

Dreams can come true when we all work together

Things that go right:

The new Oberlin Speedway is up and running, drawing race fans, drivers and crews for six dates in its first year.

The track is a great example of what happens when people get together to get something done for a community. It shows that great things can be done without the government spending a lot of money.

It began more than two years ago — a dream for Mick and Rhonda Barth of Oberlin, who wanted to see racing resume at the Decatur County Fairground. The Barths wanted to revive the old dirt track at the grandstand, though neither is a racer. They raised money and recruited volunteers, got plans for the track approved and started construction.

When they had done all they could, the track still was not completed. Not to worry. Four others volunteered to push their dream to reality. That was only last December, and four months later, racers are going round and round the track.

The men — Jack Metcalf, Lee Scott, Scott Dolan and Lee Martin — raised the rest of the money, talked with county commissioners and the fair board, found fencing and contractors. They got the job done in short order.

We all owe a debt to these people, the Barths, the four who pushed the project to completion, all the volunteers, the commissioners and county employees who worked on it.

It proves that the American spirit still works when we let it. It proves that great things can be done without a lot of government money. And it shows what can happen when people believe.

Take a bow, folks.

Then, there is the city's water project. It's nearly done, just in time to provide water for peak summer months, and with a little luck, help Oberlin avoid a repeat of the shortages which have plagued us the last couple of years.

The project includes a new line down Cass Avenue to boost pressure all over town, plus a mixing system to get one of the city's better wells back into service. The well, near the high school football field, has been held off line because it's contaminated by nitrates.

The contamination isn't bad, though, and mixing its output with water from another well will allow the city to use both. As long as the mixed water meets federal limits, it's OK to drink. The mixing represents a rather elegant engineering solution, compared to a much more costly alternative of building a treatment plant.

The water improvements may not solve Oberlin's water problems, but they'll go a long way toward making them much less noticeable. The city's wells are still down, but so are most wells in the state after more than two years of drought.

The water won't taste much better, however.

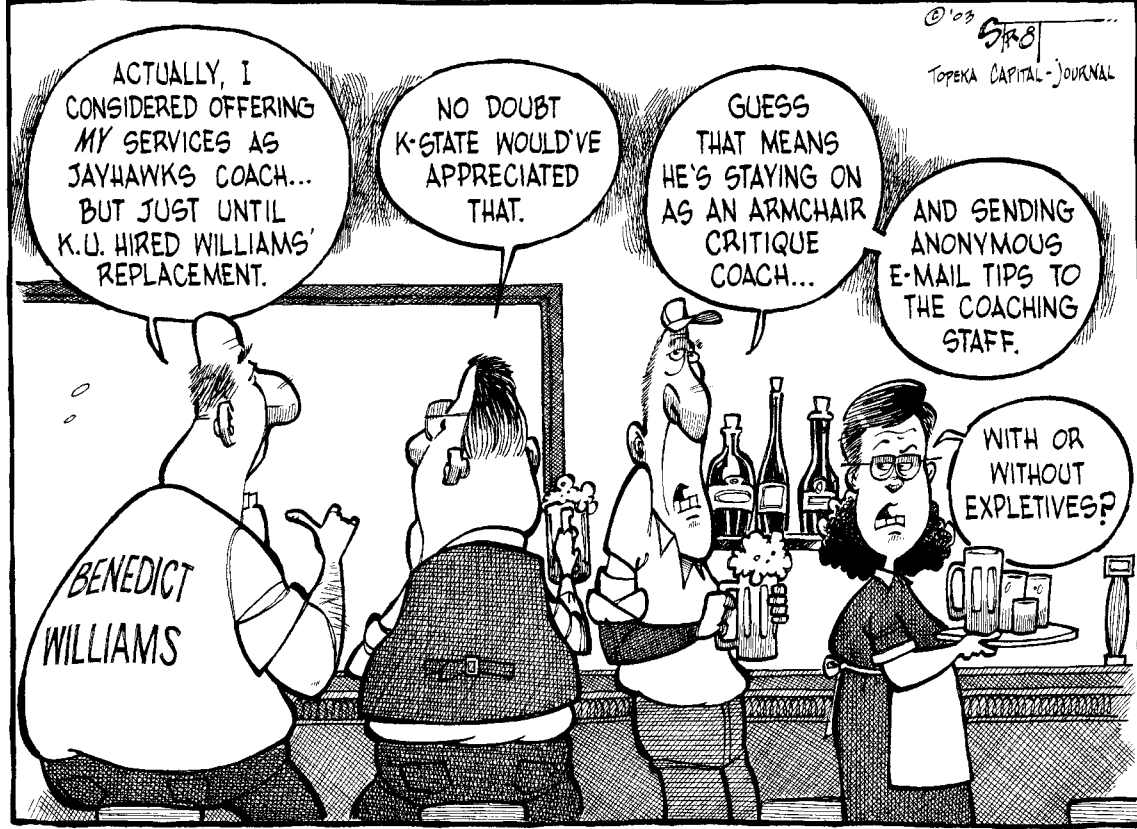
But hey, it's raining this spring. Rainfall is above normal for the year, and it looks like the rains will keep on coming.

