

## Humans aren't as smart as we think about disease

Every year or two, a new disease pops up just to show us that we don't know as much about medicine or the human condition as we think we do.

First there was ebola, a virus which has remained in Africa, and then AIDS, which hasn't.

Then in the U.S., hauntavirus, not as deadly as ebola and apparently harder to catch. Still, several people die each year after coming in contact with mouse droppings in the American Southwest.

And now SARS, a sort of super cold that can kill more than a quarter of those who catch it, children, the aged and even healthy adults.

You'd think, given the state of modern medicine, that we'd know all of the diseases we could possibly face by now.

You'd be wrong. The immunovirus which causes AIDS may have lurked in Africa for centuries, but until it entered the human population (maybe from monkeys), no one noticed it.

Hauntavirus maybe killed a handful of people every year in the U.S., but it took modern medical techniques to track it down.

SARS is a little different, and all the scarier for that difference.

SARS apparently is a type of coronavirus, a family of bugs known to cause the "common" cold. But no coronavirus has been noted to kill.

While it might be a new mutation — simi-

lar to the new influenza strains which pop up every few years — scientists think the SARS coronavirus may have crossed over from animals.

They don't know for sure. It's all too new. But the speed with which modern medicine has moved to isolate, identify and control the virus is impressive. We won't know until winter whether they have controlled it, or just delayed the start of a pandemic.

Scary as these natural contagions might be — remember that plague set civilization back a couple hundred years — there are scarier things still out there.

Remember how potent those anthrax spores were? What happens if some rogue nation's biological weapons get loose? How would we fight an outbreak of smallpox, ebola or SARS?

Or suppose a bacterium genetically modified to produce some useful substance turns deadly? It could happen.

It's a race to see if science can get to the pass ahead of the next superbug. And nature, nasty as she can be, might get some help here from man.

Around the world, health authorities know how serious this threat is. In China, the government has decreed the death penalty for those who ignore SARS quarantines and spread the disease.

Think about that when the guy at the next desk sneezes this fall. — Steve Haynes

## Battle with grass ends in victory

It sounded easy enough: rent a sod cutter and strip the old lawn off the yard at Jennifer's house.

That's where theory ends and reality begins. Jennifer has a VERY big yard. But, armed with shovels and a wheel barrow, we attacked. I use that military term because it was a war. Us against the sod. And for awhile there, it looked like the sod might win.

But, do you remember watching old western movies, where the pioneers were under attack? They had their wagons circled and were all about to be killed when you heard a bugler sound "Charge." Do you remember the relief you felt when the cavalry came charging over the hill to save them? Well, that's the same relief we felt when David Eskew came riding in on his new tractor.

He wasn't wearing a white hat and he didn't say, "Howdy, Ma'am." But he couldn't have been a more welcome sight. He is the very proud owner of a brand new, less-than-15-hours-on-the-motor utility tractor. It is complete with front loader, blade, tiller, mowing deck and any other bell or whistle that can be put on such a piece of equipment.

To make a long story short, David



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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made quick work of lifting the ugly, old sod off the yard, leaving a peeled-clean earthen base ready to be tilled and seeded. I call him "The Lawn Ranger."

Oh, there was still plenty of hand work to do. Enough that we are all complaining of aching muscles, but at least it's done. We would have been at it for two weeks trying to do it by hand.

Jennifer has this vision of her dream lawn — complete with a kidney-shaped berm, three-tiered pergola, water feature, trees, patio, brick-lined sidewalks, and a white picket fence. Her dad and I just want to help her dream come true.

Jennifer is not afraid of hard work. She has tilled and seeded small areas in the back yard and in front of her house. Grass has already

emerged and is taking hold. But, if you say anything to her about the lawn, be careful how you word it. She's a little sensitive. Someone asked her if it was a Ch-Ch-Chia pet.

### From the Bible

... there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. II Corinthians 7b, 8, 9ab

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## GHOST(SOLDIER) BUSTERS



## Kids' cats show up for vacation

I haven't told any cat tails, er tales, for a while, so here's the latest on the Haynes felines:

Youngest daughter finished her grades and packed up for a summer in Colorado. She farmed out the classroom gerbils and fish, but dumped her two gray cats in individual carriers and showed up on Mom and Dad's doorstep on a bright, sunny day last week.

Since she had decided to go visit a great aunt in Denver, in northern Colorado, on the way to Creede, which is in southern Colorado, she asked us to take the cats with us as we headed out to open the house.

Youngest daughter's cats are spooky, but they have both spent considerable time at our home.

Come to think of it, all our children's animals (except oldest daughter's birds) have spent considerable time at our place over the years.

She let both cats out of their carriers and we all settled in for the night. We would all leave about noon the next day — youngest daughter for Denver, us for Creede.

In the morning, only one cat could be found. We searched the whole house. Someone thought they saw something move under a stairway in the basement, but no one could get back there and it was getting time to



### Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
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go if we were going to get to Creede before midnight.

