

Governor has good idea for getting more sales tax

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius has put forth one good idea for improving the state's revenue and boosting business in Main Street Kansas. The only problem is, it'll take four to five years to see any money.

The new governor has asked the Legislature to change the state's sales tax law to make it match other states in definitions of what's taxable and other details. That's a necessity if states are going to help each other collect sales tax on Internet and catalog sales.

It's about time Internet sales were taxed. As it stands today, Amazon.com and other Internet dealers, large and small, are protected by federal law from state and local sales taxes.

President Bush has argued against taxing such sales, arguing that it would curb the growth of the Internet. Bull.

But if growth of the Internet comes at the price of the health of our existing retailers, what is the benefit?

It's hard enough already to make a living on Main Street or out in the strip mall. Now they want to give another advantage to big-money Internet firms?

Think of what that can do, in a few years, to the local economy, the local job market and the local tax base.

Is it fair that when you go across the street to the hardware store, you pay 5-7 percent sales tax (more in some states), but when you

go to your computer and order the same merchandise, you don't?

Ask the owner of your hardware store what he thinks. He's using the same Internet to order the same stuff, plus he has all the expense of maintaining his store, stock and employees so it'll be on hand when you need it.

Kansas actually has a law requiring people to pay "compensating use tax" on anything bought out of state where no tax is paid. Unless it's something big enough to hit the state's radar, like a car, though, it's almost impossible to collect. When was the last time you ordered merchandise and then filed a use tax return with Kansas?

What the governor is asking here is not for any unfair advantage for "bricks-and-mortar" merchants. She wants a level playing field. She wants to plug a big hole in the state's tax collections.

Republican leaders are sympathetic, but as House Speaker Doug Mays points out, they can't do much for Ms. Sebelius this year. It'll take an act of Congress, as they say, to solve the problem, and there is much opposition to that. It's fueled, as usual, by special interests who are raking in big, tax-free bucks off the Internet.

Good luck, governor. In the meantime, we'd better find some other way to make money for the state.

— Steve Haynes

Troubleshooters are special

It takes a special breed to troubleshoot computers, people who enjoy banging their heads against the wall and staring at a monitor until their eyeballs turn to mush.

I know; I've done it. This time, though, I want to brag a little about the work our computer guys put in over the weekend. I had other fish to fry, so I didn't stay with them. That gives me space to brag.

There's Tom, who is in charge of all things Internet. He is the expert on Windows, connections, viruses, software problems and Internet activity.

Then there is Evan, the Macintosh guru, keeper of the keys (and ip addresses), wizard of problems and trouble-shooter of networks.

On a good day, they can walk up to a balky machine, scratch behind their ear, change a setting or flip a switch, and voila!, it runs.

I thought they had about met their match on Friday, though. The e-mail server for [nwkansas.com](http://www.nwkansas.com) was bogged down, stashing mail rather than delivering it, running two or more days behind.

For no apparent reason. Friday, they tried new programs and patches with no success. More recent versions of the server, new installations of the same version and various other fixes all ran the same way: Slowly. Very slowly.

At one point, we decided the domain name setup must be wrong, though that made no sense. It had been working fine the week before. Evan tried to change the "ip" numbers, and the server immediately began rejecting all the stored e-mail, hundreds of messages. It sent them all back to the senders so quickly, they were gone before we realized what was happening.



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes

shaynes@nwkansas.com

But the server was no longer backlogged.

Or so we thought. Then we tried checking the hard drives. The main server drive didn't exactly show bad. The drive checker just sort of blew up when it got to it. It wouldn't check it at all.

Evan thought that was suspicious. He moved everything to the secondary drive and started the server up again. It seemed to be running. He and Tom went home about 10 p.m. Friday.

I left about 8, driving from Goodland to McCook to pick up an ad that was lost in the e-mail. By the time I got to Oberlin, the message had come through. I didn't have to drive the ad back to Goodland.

Saturday morning about 9, I called the office. Tom answered, a bad sign.

Seemed the server was bogged down overnight. Evan drove over from Colby.

They found that though they had moved the mail program to the No. 2 drive, it had found the old e-mail stash on the bad drive and was trying to deal it out.

At the same time, they tried a newer version of the e-mail program, which was Apple Internet Mail Server when we bought it, later was Eudora Internet Mail Server when Qualcomm had it, and now is maintained by some guy working in

his basement in New Zealand.

That worked, slowly, but caused problems for people who depend on mail relays. They complained. Evan changed the program back to the old one. That set off another round of bounced messages, hundreds of them, before it could be stopped. He sent an e-mail to the guy in New Zealand.