It'll take some time to get over the effects of the drought, one of the worst in a century, but it looks like the dry spell is over.

The rain didn't come a minute too soon, but it looks like farmers will have a decent wheat crop — and a chance at a decent year for a change.

Good news is nice.

— Steve Haynes



Dad foretold daughters' futures

My father was a prophet. Not the Old Testament type with a long beard. Dad could just read the future. He knew what was likely to happen to his children and tried to prepare us for it.

He wanted both of his girls to be self-sufficient. He never wanted us to be one of those women who can't live without a man.

I remember when I was learning to drive, he had me stop on a side street one day and made me change a tire. There was nothing wrong with the tire I had to take it off and then put it back on, but he thought it was important for me to be able to do it.

He also made sure we both knew about basic tools. In those days, girls didn't take shop or woodworking, but we both learned how to use a hammer, pliers and screwdriver. We both learned to paint and hang wallpaper.

The big thing for Dad and Mom, too, was economics. We were never to be in the position that we couldn't make our own living. They were both determined that we would have a profession.

Mom was a teacher and Dad worked for the electric company. Mom had a college education and a lifetime teaching certificate in the state of Kansas. She could teach anything from first grade to senior



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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high school but most of her years in the classroom were spent in the middle grades. She did teach one high school class — physical education — but just for one year.

Dad quit high school in his sophomore year. The education that wasn't important to him then became a problem as he got older. He took correspondence courses and was self taught, but it was tough. He would have a college degree.

I was first, and when I was a junior in high school, I started searching for a career. I liked math and science, but I didn't want to be a nurse or doctor. Dad suggested pharmacy. It's a profession with a lot of respect, he said, and you can always work part time after the children are born. At 16, the thought of children was in the same league as Social Security. It'd come, but not for so long that it didn't matter.

I went off to five years at the University of Kansas, even though it was hard for them to pay all the bills.

Luckily, my sister was six years younger. She got a bachelor's in nursing at Fort Hays State and moved home to Concordia.

I worked full time when my children were growing up, but now that they are gone and I work full time for the newspaper, I only work now and then at the drug store.

Dad, you were right. Pharmacy is a great profession. It's good to have something.

My sister got married and adopted two boys, but things weren't always good for her and her husband. They separated and later divorced.

Her nursing degree made it possible for her to stand on her own two feet, pay the bills and keep her home.

How did you know, Dad? How did you guess?

State robs Peter to pay Paul

It's amazing that those running the state of Kansas just can't seem to face reality.

The state is up to its eyeballs in financial problems, and it has been for two years.

Everywhere you turn, there's talk of state budget cuts.

Yet the fact is, the state budget has gone up each and every year.

That's right, state spending keeps on going up. It was \$8.85 billion in 2001, \$9.5 billion in 2002, \$9.85 billion this year and the budget projection for next year tops \$10 billion for the first time.

The only things being cut are budget requests, pleas for more money when the state does not have any.

A family faced with the kind of budget problems the state has — stagnant revenue, pressure for increased spending, much wailing from the children as their allowance is cut — would either cut back or face bankruptcy.

A private business faced with this kind of pressure would do the same — stabilize employment, defer raises, maybe even have some layoffs. Or face bankruptcy.

We know. We've had to face that with our business, and it's been painful. Lots of Kansas businesses have faced tougher issues than ours.

But we don't have to answer to the teachers' union or the many organizations that represent people who benefit from — or work for — state programs.



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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The first rule of government is, those who get want more. Last year's new, innovative program is this year's entitlement.

And absolutely no one is prepared to see government programs cut.

The right answer to the state's budget problems is to cut back until the economy recovers and the state once again is flush with cash. What they are doing in Topeka, it seems to me, is trying to figure out some way to cook the books.

The governor wants to borrow against future tobacco settlement payments, make people pay their second-half property taxes earlier (so the payment is in the current fiscal year, not the new one), and authorize more gambling.

