

## You might get a surprise if legals aren't published

Trying to turn nearly a century and a half of practice and tradition, Kansas cities want the Legislature to allow them to stop publishing ordinances, reports and the like in newspapers.

The Kansas League of Municipalities is pushing bills in the House and Senate to allow legal notices to be made on the Internet instead. The league claims the idea is to save money, but as usual, the public will be the losers.

It's not a good idea to abandon newspaper publication, for several reasons.

For one thing, in small-town Kansas, everyone reads the paper. And studies show that up to half the readers of a typical community newspaper regularly read the legal notices.

That's what the law intends when it requires publication of notices — a lot of people will see them.

That won't be so easy to accomplish on the Internet, where the city or county would be in control of its own web site. The legals might or might not be easy to find. There'd be no way to know how many people actually took the trouble to read them. And cities might or might not create easy links to legals they didn't want people to see.

With newspaper publication, the notices are "pushed" out to people. They go into homes and offices where people read the paper. Someone affected by a zoning change or a new ordinance has a chance to read about it and do something to change it.

That's democracy in action.

On the Internet, people first would have to know what to look for. They likely won't be browsing the city's homepage. So unless they know a sardine cannery is going in next door, they won't see the zoning change proposal.

Internet sites require users to dig into them to find items. Newspapers put them out for everyone to see.

And that's the best reason to keep things the way they are.

There's another, though. A typical western Kansas county might pay the local newspaper \$5,000-\$10,000 a year for legal notices. That may sound like a lot, but it's not much in the city or county budget. To the state's smallest newspapers, though, it might be the difference between survival and disaster.

Do our cities and counties need to save money so badly that they'll no longer support their newspaper? Will people be happy if the city saves a few bucks, but the local newspaper dies?

The money may not be important to big papers, but it sure is to the little ones. Like small, rural school districts, many are barely getting by.

Another thing, many Kansas newspapers already post legal notices on the Internet, so there's no need for cities to pay someone to do it also.

All in all, this is just not a good idea. It should not make it past hearings this week, not when the state has a fiscal crisis to worry about.

— Steve Haynes

## Goodland paper drops 'daily'

With the switch to twice-weekly publication and all-local news today, *The Goodland Star-News* joins a handful of other Kansas publications that made the plunge in the last couple of years.

*The Hiawatha World*, *Beloit Call*, *Russell County News* and *The Norton Telegram* all have dropped "daily" from their name in the last couple of years, all for about the same reason.

They weren't making any money.

There are still a handful of really small dailies in the state, those around 2,000 circulation. The *Concordia Blade-Empire* is the largest of the lot, reporting 2,357 circulation this fall. The next-largest paper is *The Clay Center Dispatch*, at 3,109, quite a jump.

It's hard to say how the surviving dailies are doing. Three of the nine are owned by the Liberty group, which maintains a ring of papers around Wichita, in Derby, Augusta and Pratt.



### Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
shaynes@nwkansan.com

Independent small dailies include *Concordia*, the *Tiller and Toiler* in Larned (love that name), *The Lyons Daily News*, *Council Grove Republican*, *Colby Free Press* and *The Columbus Daily Advocate*, way down in southeast Kansas.

It's hard to say what the future holds for these papers, even Colby, which is owned by our company (as is the *Norton Telegram*).

One Liberty paper, in Wellington,

tried to publish four days a week, but eventually returned to five. At present, there are no four-day papers in Kansas, and only a couple of three-day publications.

Twice-weekly papers are rare.

We changed because we had to, true enough, but also because of a firm conviction that what people really want from their newspaper is local news. And that's what we intend to provide.

## Teacher appreciates support

To the Editor:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Decatur Area Chamber of Commerce for the surprise and recognition at the recent Chamber banquet. It really means a lot to me and is an award in which I include my colleagues and friends.

It would be impossible to be an "outstanding educator" if I wasn't part of an outstanding school system and community. I have always felt that Oberlin has had more than its share of excellent teachers and administrators who challenge and encourage students to work. I have been proud to be part of this for the past 24 years and appreciate all the support I have been given.

### Letter to the Editor

It would be impossible without the efforts of many students who have been a part of the vocal program throughout the years. I have always expected Oberlin students to be a "cut above" the rest, and they have never disappointed me.

To Mary Lohoefer, the "world's best accompanist," my family and friends, again, my thanks for all you do. I consider myself a very blessed educator.

Susan Nelson, Oberlin



COLUMBIA - 2003

Heaven's constellation has been written on our hearts.

## Late arrivals don't get on board

We were expendable. The last ones.

"You must be the Hayneses," the smiling woman at the airport gate in Phoenix said. "We have to re-accommodate you. We had to close the door."

"Close the door?" I thought. "So open it and let us on. You knew we were late. It was your fault we were late. That plane hasn't left yet. The jetway's still in place. Open the door and let us on the plane. We're tired and we want to go home."

"You're the last two," the smiling woman was continuing. "We couldn't wait."

"Wait! Wait!" my brain cried. "That's all we've been doing all day."

We'd just spent a week in sunny Mexico. We'd been sunbathing, swimming in the ocean, deep-sea fishing and enjoying the countryside. It was a great vacation.

Now our most vivid memories of the trip were going to be not being allowed to board the aircraft in Phoenix that would take us to Denver so we could go home.

I was angry. Steve was angry. As we talked to the woman at the desk her smile became more and more fixed.

We didn't shout. We didn't threaten. We didn't even jump up and down.

But we did say that we were not happy with America West Airlines.

After several days — this happened on Thursday — I'm still not happy with America West. Not because I had to wait for another hour for the next flight. Not because I had to walk a country mile to get to the gate for the next flight to Denver. Not because they were mean to us.

I'm angry because they didn't tell us what was happening. They didn't tell us why things were — or in this case weren't happening. And they didn't help us when we needed it.

The plane was late getting into the airport in Mexico. We were on time, and sat and sat and sat waiting for it



### Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
chaynes@nwkansan.com

to arrive. When it finally did come in, we all crowded aboard and waited to take off.

Nothing happened. The captain came on the intercom and introduced himself and his crew and said that we would be late leaving the gate because a pair of passengers hadn't shown up and their luggage would have to be taken off the plane.

We sat. Suddenly, two rows up and on the other side of the plane a woman started yelling, "Those are our bags. They're taking our bags off the plane."

That got things moving. The stewardess ran to their seat and got their names and then checked with the captain.

Someone had missed pulling their boarding passes.

I had been wondering who would take their bags to an airport in Mexico and then not get on the plane. It's not as if they ran across the street for a taco. The airport is just like in the U.S. — It's in the middle of nowhere. A simple question over the intercom as to whether John and Jane Doe were aboard would have saved us 20 minutes.

After the bags were restowed, we taxied to the end of the runway and sat for another half hour in the Mexican sun while not a thing moved.

No one told us what was happening so I figured that:

- It was siesta time and everyone took a nap.
  - It was lunch time and the air traffic controller was out of his tower.
  - The captain had lost a contact.
- On the way up, the crew didn't even bother to explain to people

what to do about connections or how the airline could. Maybe they knew it wouldn't be much.

We had 10 minutes in Phoenix to go through immigration and reclaim our checked bags. The federal officials, Customs and Transportation Security, ran us through in record time, but our bags were the last to come off the plane.

We had no idea where we were going. No one had told us which gate and their was no one telling us where to go as we got off the plane. There was no passenger service representative to help. Budget cuts, I suppose.

We stopped at a monitor for a second to get our bearings and ran some more. All for naught.

We got to Denver and our friends, who had made the first plane, were still there waiting for their luggage. It came on the plane with us, so we really didn't lose any time.

I'm still not happy with American West, and I'll be reluctant to take that airline again. But our problems were small.

On the bus to get our car we sat next to a man who was heading for the hotel. His flight to Oklahoma City had been canceled. He was told it was equipment failure. It was 7:30 p.m. and he wouldn't get out of Denver until 11 the next day. He wasn't very happy with Frontier, knowing that he would lose a whole day and that he had no way to contact his family to tell them he would be late.

Frontier. Oh joy. That's the airline I'm taking to Washington next month.

## Senator dogged by questions

*Dare to be a Daniel; dare to stand alone.*

*Dare to have a purpose firm; dare to make it known.*

*Many giants great and tall, stalking through the land; headlong to the earth would fall if met by Daniel's band.*

These words of a children's Bible song come to mind as I reflect on my work this week. What differences are there in the attitude of a Daniel compared to the attitude of a bully? What elements are involved in determining if the depth of your conviction is just, or if it is a power struggle? Do the dynamics change when these questions involve groups and organizations and ultimately states and nations?

Help me in the continuum between maintaining the "permanence of a society" by defending the enduring interests and convictions that give us stability and continuity; and the "progression in a society" that is the spirit and body of talents that urge us on to prudent reform.

I don't want society to slip into anarchy nor do I want stagnation. Sometimes I find myself in the middle of a cause that I believe will help people and other times I find myself defending the current order alone.

Why, Lord do these dilemmas continually challenge me? Why aren't others motivated in the same causes at the same time, so that we can work together? What refining, purifying process are you putting me through? Am I growing or am I just treading water? Do I keep on doing the same thing for another year or am I just banging my head against an impossible situation and you are trying to lead me in another direction?



### Letter from Topeka

By State Sen. Stan Clark  
sclark@ink.org

How do I know?

With all the problems confronting the state, I spent most of this week working on prairie dog testimony. Why? In the scheme of things, aren't there more important things to do?

Why in the world would all the major statewide farming, livestock and county government organizations want to manage prairie dogs? Why would they support a of 20,000 more acres of prairie dogs in western Kansas in the next 10 years?

Why in a time of great national concern about bio-terrorism would we seek to protect a rodent that is a carrier of fleas, that can cause bubonic plague? Why do we believe groups and government officials when they say "trust us" when the record shows countless examples that they are not trustworthy?

Why would anyone in their right mind want the government to calculate into the equation its view of "aesthetics" in creating a management plan for land and habitat the prairie dogs are going to live on? Don't people know that they are just trying to turn our pastures into parks?

Why would Kansas throw in the towel now when we know that two individuals, well known as defenders of freedom, are going to chair the key committees in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate that have legislative authority over the Endangered Spe-

cies Act and property rights? As Kansas legislators, let's join forces with Congress, working with these new committee chairmen to restore common sense.

Farming, ranching and small businesses are the backbone of rural America; we know that we must work with our natural resources to provide the means that preserve our way of life.

Prairie Dog State Park is in my district, as are Prairie Dog Creek, Prairie Dog Golf Course and thousands of acres of prairie dog towns. I enjoy reading the *Prairie Dog Press* and the *World's Largest Prairie Dog* is less than two miles from where I live. My request to the House Committee this week, if they weren't convinced to leave the current law alone, was to make the management plans apply only "in counties where there are more people than prairie dogs." If prairie dogs are an endangered species, or threatened species, or species at risk, I would assert that the people in Western Kansas and their habitat deserve the same protection.

Please feel free to contact me on any issue. I can be reached by writing to Sen. Stan Clark, State Capitol-Room 449-N., Topeka, Kan. 66612; by calling 1-800-432-3924 or 785-296-7399; by FAX at 801-457-9064; or by e-mail at sclark@ink.org.

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

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