

A hand to city for getting trees to beautify streets

Here are some things going right in Oberlin: Cheers for the City Council and the Tree Board for bringing 100 trees into town for planting.

The original plan was to offer these eight-footers at cost, and many of them were passed out to citizens that way. Emphasis was to get them planted on the city right of way, or parking, along Oberlin streets.

You can see these saplings — burr oaks, lindens and others — in many parts of town. In the coming century, they'll help carry on the tradition of spreading shade trees which has helped make this a nice place to live.

Some of the trees went in along Cass Avenue, where the contractor replacing the water line had removed many century-old elms and other trees. Though small, the replacements already dress up the street.

The tree board may have hit on a successful plan here. Shade tree planting has to be three or four times normal with the boost from this program.

Maybe they can do it again this fall, and again next spring. There still are a lot of holes in the street tree constellation.

If it hadn't been for far-thinking people 100 years ago, after all, we wouldn't have the trees we have today. If you have bare space in the parking in front of your home, consider putting a couple of trees in it this fall.

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The city's water project seems to be working, cursed as the water system is.

With the new main, pressure is up on Cass Avenue and should be better all over the heart of town.

Mineral deposits from the rotten Oberlin water had all but closed off the old main. The new one should give years of service.

Now the city needs to find a way to help open up some of the cross mains, which may be equally bad. It also needs to get the blending system to work and get some more wells on line before it gets really hot.

The water project has been dogged by bad luck. Test wells south of town looking for a better-quality water supply came up dry. Many of the city's older wells are either dry or contaminated. And even the irrigation well it bought last year turned out to be bad, at least in early testing.

Water is tough to find out here, but at least we have some, bad though it may taste.

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Fourth of July celebrations were low-key, but well attended for a year when harvest extended over the holiday weekend.

In Oberlin, the Prairie Chapel United Methodists were selling burgers and hot dogs to a small but steady crowd at City Park. With no organized games or events, people came and went.

There was a good crowd for fireworks, though many farmers reported that they had to watch from their combine seats.

In Jennings on Saturday night, things were more relaxed, but the show was good and people were having a nice time.

The holiday weekend was a good time to think about what our independence means after two and a quarter centuries — and to be thankful for a bumper harvest rolling in.

— Steve Haynes

State arrayed in green beauty

Driving across Kansas, you're struck by the fact that it's as green as you'll ever see it.

After three years of drought, the state is lush and beautiful. Pastures are heavy with grass. Wheat is bending over, heavy with grain, at least where it hasn't been cut.

Back east, corn is as high as the proverbial elephant's eye, with tassels just starting to emerge. Everywhere, there are flowers. Flowers in fields, flowers in pastures, flowers in the barrow ditch.

In the northwest, we've seen a succession of white penstemon, yellow composites, primrose and other prairie flowers. Now the yellow coneflowers are out.

Back in the Flint Hills, purple coneflowers predominate, but the yellow ones have staked out a section or two of grass. There are flowers of every color and description, from yellow to bright red to blue to white.

No place in the world grows wildflowers in profusion like Kansas in a wet year. And there is not a place in the state where rainfall is below normal so far this year.

We left the Flint Hills in late afternoon, driving through the deep-cut valleys leading up to the Kaw and the Smoky Hill. We took the road less traveled, winding down through the hills in deepening blue



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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haze, marveling at the beauty of this deep green world.

We contemplated our choices of fast food as we approached I-70, then decided to take a gamble. In a town like Junction City, we reasoned, there ought to be a good barbecue place, a real Mexican restaurant (rather than plastic Tex Mex on the highway), or a nice little cafe.

Time was, when traveling a half century ago, you gambled on these places wherever you went. The genius of McDonalds was that the food was always the same, no matter which store you were at.

It might never be terrific, but it would always be good, always be McDonalds. But when the chains took the gamble out of eating on the go, they took some of the adventure out of it, too.

In Junction City, we found Chubby's Barbecue on South Main, with tender beef and smoky ribs to die for. We're going back; that's for sure. We brought a plate of ribs

home and it wasn't nearly enough. The sides, creamy slaw, beans with lots of bacon, chunky potato salad, were great, too.

Then we pushed on into the gathering dusk. Harvest was going all across the state at once, at least where people could get into the fields. There was more uncut wheat back east than out here, but the combines were rolling deep into the night, racing thunderstorms pushing in from the northwest.

West of Bennington, a crew was vacuuming up grain from a semi rollover that had happened the day before. Some poor person probably got the scare of a lifetime, dumping that rig in the ditch.

But most places, harvest was going well until the rain hit. We drove on as the combines scrambled for dry ground, and it rained all the way from Concordia to Oberlin.

The rain may be getting to be a nuisance, but let's not offer to go back to the way it was last year, OK?



Lawnmowers not working out

After our little rodeo with the calves last week, I'm happy to report that Ike and Mike are very satisfied in their new confines. They run and kick, munch through their hay, lay in the shade and wait for me to bring them breakfast and supper.

Soon, I hope they get the picture that they are there for a purpose — to keep the weeds down. So far, they just think weeds are to walk through and lay on. Part of their job is to mow down that lot so I don't have to.

Last summer, we had two calves. One we sold, the other is being fattened out in a farmer friend's feed lot along with his steers. Now it's almost time for Bucky to take that one-way trip. You know. The one he doesn't have to pack for. The one where we pick him up in nice, neat packages marked, "sirloin," "rib eye" and "ground round."

