

Breathe a shallow sigh as budget gap closes again

The Legislature and Gov. Kathleen Sebelius have, apparently, closed the state's budget gap one more time by cutting state agencies again, by zeroing revenue sharing for cities and counties and by borrowing from the road fund.

When the fiscal year ends in June, they expect the state to have not a dime left, which is all the law really requires. Gone will be state's 7 percent reserve account, the "rainy day" money that we're supposed to set aside in case things go wrong.

Many will argue that's all right; things have gone wrong, and we need the money. Trouble is, we really don't know how the state's fortunes will turn as the year progresses.

Things are supposed to get better. But the government economists have been saying that for nearly three years now. The recession that George Bush inherited from Bill Clinton has deepened and widened. Soon, it will be Mr. Bush's recession, too.

And there's no real sign that it's over yet. And while Kansas will skate through another year without major cuts to school programs, the rest of state government will suffer. We'll have to ask ourselves how much we want to see it cut, and at what point are we willing to raise taxes to save state services.

School boards have given up hoping for an increase in the budget and are happy to hear promises of no cuts, but they have to be nervous.

Colleges and universities have already felt the knife. Last year they were complaining

about the danger of losing quality in their programs, but this year, they're just scrambling to make sense of the new reality.

At the University of Kansas, Chancellor Robert Hemenway has given up hope of any new money from state funds. He says he'd like to be let out from under the state purchasing, surplus property and personnel systems so he can spend what he has better. More power to him.

Dr. Hemenway also wants to get to keep the interest on student fees and tuition that now goes into the state general fund, but that's not likely to happen. The money's already been spent.

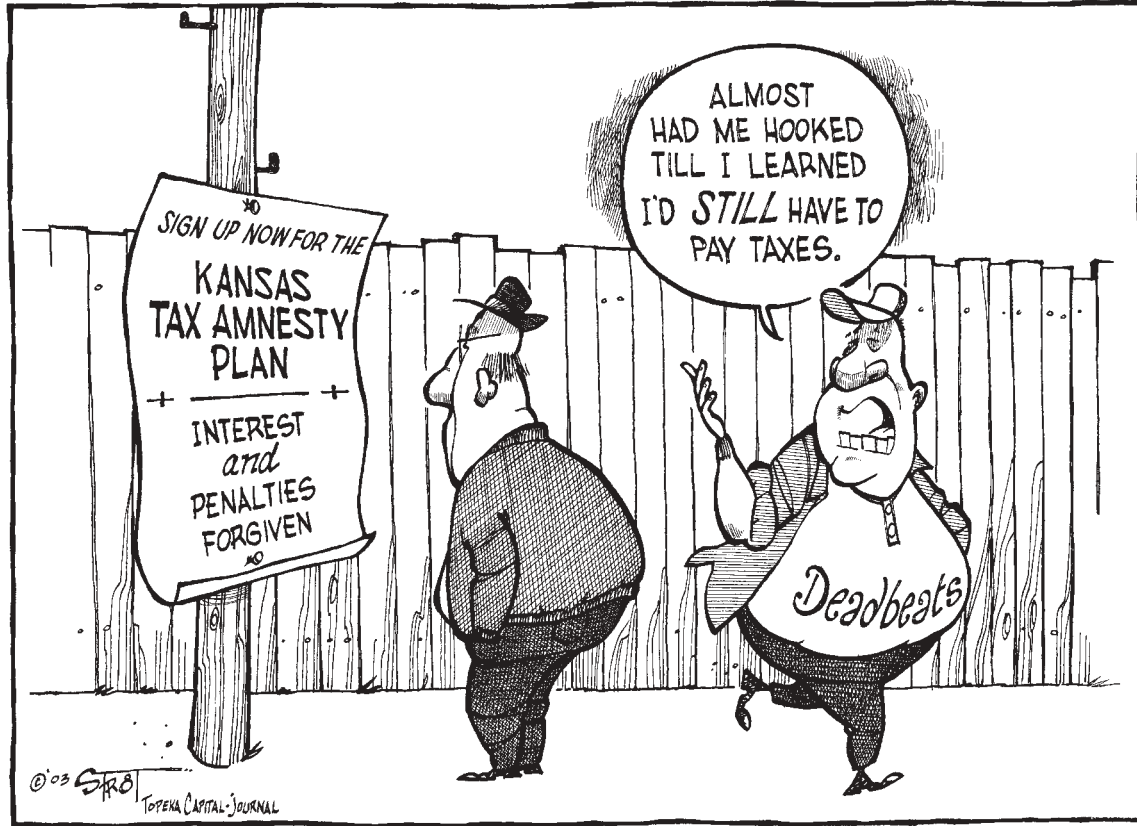
For rural Kansas, one of the most critical decisions will be what happens to the state's transportation plan. The word is that the new secretary of transportation, Deb Miller, hopes to keep all current projects, stretching out the 10-year highway plan by a couple of years to get them done.

As long as maintenance is kept up on existing roads, that's no problem. The state can't afford to let maintenance slide or we'll wind up like Missouri, having to dump new construction just to catch up with overlays.

And nothing is more important to our rural economy than transportation — except maybe rain and the price of wheat.

We think the state will survive the test, and the cuts and economies forced by the fiscal crisis will make it stronger. Tight times will pinch, it'll hurt, but we'll make it.

— Steve Haynes



Counting noses, toes and what?

We went to Lawrence last weekend to visit the cats and kids.

It's not that we have more cats in this family than we know what to do with. It's just that they seem to outnumber us.

At last count, the immediate family had 10 felines (not counting Tigger, who lives at *The Oberlin Herald* office).

We have our trio — Mollie Monster, the cat that steals marbles and goes for walks; April Alice, the mother cat we adopted a year ago; and Kubla Khan, the laid-back Siamese that tries to stay out from between the other two, who fight like, well like cats.

Daughter Felicia and husband Nik also have three cats — Sabine, the old lady of the crew that Felicia has had since college; Marcell, a long-haired black ball of meanness that fights with both the others; and Louie, or Baby Cat, the newest arrival — a real sweetheart. He loves to purr.

Luckily, that crew lives in Augusta, Ga., along with a monster dog called Chauncey and a pair of birds, which look like lunch to the rest of the crew and act like birdbrains.

Back in Kansas, youngest daughter Lindsay lives in Lawrence with



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
chaynes@nwkansas.com

Jezebel, a nice but timid feline, and Rupert, another lap lover with a super purr.

Across town, her brother Lacy and his roommate Chris harbor a pair of illegals. The apartment doesn't allow pets, although they claim that the other residents keep St. Bernards and Great Danes hidden in their spaces, and even the resident manager has a pooch.

Hiding out at their place are April's children, Frank and Jules. Frank is the tom, and he is big and brash. He loves to play and is a great favorite of all the girls, who come to visit. His sister Jules started out life as July. She then became Jewell and finally Jules. She is shy, with big eyes and soft fur.

The kittens belong to Lacy, but both he and Chris and all their girl friends take care of them. This in-

cludes defleaving them.

When Lacy talks about his little flea bags, he isn't kidding. The kittens had to go to a friends home for a couple of weeks while repairs were made to the boys' apartment. During the repairs, the cats needed to be scarce to keep from being bounced.

When they returned home, they brought a few "pets" of their own.

The kids tried to use a flea bath on the kittens. That was a mess, I'm told, and didn't do a real good job of getting rid of the pests. In fact, the fleas were not eradicated until Lacy and the kittens came home for Thanksgiving.

At that point, I put some flea remover on them and gave son some to take back. I've got enough pets as is. Besides, if son thinks I'm going to bathe a pair of cats, he's as crazy as they are.

When Times chief talks, we listen

We had the opportunity to meet Arthur O. Sulzberger Jr., the publisher of *The New York Times*, last week during the annual celebration of William Allen White's birthday at the University of Kansas.

KU puts on a show every year to honor the namesake of its School of Journalism, inviting a bigwig from the national media to come to campus for a couple of days.

The honoree is feted, paraded before journalism students and gets a nice medallion.

Homage is paid to the traditions of journalism and leadership Will White set out in Emporia, and then the world turns.

Recent recipients of the White award have included Cokie Roberts, the television correspondent and columnist, and daughter of two powerful Louisiana congress people, and Robert Woodward, the

Washington Post reporter who helped break the Watergate scandal. But Mr. Sulzberger, the fifth generation of his family to lead the august Times organization, turned out to be one of the more delightful speakers to grace the Kansas Union stage.

Showing quick but gentle wit, he put the crowd at ease with stories of how he met his wife in Topeka, after driving 25 hours to spend Thanksgiving with his mother. This scion of New York was no stranger to the midlands.

He shared some research he'd done into what his newspaper had to say about the famous Kansas editor, dredging up an editorial quite critical of Mr. White. In one of those



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
shaynes@nwkansas.com

exchanges that used to enliven the printed page long before Crossfire, Mr. White had written about the evil ways of the big city. The Times, it seems, had taken umbrage at this prairie editor who was so scornful of her sinful ways, but "couldn't seem to stay away from Manhattan."

But Mr. Sulzberger is one of the few Americans to lead a large family business into its third century, and he's been at the controls during a period of record growth and change.

So when he speaks about our business, you have to listen. He had one observation that bears repeating.

After more than 400 years, he said, newspapers are still around, and they are likely to outlast most of us reading today. Eventually, though, he said, he thinks they will fade away because paper will become too costly.

He thinks some form of electronic communication will take their place, and he doesn't seem to think that's all bad. Maybe he's right.

Before newspapers, there was no cheap and reliable way to spread large volumes of relatively accurate information. There was only the grapevine or the government's crier. Newspapers grew to become

strong, independent voices in a world where powerful forces would like to control everything we see and hear.