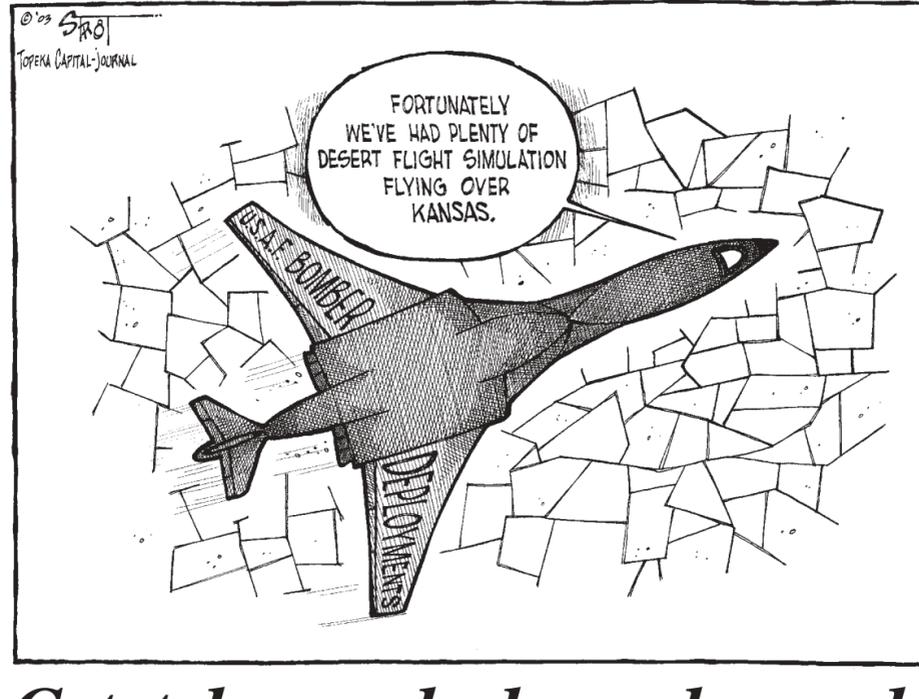
By late Saturday night, they had isolated the bad drive and removed it from the system. Things seemed to be working, but still slow. All the boys knew how to do was watch and wait.

It would be 24 hours, in fact, before the server caught up. It faced backlogs in all 18 mail databases (Why 18? Who knows?). One had grown from 4 kilobytes in size to 1.79 gigabytes, way bigger than any of the others.

But about 10 p.m. Sunday, the dam seemed to burst. Messages flowed, those that hadn't bounced. The 1.79 gigabyte file shrunk to 4k. And by midnight, the backlog was down from a peak of 85 hours to about 40 minutes.

Monday, it was gone. The guys think maybe it was the bad drive — if it really is bad. But they can't be too sure.

For now, the server is running. They're planning on going home at quitting time. And they have a very wary eye on the backlog.



Cats take over bed, couch, people

Cats to the right of me, cats to the left of me. I can't get up.

The cats have taken over my bed, the couch and any other place I might want to lie, sit or stand.

According to the book my children gave me for Christmas, "The Complete Cat Book," cats like to sleep in the warmest spot in the house, and they like company.

That would explain why there is always one sleeping on top of the heating vent in the dining room and one in the kitchen, and why there are always two or three in my bed every night.

The book warns that if you don't want your cat to sleep with you, you'd better close the door and not let it in even once.

I haven't figured out why anyone would not want their cat to sleep with them.

Cats are warm, furry and friendly — well mostly friendly.

I love having the cats sleeping with us, even if it means I can't move.

Most nights, I find one under the covers before I arrive. He usually moves to the foot of the bed about the time I try to use him to keep my cold feet warm.

Soon another will join us and oc-



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes

chaynes@nwkansas.com

asionally the third. By the time Steve gets in bed, there's almost no room for him, so he scoots the furry freeloaders around and takes over his three-fourths of the mattress.

The cats don't stay scooted. They are soon bracketing us like quotation marks, and woe be the human who needs to get up in the middle of the night.

They may only weigh 12 pounds each, but that's a really heavy dozen pounds when you're mostly asleep.

Sunday, Steve washed the bedding, including the blankets. I grabbed a blanket out of the dryer with the intention of remaking the bed. I didn't get any farther than the living room couch.

The blanket was warm, I was sleepy, the couch was there. And so was I for the next half hour.

I felt a slight disturbance in the

force, but was too far gone to notice.

When I awoke, I had Miss Molly sitting next to my head; April Alice, her sworn enemy, on my stomach; and Kubla Khan, the only guy of the bunch, near my feet. I was surrounded.

The disturbance was when the two females got on the blanket at once.

They hate each other, but must have called a truce so they could both take a nap.

I love naps and so do my furry friends. I saw a cartoon the other day that featured a cat that claimed that wakefulness was that annoying time between naps.

So true. Sometimes I wish I could sleep on top of the covers and help bracket a pair of humans. Wakefulness is so annoying.