—ob—

To merely say "It's hot!" doesn't do justice to the degree temperatures have risen to in the last few days. The time and temperature sign on one of the local banks read 114 degrees the other day. Plants "toasted" in their containers. Sheets hung out on the line to dry were ready to fold before the last clothespin was on.

It's a heat you can't escape from if you're outside. It's even hot in the shade. It's a heat that sucks your breath away. And coupled with the wind, it's a heat that blows like a blast furnace.

—ob—

I feel sorry for the men and women working out in the wheat fields.

Driving the combine wouldn't be so bad with an air-conditioned cab. It's usually the farmer's wife who ends up driving the old, beat-up, windows-wide-open grain truck to town. There she gets to sit in line waiting to get weighed, waiting to unload, waiting to weigh again and then hurrying back to the field, where she gets to wait some more.

This time in the dust. With the



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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bugs.

If you're a farmer-husband, you've got to know she loves you. Most hired men wouldn't put up with the conditions you ask her to endure. And she usually does it with a smile, knowing she still has to get a meal on the table when you come dragging in at night after it gets too damp to cut.

So guys, do something really sweet for that woman. It doesn't have to be a fancy trip or a diamond ring. Try lighting the candles in the bathroom (you know, the ones you usually say stink) and draw her a nice cool bath, with bubbles; send the kids outside for an hour; and say those two little words she longs to hear: "Thank you."

—ob—

Dick and Donna's middle son, Kirk, is studying in France this summer. He is working for a degree in French, so what better place to learn. His mom is keeping the family updated by relaying his e-mail letters on to the rest of us. He tells us that the French are very particular about their grammar and everyone, including children, speaks proper French. He said it is very humbling to have your pronunciation corrected by a 6-year-old.

Our other nephew with international connections is Mark Kelley, Bill and Betty's middle son. (Is there something about birth order that makes a child adventuresome?) Mark has worked abroad for several years, his last stint in Syria. His dad reports that Mark is coming home in a couple of weeks for a visit. His next

assignment, he hopes, will be in Saudi Arabia. Oh, Lord! Out of the frying pan, into the fire!

—ob—

Two weeks and counting! That's how long it is until I meet Kara in Wichita to pick up our youngest granddaughter, 4-year-old Taylor. She will spend two whole weeks with us before her mother (and possibly her Aunt Halley) come to retrieve her.

We probably told Taylor way too soon that she was going to get to come to Grandma's. Kara said Taylor came to her the other day, with her little hands on her hips, and in a very indignant tone said, "Mom. When am I going to Grandma's house?"

I hope we're both ready for this. No. Not Taylor. I mean her mom and me. I haven't been a "working mother" in a long time. But I remember it can be a balancing act. And two weeks is a long time for a mother to be separated from her baby.

Don't worry about Taylor. She'll be fine.

From the Bible

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8, 9

Cats keep getting left behind

Youngest daughter has been rather careless with her cats this last month. She has picked them up and dropped them off across two states.

It all started when she stopped by our house on the way to her summer job in Colorado. She brought her two cats — Jez and Rupert.

Since she was staying a couple of days, she let the cats out of their carriers. They met our three cats and there was magic in the air. Unfortunately, it was black magic. They hated each other on sight.

Still, within a couple of days, all was calm.

Then it was time to repack the visitors for the next leg of the trip from Lawrence to Creede, Colo.

Jez was caught and caged, but Rupert was nowhere to be found.

After searching high and low, daughter finally abandoned her to a few more weeks in enemy territory.

Here she stayed until daughter came back through on the way back to Lawrence for some meetings and a doctor's appointment about three weeks later.

This time, Rupert was caught,



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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caged and on her way.

Jez was left behind in Creede because it didn't seem a good idea to cart her across two states when daughter only planned to be gone four days. A friend promised to check on her to make sure there was plenty of food and water available.

However, once in Lawrence, nothing much went right. The four days turned into three weeks. Calls were made to cat sitter and neighbors, asking them to check on both cat and a bunch of newly purchased house plants.

Finally, daughter and Rupert were able to head back for Creede. There they were greeted by one very lonely, very lovey Jez.

Peace was short, however. Less than a week later, friends from Lawrence showed up. While one just wanted to spend a couple of days in the mountains, the other one, Rachel, will spend the rest of the summer waiting tables at a sandwich shop during the day and at the bar by night.

Since she is staying for the rest of the summer, Rachel brought her cats — Mamma and a trio of three-week-old kittens.

Now the house in Colorado is overrun with cats.

I can't wait for vacation time so I can get out there and see them all. I love cats, after all.

Mother still mourns for daughter

To the Editor:

It is hard to believe that my daughter died more than 20 years ago. I needed to get the truth in what happened to her.

I found myself in the company of one of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation attorneys, along with my hired attorney, in a private room near the judges' rooms in Topeka. I brought my note pad and pen in case I needed them. I was promised by the attorney I had hired we would go over all of the records, and I would give him the red flag if need be.

Can you believe the Kansas Bu-

reau of Investigation laid down two records for me to choose from, as they really did not know which was the right one?

I sat somewhat dazed — I could hardly believe my eyes. They had no idea which record was the right one. It caused me deep pain that they did not even know the date my precious daughter had died.

It was hard to keep from crying,

knowing my child was not important enough for them to know the date of her death.

The attorney that we hired took \$7,500 from us to get these records. He could not help but know that I did most of the research and investigation.

Elsie Wolters
Oberlin

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