The challenge in a new order will be to ensure that this voice — clear, honest, free of control, independent of thought — continues no matter how the word gets out.

And that's something I'm sure Arthur Sulzberger's newspaper and Will White could agree on, their other issues set aside.

From the Bible

Blessed be the Lord: for he hath shewed me his marvelous kindness. . . . Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord. Psalm 31: 21 a,b; 24)



Adios does not mean forgotten

Our mission had been to build a house: mission accomplished!

We returned from Mexico late Saturday afternoon, and I admit I was feeling lots less than perky. Several of us had some kind of "bug," but I refuse to blame it on the water. With all the flu that has been going around, I'm convinced that's what it was.

No matter; I wouldn't have missed it for the world!

When we left our homes we were, for the most part, unskilled construction workers. By the end of our project, everyone knew the difference between a header and a stud, between stucco and cement, and a 16-penny nail from an eight-penny nail.

But as always, the real transformation comes from within: The feeling you get from doing something for someone who can't do it for themselves. We don't go to preach. Just to help.

During our evening get-together the second night in Mexico, one of our teammates expressed the concern that she had been afraid that she couldn't love these people, that she might be afraid to touch them. But after meeting "our" family, she



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
Out-Back@webtv.net

found she could hardly keep her hands off them. Ultimately, that's the way we all felt.

I don't care how many times I go: it's always the same. The hardest part is leaving. After the dedication of the house and good-byes, no one wanted to get in the vans. Everyone dragged their heels, trying to hold on to that image of a family with a brand new, secure, comfortable home of their own.

A home that we had built. One thing is for sure; we got enough hugs and heartfelt "gracias" to last a lifetime.

Now we're home and about to pick up the daily routine of our lives: Work, shopping, club meetings, news, bills, weather and sports. Kind of mundane stuff after what we, as a team, have just been

through.

I wonder how the mother, Norma, and her two sons, Manuel and Jose, are doing today. Have they unpacked all the boxes of presents we took?

I will always wonder how they are doing, but I know we made a difference.

—ob—

The shuttle disaster occurred the day we left and a call to our cell phone from our daughter in Dallas alerted us to the fact so we could tune in on the radio. It was a sobering and sad moment for us.

An e-mail from my brother, Don, was waiting for me when we got back. His son, Tim, works for NASA and had been involved with Columbia. The impact of this tragedy is far reaching.

Trooper shares child safety ideas

To the Editor:

This is National Child Safety Awareness Week. During this week, the Kansas Highway Patrol and law enforcement agencies across Kansas will concentrate on proper installation and use of child restraints and car seats. Installation and check lanes are scheduled across the state.

Thanks to previous efforts, tremendous gains in child passenger safety have been made. Fewer children age 15 and younger were killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2001 than at any time since recordkeeping began in 1975. Vehicle fatalities dropped 8.6 percent from 2000, and injuries fell by 7.3 percent for children age 5 to 15 and by 11 percent for children age 4 and under. It is through these efforts that 95 percent of infants and 91 percent of toddlers, age 1 to 4, are restrained in safety seats.

Here are some guidelines to follow when transporting children:

- Use rear-facing infant seats in the back seat from birth to at least 1 year old and at least 20 pounds.
- Use forward-facing toddler seats in the back seat from age 1 to about

Letters to the Editor

age 4 and 20 to 40 pounds.

• Booster seats in the back seat are for children from about age 4 and 40 pounds to at least age 8, unless they are 4 foot, 9 inches tall.

• Safety belts are good at age 8 or older, or taller than 4 foot 9. All children 12 and under should ride in the back seat.

Motor vehicle crashes are still the leading cause of death for children age 4 to 14. Be a leader, "Buckle Up", protect our most precious resource — children.

2nd Lt. Doug Griffiths
Kansas Highway Patrol
Norton

Baseball program 'great'

To the Editor:

I've wanted to write this letter since last summer. Somehow time has gotten away from me.

I took over as the K-18 baseball commissioner last year. I want to thank all of the coaches, fans and players who make this season a wonderful experience.

The sub-regionals were held in Colby and Stockton. The regional tournament was in Ellis, and the state tournament was in Lucas. I compliment these cities for the fine job they did hosting these tourna-

ments. My main reason for writing this letter is to thank coaches, fans and players for the best sportsmanship I have ever been around. I can honestly say I am proud to be from a small town in Kansas, and proud to be associated with K-18 baseball.

I am looking forward to being a part of your K-18 baseball program this summer.

Thanks for the support.
John Walz, Oberlin
K-18 West Regional
Commissioner

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



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

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.

Published each Wednesday by Haynes Publishing Co., 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Periodicals mail postage paid at Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Steve and Cynthia Haynes, publishers
Official newspaper of Oberlin, Jennings, Norcatur, Dresden and Decatur County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association, Nebraska Press Association and Inland Press Association.