We took off with one cat. Daughter continued to search, but soon had to leave also. We called our catsitter and warned that there should be one yellow female, one Siamese, one gray-and-white female — and one gray female of skittish disposition.

Don't let the gray one out, please, we said.

We all worried all weekend as to whether there would be four cats or only three when we returned.

We were half right. There were only three cats at the back door when we came home on Saturday night. There was a white and gray one. There was a Siamese. And, there was a very lonely gray kitty wondering where Mom and her playmate had gone.

There was no April Alice. Our yellow cat, the one we picked up when she was pregnant a year ago

and carried home, was gone.

Cats just don't seem to return when they disappear — at least ours don't. April Alice is a home-loving cat. She doesn't stray much and she doesn't spend the night outside if she can help it.

I was devastated. My only hope was that she had gotten caught in someone's garage.

In the morning when I got to the back door, there was April Alice. The neighbors reported her flying out of their garage the minute they opened the door.

Sometimes miracles do happen.

My only problem now is the fourth cat. But that will solve itself. Youngest daughter has to return to Lawrence for a teachers' meeting in two weeks. She can pick up her cat on her way back to Colorado.

Until then, we're a four-cat family, with little chance that any two of them can get along.

## Times not first to face problem

Everyone asks what I think of Jayson Blair, the *New York Times* reporter who apparently went from fabricating quotes to making up whole stories, filing datelines around the country from his New York apartment.

Heads are rolling at *The Times*, arguably the nation's best newspaper, because top editors apparently ignored complaints and corrections which piled up at Blair's feet.

The evidence shows that Blair, a bright and personable young black man, had a shady record but was promoted time after time. He came to *The Times* as an intern, then was promoted to reporter. Most hires at the paper have 10 or more years experience, often with advanced degrees.

Would anyone else have gotten the kind of breaks young Jayson got?

Maybe. He apparently is quite the con man.

But few would even have gotten to *The Times*, which usually requires a record of accomplishment at smaller papers. Jayson Blair no doubt got where he was as a minority hire.

And his editors, bless their hearts, wanted to believe in him.

*The Times* is not the only great newspaper to fall victim to lazy or false reporting, just the latest. *The Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Washington Post*, there is a long list.

The truth is, nearly every newspa-



### Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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per has some experience with fake reporting. At *The Goodland Star-News*, we had a reporter who either made up quotes or, more likely, got the sources mixed up and used a quote from one school superintendent with the name of another.

Based on one complaint, we launched an investigation — and the reporter disappeared. He was gone until Christmas, when he sheepishly came back to town. He found himself facing criminal charges.

A couple of years ago, a large Kansas paper caught a photographer "enhancing" one of his photos. Under pressure to "get the shot," the guy came back to the office one night and found that he had a great basketball shot, but no ball in the picture.

He found one in another frame and moved it into the "great" shot.

The only problem was, on closer examination, you could see a piece of the real ball in the finished photo. He was fired the next day.

And of course, Jayson Blair is gone from *The Times*, along with the executive editor and managing edi-

tor. The paper is going to have to answer questions about why it allowed him to stay as long as he did, considering the fact that nearly every editor who supervised him had complaints about his work.

Blair left a trail of corrections and mangled facts that would have gotten anyone else fired at a tough paper with high standards like *The Times*.

The truth is, his editors wanted to believe in him. They wanted to trust him. And he took advantage of them.

Now, Jayson Blair has a book contract, and *The New York Times* has a black eye. It will survive. After more than a century and a half, *The Times* will be here 150 years from now.

But the damage it done — to a great newspaper, to journalism as a whole, and oddly enough, to the cause of affirmative action.

Jayson Blair needs to pay for that. *The Times* ought to sue him for every penny he'll ever make on his book deal. It would be a travesty to let him profit from this mess.

## Photo Policy

*The Oberlin Herald* wants to emphasize photos of people doing things in the community. If you know of an event or news happening that we should attend, please call 475-2206.

Please be sure to allow a couple of days' notice so we can arrange to be there.

Space in the paper is limited and so is the time of our staff, so we may not be able to get to every event, but we will try.

Because space is so limited, we cannot run team or group photos, any pictures of people lined up or of people passing checks, certificates and the like. (We will always try to make room for a story about any of these events, however.)

We do run wedding and engagement pictures and "mug" shots with

stories and obituaries, when they are provided to us. Please remember that we need a clear, sharp picture. Dark or fuzzy prints will not work.

We cannot return photos unless you submit a self-addressed, stamped envelope with clear instructions for return. Other photos submitted may be picked up at our office within two weeks. After that, they will be disposed of.

Laser proofs of photos which have run in *The Herald* are available for 50 cents each, first come, first served. Special-order laser prints of photos will be available at \$3 each for about two weeks after publication.

We can take passport photos if you provide a roll of color film. ASA 200, 12 exposure works fine. The charge is \$8.50 per person.

## Write

*The Oberlin Herald* encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

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We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses.