

Even if the state profits, gambling still a bad idea

A bad idea is still a bad idea, even when the state needs the money.

Time was when society as a whole pretty much recognized that gambling was a bad idea. Basically, gambling was illegal in this country, except in Nevada.

But there is no way to rid a nation of gambling, any more than you can rid a nation of dangerous drugs like alcohol and meth. It's pretty hard to prevent something that can be done in a barn or a basement.

And because we are human, there'll always be demand for sin.

When gambling was illegal, the market (like that for liquor when it was illegal) was controlled by criminals. The mob ran horse books and numbers games in every city.

With the advent of Las Vegas, the mob saw it's chance to go legit and make some real money. And, using the Teamsters Union pension funds for investment capital, that's just what they did.

Soon, everyone wanted a piece of the action, from Indian tribes to hard-pressed state governments, and in Nebraska, even small-town city councils. The state lottery, with profits earmarked for schools or prisons or parks, became ubiquitous.

Casinos sprung up everywhere from South Dakota to Gary, Ind., in the shadow of the steel mills. Bingo parlors and betting operations, riverboat gambling salons and race tracks multiplied.

So, of course, did gambling addiction and the loss of homes, cars, marriages and families.

But, when the state needs the money, who cares? Right?

And Kansas needs the money, so gambling is on the table as the governor and Legislature wrestle over the details of another deficit.

Slot machines to save the state's race tracks, and boost a few needy counties, including Ford and Geary. Casinos to fuel economic development. Who knows what might come next. One bill provides county option for the entire state. Heck, we'll all have casinos soon. Slots at the corner c-store. Bingo at the bank.

The latest twist is having the state lottery run the new games.

The take? No one is saying for sure, but maybe only \$50 million or so. Not nearly enough to solve the state's budget problems. Only a good economy will do that.

Beware the state-run gambling enterprise, by the way. When the mob ran the numbers racket, it took just a few cents of every dollar. When the state runs the numbers racket, known now as a state lottery, it typically takes half.

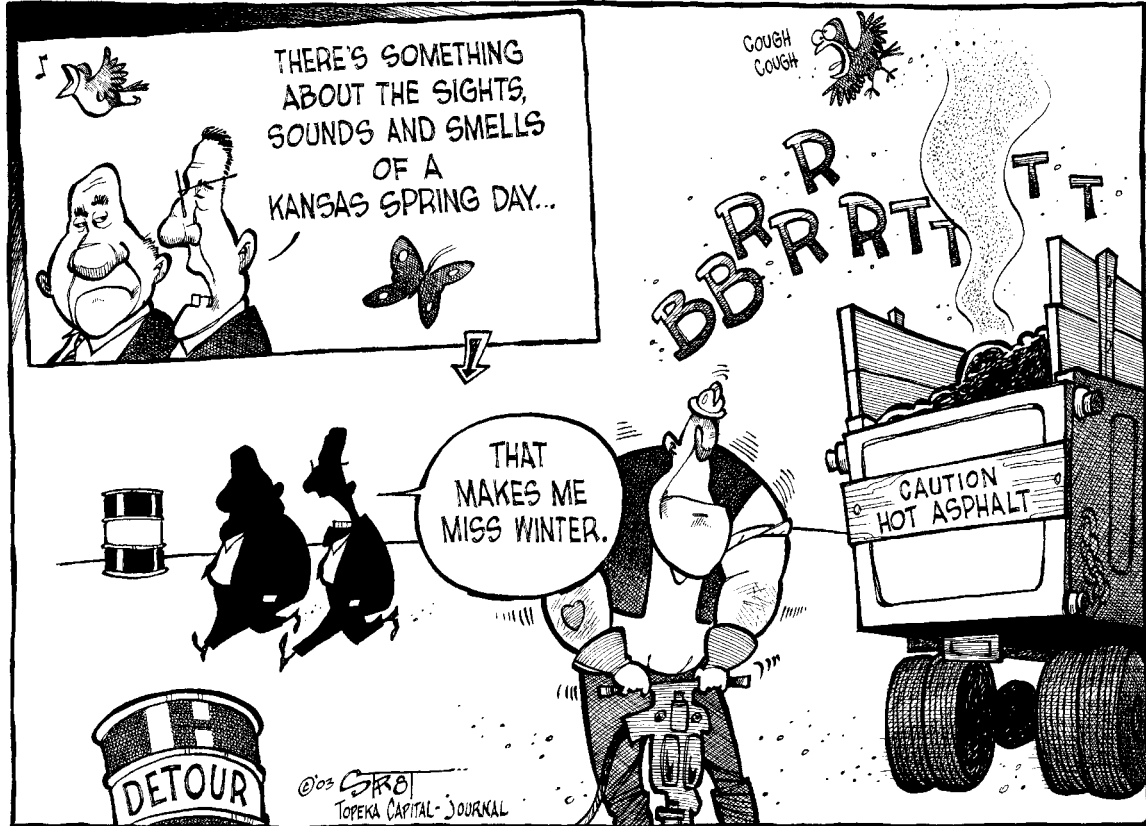
The odds are better in Vegas than in most state-run joints, but the losers lose just the same.

