

## Kansas just doesn't need any more places to gamble

There'll be another big push for more casino gambling in the Kansas Legislature this year. Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, who appointed a special commission to study the issue, likely will get behind the drive. She'll say the state could use the revenue and the jobs, but that's an open question.

Lots of interests are willing to spend big money pushing gambling, and most of them stand to make money. Race track owners have lost most of their profits to casinos; they want slots to boost their fortunes. Suppliers want to open up our state. Others want to start new gambling operations.

There's no denying the appeal of casino games. A glance at state traffic statistics shows that U.S. 75 averages 10,000 cars per day north of Topeka, and just 5,000 north of Holton, meaning that a lot of people exit at the Indian casinos up there.

If casinos out in the middle of nowhere draw like that, imagine what they could do in or near major Kansas cities.

There's money to be made in the casino business.

But the question remains, do we really want or need more gambling in Kansas?

Time was when the state looked on gambling, liquor and prostitution as vices to be suppressed. All of those can be destructive and addictive, especially liquor and gaming.

But we found it next to impossible to get rid of Demon Rum, and there's always been a horse book or a card game going on in this state, legal or not.

Then the state latched onto gambling as a money-making scheme and got into the busi-

ness itself. The state lottery opened the door for Indian casinos and the Legislature gave us gambling at dog and horse tracks.

The tracks made money for a while, but big "riverboat" casinos over in Missouri have siphoned much of the profit, and the Indian casinos have taken the rest.

But gambling as a business depends on the immutable fact that people lose money. Otherwise, there'd be no profit for the house. Someone has to be paying the casino's bills.

Legalizing gambling puts the state in the position of encouraging vice, not suppressing it. The state's Lotto game is pretty much the same as the mob's old numbers racket, though the mob used to give better odds.

Is that what we want for Kansas?

Now that we're making money off of liquor and gambling, should we also consider taxing marijuana and prostitution? Or maybe state-run brothels?

It's almost impossible to win the battle against vice by passing laws, or we'd have made it work during Prohibition. It's another thing altogether to have the state promoting a vice, but with gambling, that's what we're doing.

More casinos? The \$50 million the state stands to make would be a drop in the budget. We've no obligation to bail out track owners or make big casino firms rich.

From this point, there's plenty of gambling opportunities in our state already, maybe more than enough. The social costs are great.

Let's just say no. — Steve Haynes

## Casual obscenity steams her

The following column addresses an issue that may be offensive. If you do not wish to be exposed to graphic language, please stop now.

Between the two of us, Jim and I keep the highways hot going to and from the county seats where we work.

Most of those miles are spent listening to the radio. And even though I worked many years for a country radio station, you will usually find us tuned to a Christian station.

Today we learned that the Federal Communications Commission has granted permission for the "F" word to be used on any television or radio show, anytime day or night. The commission said the word can be used whenever desired except in sexual situations.

Well, duh! A sexual situation is the last place it gets used. That word gets banded about with such a casual air that it has taken on the meaning of a verb, an adjective, maybe even a noun.

Now you and I both know what I mean when I say "the 'F' word". But that certainly doesn't mean I want to hear it while I'm having my morning coffee or watching television with my granddaughters. The feds have protected us over the years from offensive vulgarities on the airways, but ever so slowly those guidelines have eroded. Proper language has become a gray area.



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
cplotts@nwkansan.com

Liberals will say, "That's the way real people talk. Programming merely reflects the morals of the community."

I say, "Perhaps people talk that way, but they shouldn't."

The way we speak to one another reflects the respect we have for each other and for our society. Your right to say what you want stops where my ears begin.

Problem is most conversations don't come with a warning label (like this column did) to alert the listener as to the content. It's too late after you've already heard it. You can't "unhear" something. Nor can you forget it. There is nothing positive gained from hearing vulgarities.

Even adults who do use vulgar language don't want their children to use it. I've seen kids get their mouths washed out for speaking the same words they have heard their parents say.

In the early days of television, there were about seven words that couldn't be uttered. By today's stan-

dards, it seems puritanical that pregnant was once a prohibited word. Now, on any given cop show somebody is "kn—ed up"; they aren't merely mad, they are "pi—ed off"; someone isn't stupid, they are a b—head. The line keeps getting pushed farther and farther back.

If there was ever a time when you should write your congressman, this is it.

All it takes for evil to prevail is for a few good people to do nothing.

### From the Bible

Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

John 12: 44-46



## No room in the inn's good news

Steve and I took a mini-vacation last week.

He claims he has to get me out of town to keep me away from work.

Even that doesn't work, however, because we both take our computers.

This was a one-day trip to Denver for a concert, a glass of wine and a night at a downtown hotel.

Steve got tickets for the Lucinda Williams concert on Wednesday night and I booked us a room at the Comfort Inn downtown. We planned to drive in after work, park at the hotel and walk to the concert, which was at the Fillmore about 12 blocks east of downtown.

Steve and I have a routine when arriving at hotels. I check in and he deals with the luggage—in this case two computer cases and a small suitcase.

But there was a hangup at the desk. The clerk told me they were booked up and the person who had had our room the night before wasn't leaving.