The Republican-dominated Legislature wants to delay the June payment to schools into July, and put off paying some tax refunds.

What both sides are advocating, really, is Enron accounting. By using up state reserves and shifting funds around, they hope to avoid a deficit, at least on paper, and skate

through the year without either cutting services or increasing taxes.

No one wants to vote for increased taxes. That's the kiss of death.

Yet, no one wants to cut service. Every state program and service has someone who benefits from it. And those people — senior citizens, the handicapped in their wheelchairs, school teachers and students — are very effective when they parade outside the State house.

No one is saying that their needs are not real. But the state doesn't have any more money for them. It's dipped into its savings account, shifted funds, done everything it can. And it still can't afford its ever-increasing budget, not like it could in the 1990s, when times were flush and the state cut taxes each year while increasing the budget.

Now times are not flush. Reality should be settling in.

But not in Topeka. No, the Legislature and the governor can't even agree on which mirrors to put the smoke in front of.

Little one still keeps 'em busy

Actually, I do have a follow-up story to my Washington trip. It's not the gripping drama I had hoped for. You know, the President picking my granddaughter out of a crowd of thousands and asking her opinion on world politics.

No, it was nothing like that. But, it did involve high-tech monitoring devices. Sort of.

Oldest daughter Halley, lives in the suburbs of College Park, Md. One day, while Kara and Taylor were visiting, the unmistakable music from an ice cream truck was heard. They all ran outside but discovered he was on the other side of the block. Taylor cupped her hands over her ears and started twisting her hands back and forth.

Aunt Halley asked her if she could hear him that way. Taylor, with a very concentrated look on her face said, "Sh-h-h, I'm trying to get my signal."

Halley said she and Kara about fell on the ground laughing.

Following an entire day of walking and visiting the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, the Vietnam War Memorial, the Korean War Memorial, the Mall and all points in between, Taylor was asked what she had done that day. Her reply: "I rode a merry-go-round."

Don't you know her mom just thought, "Why bother!"

— ob —
Big news in this part of the country is RAIN! And what beautiful rain it has been, too. Slow, gentle, perfectly spaced rain. The parched ground is getting a thorough soaking. Lots of farmers have big, broad, smiles nowadays.



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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The only down side is that now the grass and weeds will grow like crazy and we'll have to mow. Last season, we mowed once in the spring and not again 'til fall. But, what a small price to pay for that crop-saving moisture.

— ob —

The rain prompted lots of yard work this weekend, including Jennifer and us. We needed to "lose" some of our spirea bushes and she needed some shrubs around her house. So we swapped. Two days later, they're still alive, so hopefully they made the move OK.

The semi-wild roses we sent home with her did not fare as well. Jennifer said they had turned "toes-up" by the following morning. You can't hardly kill them. They thrive on neglect. But don't try to transplant them; they can't take it.

— ob —

The church in our town is sponsoring a clothing drive to help with Mexican/American mission work in Garden City. If you ever wondered if the people we're trying to help appreciate it or not, I can tell you they do.

On our last trip to Juarez, we happened to meet a group from Oklahoma that was trying to take a trailer load of used clothes into Mexico.

They were told that they wouldn't be allowed across the border with an open trailer. We were asked to help them out. Our group each took two bags into their vans and we crossed the border uneventfully.

At the church compound where we were staying, all the bags of clothes were opened and the contents laid out on makeshift tables. The pastor put the word out to his congregation. In record time, I bet half the women in the neighborhood were there finding clothes for their families. Many grabbed our hands and said, "Gracias, gracias."

Yes, they appreciate it.

From the Bible

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. . . . And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? (Job 1:1, 8)

Should U.S. be member of the U.N?

To the Editor:

I sent the following letter to my elected officials. I ask each of your readers to do the same:

The United States, a member of the United Nations and North Atlantic Treaty Organization, provides 90 percent of the operating budget. The United States gives 90 percent of all foreign aid, and 99 percent of all World Bank loan money. The U.S. Navy provides 99 percent of all security for the world.

Whenever there is a police action or war, the United States stands 90 percent of the cost and contributes 90 percent of the military personnel.

Letter to the Editor

In exchange for our sacrifice, the U.S. is subject to argumentative, arbitrary, belligerent, capricious, and disingenuous remarks and actions, specifically by our allies, France, Germany and Russia.

After the Iraq War, if you do not introduce and support legislation to have the United States withdraw from the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, I not only will not support you in the

next election, but I will actively work against you in favor of your opponent.

Arthur Loyd Shelton
Norton



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