

## Big brother telling us how to run our elections

It's another one of those federal mandates, the kind that come with big money and lots of strings. The kind that states ought to fight, but seldom have the fortitude for.

This time, Kansas is worried about losing \$27 million in federal money for voting machines and other election improvements. Gov. Kathleen Sebelius vetoed a bill that would have required every Kansas voter to show identification at the polls.

The governor rightly figured that Kansans, used to being recognized by election judges, might be insulted by the rule.

The federal money sounds great until you find out that the feds think one set of machines for each county is plenty. That means that in Decatur County, for instance, voters from Jennings, Dresden and Norcatour would have to drive into Oberlin to vote in their own city elections.

Sometimes it's hard enough to get people interested in city elections when the polls are right down the street. But in Washington, they neither know nor care about places like Jennings. Never mind that out there, paper ballots produce a count just as fast as machines.

This is no laughing matter. Sherman County already has converted to the new machines and adopted the one-polling-place solution. Voters in Kanorado, the only city outside of Goodland, have gone through two elections now, driving 18 miles into the county seat to vote.

At least they have a freeway to make the trip on. Jennings people had better hope it doesn't rain, or they'll have to drive miles out of their way to avoid muddy county roads.

What a mixed up country this is, where people in Washington think they have to make every decision.

This law came out of the voting-machine fiasco in Florida three years ago. The idea is to give states money to replace outmoded systems that cause voting problems. Like many federal laws, it sounds almost sensible at first.

But one thing about the feds: they want to apply the same rules to everyone. That means urban counties, rural counties, East Coast counties, Alaskan counties. Just because it makes no sense is no reason not to be consistent.

Then there are the strings. It's not just the money. It's the fact that if a state or county doesn't update its systems, the law allows people to sue. So eventually, all the states may have to surrender.

Another proposal was to have only new voters show identification. Maybe that will fly, but what we really need is for states to start saying "no" to these things and get Washington off their back.

You'd think that integrity, common sense and the freedom to make their own decisions would be important, but up to now, it hasn't happened.

Too bad.

—Steve Haynes



## Wayward turtle gets rescued

He looked at us with bright red eyes, blinked and withdrew.

I took a different route leaving Colby last week. Instead of heading straight east, I went down the road toward I-70. That way I could get a Coke before leaving town.

Then I turned down some residential streets and finally found myself back downtown. That's when I saw him — in the middle of the street in downtown Colby.

I've rescued innumerable box turtles from the highways and byways of this fair state, and a few others, but this was the first time I'd rescued one sitting in the middle of a downtown street.

Not really knowing what else to do, I put him on the floor of the passenger's side seat and took off for Oberlin.

The turtle may have been tucked away as he sat awaiting destruction in Colby, but he was a lot more active in my car. He eventually made it from the front seat to the back seat and I could hear him scratching around back there for the entire 50-



## Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
chaynes@nwkansas.com

minute drive home.

In Oberlin, I put him on the lawn while I contemplated finding a box to put him in until we could find a good place in the country.

I was distracted by weeds in the garden, and when I turned around, the turtle was gone!

But not far, and not without sentries. Our three cats took turns following the feisty little fellow around the yard. When the felines got tired of the game, the neighbor's cat came over to see what the fuss was about.

We eventually took Mr. Turtle to the country. The last we saw of him, he was headed for a tall wheat field. I just hope he's smart enough to stay

out of the way of the combines.

After releasing the turtle, Steve, the dog and I went for a walk along a road. The road dips down to a bridge over the creek. As we started down, a whitetail deer stepped out of the grass and walked to the middle of the road. We all three froze and just watched her as she looked at us and then started for us to see what strange creatures we were.

A noise from a nearby field eventually startled her, and she took off the other way, her white flag raised high for us to follow. Even the dog seemed to enjoy the show.

It was a good day for a drive and a good day for a walk.

## She survives church school

I deserve a T-shirt that reads, "VBS Survivor".

Last week was Vacation Bible School at our church, and I volunteered with these naive words, "Oh, just use me wherever you need me."

Over the last few years, I had volunteered as a story teller and had not had that much direct interaction with individual classes. My first clue should have been the obvious absence of helpers wanting to be assigned to the kindergarten class. They must have known something I didn't.

Children about to enter kindergarten are at that stage where they want to venture out on their own, but they still want Mama with them. One moment they are all brave and independent; the next, they just want to sit on her lap. The flip side of that is that one moment Mama wants the same things.

Opening night, a dozen excited 5-year-olds came swarming into the auditorium of our church building, more than filling the row of seats assigned to our class. Luckily, 5-year-olds still like to share, so we did a lot of doubling up to accommodate everyone. But it had to be girls and girls or boys and boys, because they are also at that "E-e-ew! I'm not going to sit with them" stage.

It's usually not a good idea to ask 5-year-olds open-ended questions, unless you're prepared for the answer you might get. Take Moses for example. During story time on opening night, our preacher was portraying the character of Moses, complete with stone, awl and chisel. Moses asked the class, "Can anyone tell me something about the Ten



## Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
cplotts@nwkansas.com

Commandments?"

The room had been darkened, so I don't know who said it, but the answer was quick and sure. "Yeah. It's really hard and looks like a potato."

A potato? Where did that come from? Moses was taken aback. But after that, he kept his questions to those that had yes or no answers.

Snack time was also interesting. (Remind me to talk to the planners regarding sugar-free snacks.)