It takes lots of work to be warm

People who burn wood in a stove or fireplace say it heats you twice: Once when you work to cut it, and then again when you burn it.

That was our experience with our first load of corn for our corn/pellet stove. We had to work hard to get it. Notice how I always say "we" when I talk of hard work. Jim does the work; I just talk about it.

Farmer friend David had about 50 bushels of dry corn he could spare so Jim spent Saturday readying a grain bin to haul our new heat source home. He welded supports; built a wood frame for the top; and winched it onto a flatbed trailer.

Sunday afternoon, Jim drove the pickup with the trailer while I dutifully followed to Dave and Charla's. She and I chatted while Jim and David augered the corn into the bin. After filling the bin and enjoying fresh-from-the-oven-brownies, we were ready for the trip home. But less than half a mile from their house, Jim pulled over to the side of the road.

Not only had the heavy load in the bin broken one of the supports, causing the bin to lean, but the trailer had a flat tire. There was nothing to do but leave it, go home and get the old work truck and another trailer, return, scoop the corn into it, change



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts

Out-Back@webtv.net

the tire; and finally bring it all home.

A quick call to David and Charla alerted them to the vehicles on the road. But wouldn't you know, by the time we got back David had brought a tractor equipped with a loader down to our stranded vehicle; unloaded as much grain as he could and was waiting on us. Between the two men it didn't take long to shift the grain from bin to trailer and change the tire. Meanwhile, Charla and I sat in their car visiting and supplying headlight illumination.

Now that's a real friend. Not only did David sell us the grain at a fair price but he helped load it, then he bailed us out when we got in trouble. He went the extra mile.

And now I don't know who worked harder for our fuel supply, us or David.

— ob —

Did you hear about the 5-year-old

son of a preacher who performed a funeral for a dead bird that the boy and his friends had found? The boys had secured a box and cotton batting, then dug a hole and made ready for the disposal of the deceased.

The boy began to say the appropriate prayers and with sonorous dignity intoned his version of what he thought his father always said. "Glory be unto the Faaather and unto the Sonnn....and into the hole he goes."

From the Bible

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. Proverbs 3:13.

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243

Phone: (785) 475-2206 Fax (785) 475-2800

E-mail: obherald@nwkansas.com

Nor'West Newspapers

STAFF

- Steve Haynes editor
- Kimberly Brandt news editor
- Mary Lou Olson society editor
- Judy Jordan proofreader
- Carolyn Kelley-Plotts columnist
- Cynthia Haynes business manager
- David Bergling advertising manager
- Sherry Bergling advertising
- Pat Cozad want ads/circulation
- Karla Jones, Doris Miller advertising production
- Steve Smith photo/page technician
- Della Klima, Marsha Morford mailing
- Jake Robinson page makeup/web design



Subscriptions: One year, \$28 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$32 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$35 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$20 extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243.

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri. (Also open most Saturdays when someone is in.)

Reader says traditions can change

To the Editor: We read our recent *Oberlin Herald* with excitement at the opportunity for a new mascot through the consolidation of the schools in Decatur County.

Tradition is difficult to change. Imagine those families who are giving up the school of their heritage; what would it mean to them to be welcomed by feeling like there was a true consolidation?

From an outsider's standpoint, the mascot was a serious issue we had to think about when considering our move to Oberlin. In conversations with other newcomers, we discovered the same sentiment. Has the mascot kept some away?

From our point of view, there are two possible issues: (1) the term "Red Devils" could represent a racial slur toward Native Americans; or (2) like our favorite writer Grant Reichert mentioned, the Red Devil could also be looked upon as Satan (it certainly looks like him — Satan, not Grant). It seems that by adopting a new mascot, you may be averting a racial or religious lawsuit

Letters to the Editor

in the future. It is something to think about.

Thanks for hearing us out, and please make a place for Grant's articles in the new paper format. Give him a college scholarship and get him to keep writing! (Thanks for the entertainment, Grant.)

We miss you all. Yes, the mall is closer now, but we don't know anyone at the grocery store or the foot-

ball games and you can't put a price on that. May God bless you all.

Eric and Cindy Scott
7245 College Street
Lima, N.Y. 14485

EDITOR'S NOTE: There is always room for Grant's column, but the Decatur Dictator page (with that Red Devil logo) usually does not appear during school breaks.

Writer for consolidation

To the Editor: Is our school board color blind?

If a merger happened, the students would be the biggest winners. They would make new friends, have bigger and better sports teams, and maybe some new classes.

Yes, some jobs may be lost, but the government pays the schools by the student. If there are more kids, there is more money. They probably

will have to hire more teachers and maybe create new classes. If the kids come, so will their parents and their wallets. They will fill up with gas, have lunch, and probably do some shopping.

We, the people, will make new friends. This is a win-win for everyone. Wake up school board; get over your color blindness and see the light.

Darrell Lutz, Oberlin