In other words, there was no room in the Inn.

So, for the same price they had booked us a room at the Brown Palace across the street.

Oh woe is us—forced to stay at the luxury hotel. Life is tough.

We boogied across the road and checked in as a pair of bellhops grabbed our bags and practically carried us upstairs.

There was ice in the bucket, wa-



### Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
chaynes@nwkansan.com

ter in the silver pitcher and a mint on the pillow.

Life was tough.

We dropped our stuff and headed for the Fillmore, although the bellhop's suggestion of hors d'oeuvres and music in the lobby was tempting.

The walk was brisk but enjoyable and we arrived during the middle of the opening act—a nice band that ended its set with a gospel song.

The Fillmore is a strange place. It has the stage at one end and what appears to be a huge dance floor in the middle with a few small tables scattered down the sides. Mostly, however, it hosts concerts.

We were able to get a spot up front and after about 45 minutes, the main attraction came on.

Lucinda Williams was weird, but we had a good view of the show even though we had to stand the entire time. The band was fantastic. Ms. Williams has a great voice but she went from overly talkative to haggard within a few songs and appeared almost too tired to finish the

show. Her voice never gave out, though, and at a big place, like Red Rocks, we would never have noticed the slumping shoulders and closed eyes.

Steve, I and several others in the audience had our own opinions of why she was having trouble, but while others voiced the thought that rehab was in her future, I kept my mouth shut. She gave us what we paid for and the rest wasn't my business.

After the show, we wandered into a late-night restaurant and had a snack and a glass of wine, then it was back to our substitute hotel room, which had free high-speed Internet access.

Life is tough, I told you.

We both got stories to edit and things to work on for the way home off the Internet while having coffee in our room the next morning. Then it was time to pack up and head back to the real world.

It wasn't a very long vacation, but it was a fun one and I even got a little work done.

## We're the ones killing our towns

If rural America is dying, what's killing it?

Though it's popular to blame Wal-Mart, I don't think that's it.

Wal-Mart is a symptom, not a disease.

What's killing rural America is rural Americans.

We don't realize how good we have things, and we don't invest in our own, wonderful way of life.

We teach our kids that they need to go off to the university and get a good job in the city. We don't make jobs for them back at home like we used to.

We do our shopping out of town or with some big, faceless corporation. We don't support the hometown grocery or the mom-and-pop stores on Main Street.

We're hooked on the excitement of going to the big stores and buying big-brand merchandise.

A trip to the next-bigger town becomes a social outing, not just treason to the local economy.

But it's more complicated than that.

Wal-Mart exists because it does what people want.

It has low prices, if you don't mind hiking through a jammed up, ding-and-dent parking lot. It's open all day so people can shop when they have time.

One retail expert notes that in an era when everyone works, a store that's open 9 to 5 must be catering to the retired and the unemployed. That's not the most profitable demographic, is it?



### Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
shaynes@nwkansan.com

Go to any Wal-Mart at night or on Sunday, or 9 p.m. on a Wednesday, and you'll find cars from all the surrounding towns.

Go downtown in those same towns, and you'll find most of the stores locked and shuttered.

Maybe the owners are home complaining. Maybe they're over shopping at Wal-Mart along with all their customers.

Most of our towns have places to buy the things we need. These businesses provide jobs that keep our towns going.

They are the building blocks of our communities. But we drive right by them on our way out of town.

Then we get together and complain about the declining population and the ever-lower enrollment in our schools.

We gripe that it's tough to attract new businesses. We complain that no one wants to live "out here."

We'd all be a lot better off if we learned to invest in our own towns and the businesses that support them.

Instead of hitting the highway to buy a car or a coat, we ought to look downtown. Out on the highway. Or

worst come to worse, in the next county over.

Not in the city. Not at some chain store that sucks profits out of our town and sends them to five of the wealthiest people in the world.

We don't, though. We think we're going to save money on the road. We're mad at the town grocer or the Ford dealer. We want to have some fun.

Hey, nobody spends all his money at home. There are things you can't get here. There are things we want in the city.

That's not the point. If we want rural America to survive, rural Americans have to start investing in our own back yards.

We need to spend most of our money at home. We need to shop at the town grocery and support the downtown stores. We need to spend our money where it supports jobs and taxes and profits at home, not in Arkansas.

Even if it costs a few cents more. Because if we don't, we're all going to have to move to the city.

And while it's a nice place to visit, I don't want to live there.

## 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 ..... managing editor  
Mary Lou Olson ..... society editor  
Judy Jordan ..... proofreader  
Carolyn Kelley-Plotts ..... columnist  
Cynthia Haynes ..... business manager  
David Bergling ..... advertising manager  
Pat Cozad ..... want ads/circulation  
Karla Jones, Doris Miller ..... advertising production  
Joan Betts ..... historian  
Marsha Morford ..... mailing  
Whitney Beinke ..... page makeup

Published each Wednesday by Haynes Publishing Co., 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Periodicals mail postage paid at Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Steve and Cynthia Haynes, publishers  
Official newspaper of Oberlin, Jennings, Norcat, Dresden and Decatur County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association, Nebraska Press Association and Inland Press Association.

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.)

