to admit we don't know everything?

As I share the idea of "wonder," I'd like to

share this e-mail I received in 2002:

"A church-goer wrote a letter to the editor of the newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church very Sunday. 'I've gone for 30 years now,' he wrote, 'and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So I think I'm wasting my time, and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all.'

"This started a real controversy in the Letters to the Editor column. — much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher:

"I've been married for 30 years now. In that time, my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this: They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me those meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today.'

"When you are down to nothing, God is up to something! Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible! Thank God for our physical AND our spiritual nourishment."

Why not open your eyes, do a little wondering? Who knows what questions you might have answered? Who knows what miracles you might see?

Hard to get cats used to their new door

Steve warned me, but as usual, I just smiled and went ahead with my plans.

He said that if I had a cat door put into the house, I would find all sorts of creepies, crawlies and birdies in my house.

I shrugged. I wanted a way for the cats to get back in if they got left outside and we were gone.

So we had the little plastic flap installed.

The back door would have been a good spot, but it wasn't practical. A screen door moves back and forth across the French doors, blocking one or the other at all times. Besides, I decided that would be ugly.

I looked around. I really wanted a pet door beside the house through the old coal chute. Steve and the contractor shook their heads. They said the pet door we had purchased wouldn't fit where the coal chute had been, and besides the inside part would be under the basement stairs with no exit to either the basement or the upstairs. Not a good solution.

OK, I looked around some more, and found a basement window that came out onto a small ledge which would be an easy jump to the top of a cabinet near the washer and dryer.

That was doable, and was done did.

Next we had to convince the cats to use the pet door.

It looked easy enough to grab one and push it through. I did that with April Alice. She was uncooperative and just plain confused.

Next I tried it with Molly Monster.



cynthia
haynes

• open season

She was uncooperative, obstinate and stronger than an unhappy boa constrictor. She has broad shoulders and works out regularly. (A two-mile walk a couple of times a week does wonders for a cat's physique.)

I could not push, prod, force, cajole or propel her through that little flap of plastic. She planted all four feet and did a bull terrier imitation.

I gave up.

The next day, Steve gave April Alice another lesson. She seemed just as confused as before, but by the end of the week she had the door figured out and so did Miss Monster.

I knew this on Saturday when I let them both out and they were at the back door again in 10 minutes, demanding to be let out again. This went on most of the day. It was obviously a great game.

I have yet to discover if they know how to use the pet door to get out, but they sure know how to get in.

About three days after our Saturday game, I got up to find a dead bird in my kitchen and feathers all over the floor. (This was the day company was coming, naturally.)

Then last week, two weeks after installing the pet door, I discovered a dead dove in my upstairs bedroom. (Well, at least it was in season.) There was dove blood all over one of Steve's T-shirts.

I'm not sure which cat is the mighty hunter, but Steve said he's just glad they haven't brought anything alive into the house so far.

I think he still remembers the cat that brought a live rat through our front door.

Loud screaming from our house will indicate a repeat performance

PS: I think that the bird population is stupider in the spring and fall, so I'm hoping that the depredations on the flock will cease once it gets cold.

Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: star-news@nw-kansas.com.

garfield