Following the Kool-Aid and cookies was prayer time. It started off fine. Payton wanted us to pray for her Aunt Becky, who is going to have a baby. But that sparked someone who had a cat that had kittens, which led us to a dog with puppies, which led to another pet, and another pet. Which is fine, "all creatures great and small," you know, but somewhere we lost our focus.

Five-year-olds also have the uncanny ability to get to the point. Another night during story time, the youth minister played the part of Aaron. Props included a very convincing replica of the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the tablets, Moses' staff, and manna. Little squares of baked pie crust simulated our impressions of manna, but it played to mixed reviews amongst

the kindergartners. Some liked it; some spit it out; and some wouldn't even try it.

Storyteller Aaron also made some powerful statements regarding the Law, Moses and the Israelites. After one such affirmative remark, little Nathan piped up, "Right on!"

We all chuckled. But think about it. "Right on" translates to a "yes" or an "I agree," which is exactly what "amen" means.

So, the teacher learned something from the students. Say what you think and when you agree, don't be afraid to say so. Right on!

## From the Bible

I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. Psalms 138:1-3

## Storms help green up plains

We left Colorado half a step ahead of the storms.

Almost. Leaving Walsenburg, at the base of the mountains, a big one caught up with us. We got pestered: rain, wind, hail so thick the road turned white.

I was expecting frogs next, maybe dogs and cats.

Cynthia's knuckles were white on the steering wheel. She slowed down to 35 to navigate the ice.

A huge storm was sweeping off the mountains and out onto the plains.

It's been doing that for days now, and the forecast is for a couple more weeks of storms.

It may not be a wet year yet, but it's certainly a different world out on the plains from this time last year.

Last year, all you could see for miles on end was brown. This year, on the high plains, everything is green as far as the eye can see. And you can see a long, long ways out there.

Farther west, where not much grows over a couple of inches tall, the grass is green and growing. There are still some brown spots. But not many.

And the rains are coming. Friday night, clouds covered



## Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
shaynes@nwkansas.com

nearly all of eastern Colorado. Saturday, they were sweeping down onto the plains again. Sunday, they made it to Oberlin, drenching the whole of Decatur County.

In the mountains, the daily monsoons have started — about a month and a half early.

Is the drought over? Seems to be. Are we back into a wet cycle? Only time will tell.

But Sunday, it sure felt like it. ☆☆☆☆

Out on the plains, you're lucky to meet a car every couple of miles or so. Most days.

When you start passing rig after rig pulling stock trailers, you know it must be a rodeo.

We're talking fancy rigs here, especially the trailers. They have space for a horse or two in the back, windows for the mounts, bunks up front for the riders.

And while the pickups pulling

them are mostly pretty fancy, you get the distinct impression that the horses have better accommodations than the cowboys.

Or cowgirls. We counted rigs. No. 23 was broke down, and we stopped to talk with two pretty little cowgirls waiting for the engine to cool down.

They'd been in a junior rodeo in Eads, and everyone was on the way to a high school competition down the road in Ordway.

In the parade were cowboys, cowgirls, mom and dads, brothers and sisters.

And of course, everybody's favorite roping and riding horses.

We counted 29 rigs, and the lights were still on at the rodeo grounds when we went by.

As high school sports go, it's a far cry from basketball. These families have a lot of money tied up in rodeo.

## Class of '22 alumnus getting along

To the Editor:

The following letter from Helen (Herzog) Riley was written to Karl Wendelin of Herndon. "The John Herzog family and the Lorenz Wendelin family lived a mile apart," Mr. Wendelin said, "a lifelong, beautiful relationship."

Mrs. Riley, who was honored recently on her 98th birthday, is a 1922 graduate of Decatur County High School.

Dear Karl:

The enclosed was printed in the *Centre Daily Times*, permission of officials here. I was interviewed, sort of, a take-off on my birth. At the turn of the century, there were no taxes and my living until April 15 when there are taxes. I never dreamed I would be around for 98 years. I can barely see but walk 130 steps and back to meals. Would you send the piece to *The Oberlin Herald*?

I just heard that Howard Banta, who was in my class, died at age 98. I wonder if there is anyone living from the class of 1922....

I make mistakes writing; can't see, but listen to classical music on radio. Think of the good old days on Beaver Creek. Wish I could take a ride with you in your machine. Best

## Letter to the Editor

to you!  
Helen  
The following is the story, in part, written about Mrs. Riley:

Helen Riley, a resident of Outlook Pointe at State College, Pa., is 98.

A gifted and popular pianist, Helen Herzog was born on Income Tax Day in 1905 on a farm near Herndon.

John Herzog, Helen's father, her mother, Alice (Cathcart) Herzog, and her older sister, Alicia, recognized Helen's talent and started her music lessons when she was 5 years old.

On June 11, 1926, Helen was awarded a certificate of graduation in Piano Counterpoint and Composition from the American Conservatory of Music, Chicago. She taught music at Decatur Community High School in Oberlin, where she met Wilbur "Jack" Clifford Riley, a teacher and coach. After their marriage, Jack taught and coached at Fort Hays State University in Hays.

Then Jack accepted a position at the Hill School in Pottstown, Pa.,

and the couple and their youngsters, Tad and Lori, lived on the school campus.

After her husband died, Helen became a librarian at the Hill School and a devotee of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Their daughter, Lori, married a school business administrator, Ralph Moyer, and Helen moved to State College to be close to her family.

She lives at Outlook Pointe in State College and has four grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.



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

E-mail: obherald@nwkansas.com

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