The only winner is the state, which having failed to run the mob out of the gambling business, just takes over. And cuts the payout.

We don't need more gambling in Kansas. It can only hurt us while failing to do much for the state budget.

Like we said, a bad idea is a bad idea.

— Steve Haynes



Where are the war critics now?

After the war is over ... It's fascinating how quiet the left is today, after a quick American sweep to victory in Iraq.

Yes, victory. Victory in this battle, at least.

Even the vaunted Republican Guard put up almost no fight as just a couple of American divisions swept through their defenses and right into downtown Baghdad. Our success surprised even our commanders.

But remember while the troops were on a roll, the commentators who spouted doom and gloom at every turn, who swore that we couldn't win, had the wrong plan, and even if we won, would poison Mideast relations for a century?

Where are all those retired generals and Newsweek correspondents today, anyway?

Reloading, is my best guess.

Being dead wrong doesn't faze the ideological or the armchair quarterback. They are honing their arguments against the American occupation, no matter how brief, and preparing to second-guess American policy in the coming months.

That's their whole reason for being. And most of them are Americans.

To our credit, we allow them to be



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
shaynes@nwkansan.com

wrong.

One thing those liberal vipers are not doing, they are not looking for weapons of mass destruction.

A couple of thousand Defense Department experts and specially trained troops are, though. Their search has been frustrating, and captured Iraqi leaders still maintain all the chemical stocks had been destroyed.

Maybe that is so. Mobile labs U.S. forces have found had been looted, but it appeared they could have been used to mix chemical agents on the spot. There was no stockpile of ingredients, however.

It's hard to tell what will turn up. It seems unlikely that Saddam Hussein would turn U.N. inspectors loose in his country unless whatever he had was pretty well hidden.

But there has to be a reason for all those gas masks and chemical suits

his troops had with them.

And Saddam? Will we find him? One rumor has it that if we do, he'll blow himself up, taking his captors with him. Another says he is out of the country, looking to join Osama bin Laden, who seems to know how to hide.

The two aren't really on the same wavelength, though.

☆☆☆☆☆
Closer to home, the new city street signs do look nice. They're not rusted through and they're quite readable during the day. They're what the city could afford this year.

And the city, like the state, farmers and a lot of our businesses, is in a budget crunch. No one is really happy about continual tax, fee and rate increases, so it seems the better part of valor to say that the council and staff made the right decision for the minute.

Storms' violence is a shock

We must have been totally "out of the loop" yesterday not to have heard a thing about the tornadoes in eastern Kansas and western Missouri. When I went on-line early Monday morning, I saw the headline: 29 Dead in Midwest.

Four a.m. was a little early to call Jim and Linda, who live a few miles west of Lawrence, so I e-mailed them. I am, of course, assuming that someone would have let us know if they weren't alright.

The pictures I saw and the stories I read looked and sounded horrible. People who have lived through a tornado say there is no other sound like it. As close a description as they can usually come up with is that it sounds like a freight train coming right through their house.

The trail of destruction looks like a train went through it, too. People seem to have such a dazed look in the aftermath of a tornado. Probably a mix of wonderment that they are alive and confusion as to where to start to pick up the pieces of their lives.

—ob—
Jennifer invited us in for Sunday dinner. It was all delicious and I told her so. Her reply: "I'm so proud of myself. I got through the entire preparation without having to call you."

Hey! If she can cook like that, I'll be calling her.

When we pulled in to her driveway, though, we saw her dog, an excitable Golden Retriever named Abigail Alexandria Auxier, tied up



Out Back

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

in the front yard.

When I went in the house I asked Jennifer, "What did Abby do? Is she banished?"

"She ate the cake," was Jennifer's chilly reply.

Well, not ALL the cake. And since Abby is family we just cut out her "sample section" and frosted the rest.

Oh, come on! You know you would have done the same thing. I assured Jennifer that I would rather eat after most dogs than some people I know.

Which, of course, reminds me of the time.....

