

## State hurts rural Kansas by sending jobs to Topeka

Once again, the state government drives a dagger deep into the heart to rural Kansas.

With friends like the governor and her Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, we'll be lucky to survive at all.

In the latest insult, Secretary Janet Schalansky announced that nearly all the department's county offices in western Kansas — including those in Oberlin, Norton, Atwood, Hoxie and St. Francis — will be closed.

Not only will service to rural residents in need be reduced to nearly nothing, but hundreds of state jobs will be transferred to Topeka and a few other larger towns.

The towns that will get the jobs don't really need them — Lord knows, there are enough bureaucrats in Topeka already — and the towns that will lose them by and large can't replace them.

That's a pretty good economic development move.

Worse yet, rural Kansans will continue to be taxed to pay for those jobs, and that tax money now will be spent, not here, but in Topeka, Kansas City or Hays.

Instead of going down to the social services office to apply for help, and talking to a friend or neighbor, people will call a toll-free telephone number and talk to some faceless agent miles away.

Where today, welfare workers know their towns and their clients, tomorrow, workers on the phone bank probably won't even know where the calls are coming from. They'll just be case numbers to be processed before the end of the shift.

It's the Southwestern Bell business model: Do everything by phone, from an office far away, and try to act like you care.

Why our state government wants to act that way is a mystery. According to the secretary, no one will be laid off. The projected savings are only about \$300,000 a year for office rent and utilities. And travel costs will go up as case workers are forced to drive all over the place to visit clients.

Think of the inconvenience and degradation to people out here who need help but no longer can get it at home.

Think of what happens to long-time state workers who will be faced with the choice of uprooting their families or losing their jobs. Many of them, most maybe, have no desire to live in Topeka or Wichita.

A lot of them probably like the small-town life, but to keep it they'll have to find other work.

And jobs are hard to come by in rural Kansas.

Some of them, ironically enough, might be forced to draw unemployment and sign up — by phone, of course — for public assistance.

All to fulfill some Topeka bureaucrats' dream of efficiency.

Why is the state doing this to our communities?

It's hard to say, but it's a good bet that the secretary and her minions neither know nor care about the economic or social effects their decision will have on rural Kansas.

They don't live here, they don't know or understand our problems. And they could care less.

This is a plan born under Gov. Bill Graves and carried out under new Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, who kept Graves' manager on at Social Services. At this point, only she could stop the plan, but there is no evidence that the governor cares, either. — *Steve Haynes*



## Fat cat makes an office break

Steve and I were almost in really big trouble Sunday.

Tigger disappeared. We work on Sunday night because we have to have everything done for the paper by 11 p.m. Monday, and if we get an early start we can make that deadline.

When we are gone and can't work, we get behind and Mondays are bad — very bad.

So, Sunday we were carting our junk into the office. We each have a laptop computer which we carry around with us so that we can work at home, on vacation or in any of our offices. We also each have a box for our stuff — papers, copy, lunch. They're sort of like really cheap briefcases that can be replaced by a trip to the grocery store.

Anyway, after we unloaded, we sat down to get to work. It took about 15 minutes before Steve decided it was getting kind of cold. That was when he noticed that the front door was wide open. Since the temperatures on Sunday were well below freezing, it was no wonder that it was cold.

The bigger problem was the cat was gone.

Tigger had been hanging around the front door as we moved our stuff in, but we're used to that. He would really like to get out and go catting around, but he's not smart enough to figure out where home is and come back.

The last time he got out, Beth found him a block away and a week



## Open Season

By *Cynthia Haynes*  
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later. We had no idea where he'd been, but he'd never come home.

This time, however, he had escaped into the night.

Steve ran outside and yelled, "Kitty, kitty, kitty," then went to get his coat.

I went out and tried also yelling, "Kitty, kitty, here Tigger, here Tigger, here kitty, kitty, kitty."

Before Steve could get back to the front door with his coat, a fat, gray cat came streaking down the sidewalk.

Tigger had discovered something he had forgotten in his long years inside *The Herald* office. It gets COLD out there.

We were all happy for the return of the miscreant. If he had gotten lost again, the staff would have lynched us.

I wasn't surprised that the fat cat had come back so quickly. We had been having similar fun and games at home, where our cats are in and out. They want in when they are out

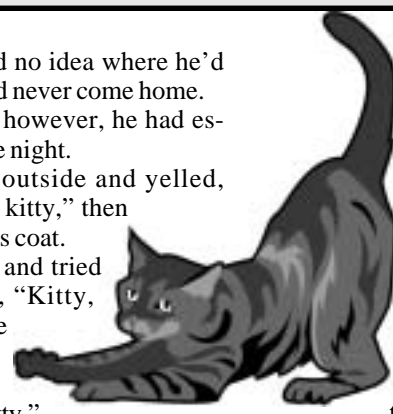
and out when they are in, and we let them go.

On Sunday, as the snow fell gently to the earth, Miss Molly Monster sat by the back door. Each time we offered to let her out, she gave us a scornful look and retreated. After about five times of this, after I had gone out to clear the snow off the cars, I tossed her out into the snow.

She gave a pitiful meow, ran halfway across the back porch and returned to the door to be let in. Of course, she does that on an 80-degree day, but she looked especially forlorn lifting first one foot and shaking it and then another to get the snow off.

I soon relented and let her back in, but I warned the whole cat contingent that I didn't want to hear any more whining about going out.

And you know how much good that did me.



## Late snow may hurt blooms

Boy! Did I ever drop the ball.

Friday night, Jim told me I should cover the tulips, that it might freeze. But, as happens a lot in our house, I got distracted doing 15 other things, and neglected to put anything over my emerging flowers. With this late spring snow, it's doubtful now that I'll get any blooms this spring.

Thankfully, I never put any of the bedding plants from El Paso in the ground. We just sashay around them where they sit in the middle of the front room floor.

It's tax time again. And my job this weekend was to finish all the journal entries. For the last three years, we used a computer program to track business expenses. Jim never did like the way it compiled the data, so now we do it the old-fashioned way, by hand on a ledger sheet.

Believe me, it is not my favorite thing to do. Some people like the precision of rows and rows of numbers, of making everything come out "even." My attitude is "close enough."

I think I'll wait 'til after he's done figuring our income taxes to make him aware that "accounting" was the only high school class I ever flunked. I absolutely despised it. Never could keep "debits" and "credits" straight.



## Out Back

By *Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts*  
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—ob—

I have been riveted to coverage of the war in Iraq. If I miss "my" morning briefing with Gen. Vincent Brooks at CentCom, I feel like I'm out of the loop. Some feel like they are bored with the media's attention to the invasion: I feel it's my duty to watch this war as it unfolds. It seems like the least I can do. Our guys are fighting and dying while I go about my daily routine. I owe them as much time out of my day as I can. They're giving us everything.

At this writing, U.S. forces are occupying one of Saddam's palaces; weapons of mass destruction have been uncovered by coalition units; and "Baghdad Bob" is still trying to convince the Iraqi populace that the regime remains in control.

There can no longer be any doubt about the will and capabilities of our armed forces. They have performed superbly. Operation Iraqi Freedom

has been a textbook example of military maneuvering, logistics, communications and intelligence.

I love it when a plan comes together.

## From the Bible

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. James 1: 5, 6



## Looks like the war is near end

By the time you read this, the war in Iraq may be mostly over. Who knows?

As I write, American soldiers are set to blow up a big statue of Saddam Hussein in downtown Baghdad. They are waiting for more press photographers to get in place before they push the button.

The 3rd Infantry has pushed through downtown, occupying key positions near government buildings and taking parts of two presidential palaces. American tanks guard the levy along the Tigris River.

The end seems very near for Iraq's despot. And despite the claims of his information minister, there does not seem to be much he can do to prevent it.

Was it just last week that every talking head and retired general on television was questioning the war plan, pointing out how it had "bogged down" and failed?

Just last week that Peter Arnett went on Iraqi television to crow about the "failure" of the American plan and the success of the valiant resistance?

Peter Arnett is history now, and it's Tommy Franks, the Central Command general, who looks to finish on top. After "stalling" outside the capital, his troops rushed in to seize the airport, the bridges over



## Along the Sappa

By *Steve Haynes*  
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the rivers to the south, and the road approaches to Baghdad in all directions.

The vaunted Republican Guard? Its tanks bombed to smoldering heaps, the guard seemed to just melt away. Some stayed to fight against the Americans with rifles and grenades. Many more were seen walking south in civilian clothes. They left their uniforms, their guns and their leaders behind.

A reporter for the *Atlanta Constitution* calls to report that American troops are about to destroy the equestrian statue of Saddam. There's a tremendous explosion, then cheers. It's a phone call, so no one sees the great leader fall.

Cut to the roof of a hotel across the river, where Arab journalist and camera crews are housed.

The information minister is holding a press conference. Cameramen scramble to get in place.

The minister says there are no Americans in Baghdad.

"We slaughtered them," he said. "We gave them poison. They are committing suicide."

A BBC reporter points out that a battle rages a mile and a half across the river.

It's just a few tanks, the minister says. Do not believe them. They are lying. They are not in Baghdad.

He urges the reporters to go see for themselves. He says he has just come from the Information Ministry and there are no Americans there, only heroic Iraqi fighters.

Go see for yourself, he says.

Of course, all the American reporters have been kicked out of the country. The British are left, but they and the Arabs and the other Europeans cannot go see for themselves. Saddam's militia has surrounded the hotel, and they are prisoners here.

In downtown Baghdad, in Saddam's Iraq.

But not for long.

# THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

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

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

E-mail: obherald@nwkansas.com

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

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