Years ago I used to attend a little country church in Miami County. The women of the congregation would take turns baking a loaf of bread for the communion service. It was to be left whole so that the preacher could break it and give pieces to the congregants.

It was my turn and I had awakened very early that morning to attend to my responsibilities. The loaf had risen properly and was baked to perfection. I had set it on the counter to cool while we got ready for church.

You can imagine my horror upon returning to the kitchen and seeing the family cat on the counter, blithely gnawing away, right in the middle of the loaf. No time to bake another one! What to do?

I did what any other self-respecting baker under that kind of pressure would do. I cut off both ends, eliminating the middle, cubed it up and headed off for church. And until now, the preacher and I were the only ones who knew it.

What's the statute of limitations on serving pet-tested communion bread?

From the Bible

Behold, God is mighty, and desiseth not any: he is mighty in strength and wisdom. He preserveth not the life of the wicked: but giveth right to the poor. He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous Job 36: 5, 6, 7a

We don't have to let town decay

To the Editor:
Empty storefronts and offices in the business district, a marginal existence and future for the others. Limited growth potential for even the viable ones.

Deteriorating awnings, cracked, irregular and sinking sidewalks, dirty and patched windows. A declining agriculture economy and population, loss of young people, a narrowing tax and employment base, sandwiched between two larger communities with Wal-Mart stores.

Numerous homes for sale, few new ones under construction, empty apartments. Tenth in the nation for percentage population loss. Listed as 105th county in the state in "A Study of Economic Progress Across Kansas."

If we are to accept these facts as immutable and inevitable, then defeat is certain. A self-fulfilling prophecy has taken place. We have not died; we have committed suicide by apathy.

It's hard to leave small-town life

To the Editor:

As we get older, we tend to do some silly things. At least that is what our kids think some of the time. Perhaps I feel a little this way now as I prepare to tell my town "good-bye." At least for a while.

Some day I will be back, probably for a visit, or maybe up on the hill.

I shed a few tears when I think of all the things I am leaving here on moving to Oklahoma (not Texas, as has been reported). The decision was reached with my daughters, after much persuading on their part, that I need to be closer to them and avoid all the work of a yard and large home.

Oberlin will always be my home. It is a great place. Where else can you park downtown and not worry about locking your car, or go into a store and have the merchants greet you, and where you can consider all of them your friends. I know I won't have that in Jenks, Okla. But this is the choice I have made; I will make the most of it, although I will remember many things in Oberlin and the surrounding areas.

The citizens of Oberlin have been so good to me the past 26 years since I moved here. I am saying good-bye to many, many friends, but I am also inviting them to come to Oklahoma to see me. It would be great.

Letters to the Editor

By thinking out of the box and taking initiatives and responsibilities beyond that usually assumed by the city council or county commissioners, the first steps toward reversing the decay can take place.

Decatur County's strategic plan has been laid out and accepted by the state. The time has arrived for developing tactics to implement the plan. The mayor, city councils and county commissioners can set the tone and give a sense of direction, and with the Economic Development Corporation, Area Chamber of Commerce, service organizations and clubs, develop and execute the plan.

A step-by-step examination of the strategic plan needs to be done to determine where, when and how the council and commissioners can take effective action. Any tactics adopted must have the primary goal

of improving the educational, social and economic life of the community.

There are five present and potential income producers in Decatur County:

1. Agriculture.
2. Industry — present and future.
3. Recreation.
4. Tourism.
5. Retirement.

None of these are separate entities; they are joined and mixed. How we as individuals or organizations make them work will determine whether or not our community survives. There is no knight in shining armor who will ride in on a white horse and save us; we must do it ourselves.

Jay Anderson, D.V.M.
Oberlin city councilman

mote Oberlin, I will be in there tooting my horn, even from down south. I will be close to Cheryl and her family in Tulsa, and only an hour or so by air from Jamie and Allison in Houston.

I will be with my granddaughter, Kara, as she receives her Doctor of Pharmacy degree from Oklahoma University, and with Kendra when she receives her degree in Early Childhood Development, and I won't have to drive eight hours to get there. Then later in the month, my youngest granddaughter will receive her diploma as she graduates from high school in Houston.

Thanks to all — especially the "slaves" that have helped get me out of town. Are they really this excited to see me go? I will know some day. God bless.

Phyllis McKay
Oberlin

Memories kept her going

To the Editor:

I've enjoyed keeping up with friends and students through your publication over the years. There are too many names I no longer recognize now.

Keep up the good work.
Judy Waterman, Euleess, Texas



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@nwkansan.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
- Joan Betts historian
- 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.)