

Oberlin needs to switch to high gear and get water

Despite more than four years of efforts by the city, Oberlin seems to be running out of water.

Thousands of dollars spent on drilling, exploration, a mixing system and land with an irrigation well have brought, so far, nothing but a series of dry holes.

A water project with a \$1.5 million bankroll came in under budget, but brought no new water.

An irrigation well on the land the city bought turned out to produce water high in uranium.

Drilling outside of town in a search for better water produced a flood of engineering and drilling fees. The city might have produced more by hiring a water witch equipped with a divining rod.

The mixing system installed during the water project two years ago remains unused, though it could have been hooked up to add a little water to the thirsty system.

It's not that city officials aren't doing anything, or even that they haven't done the right thing. Just that we still don't have any water. System capacity has, in fact, slipped nearly 20 percent over the last few years. With the drought, city wells are lower and producing less than they used to.

Consumers face another summer of odd-even water restrictions. No one is very happy about getting up at midnight to set sprinklers, but most people seem to be trying to save water. The alternative is a ban on outdoor water

use which would dry up the town's lawns and gardens.

It wouldn't be the end of the world. The town would survive, and the drought will end some day.

Water is vital to the town's future, though, and the city ought to redouble its efforts to grow the water supply.

If it takes a treatment plant, then we'll have to pay the price. If the city decides to tell the state and the federal government to stick it and not meet new water quality standards, that'd be a decision many would support. The government probably would sue, though. Either way, it will be expensive.

Grass, trees, flowers and vegetables are not just a luxury. They're part of what makes an inhospitable plain tolerable, even pleasant. Green is important, because no one wants to live here without it.

Citizens can and should help. We can give up daytime watering, and the city should ban it permanently. As time goes by, we could plant more stuff that needs less water. That would help, too.

Most people have already done some of these things. A few, perhaps, just won't.

Whatever the city does, it won't produce more water this year.

Officials need to act now, though, to be sure that there will be water next year and the year after.

— Steve Haynes

Check where '911' call is going

Out on U.S. 83 the other night, everyone was pretty much lost.

The driver probably thought he was in his own lane, though the marks on the pavement showed he'd been more than three feet over the yellow line when he crashed into the front wheel of the semi.

The witnesses thought they were in Nebraska, though they were, in fact, more than four miles south of the state line.

The truck driver just shook his head.

The impact had unseated the front axle of his tractor, causing the wheels to fold under, sort of like a cat with its paws tucked in.

The Red Willow County dispatcher just assumed the wreck was in Nebraska, too. She sent an ambulance and a passel of firemen south to look for it.

Fortunately, the driver only had a scratch or two, despite ramming the loaded semi at speed.

The wreck was well into Kansas, and the Oberlin dispatcher seemed surprised when I asked her if help was on the way.

She had to call sheriff's officers and an ambulance crew out of bed, and they still made it to the scene before the McCook firemen.

There should be some road safety lessons here:

- Slow down and think. It's an emergency, but being in a hurry won't make things any better. Rushing could make them a whole lot worse.

- When calling 911 from a cell phone, your call could go anywhere. Never assume the dispatcher knows



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
schaynes@nwkansas.com

where you are. Never assume you know where you are.

On the north side of the hill, north of the feed yard in Decatur County, it's better than even odds that your call will hit a Nebraska tower. An emergency call will be routed to Nebraska, maybe to McCook, but not always.

Cell phone systems are full of little quirks like that.

A little knowledge of geography and attention to details, like the big "Welcome to Kansas" sign at the border, goes a long way.

Be aware.

- When calling from the road, always ask which dispatcher you have, what town he or she is in. You might be surprised at the answer.

Of course, dispatchers ought to answer the phone by county-seat name.

Most people probably don't know what county they are in, but they do know town names.

Many dispatchers just say something like "911 emergency" or "County dispatch," which isn't as helpful.

- If someone is hurt, call for help now. Time is precious. But take time to figure out what is going on.

- Check for injuries. The dis-

patcher needs to know what to send and how to respond.

Is anyone missing? Anyone trapped? Anyone bleeding?

- Keep people off the road and out of the way. No need in someone else getting hit.

If it's safe, have someone with a flashlight warn oncoming traffic.

Put on emergency flashers, especially at night. (People are pretty good about these things, actually.)

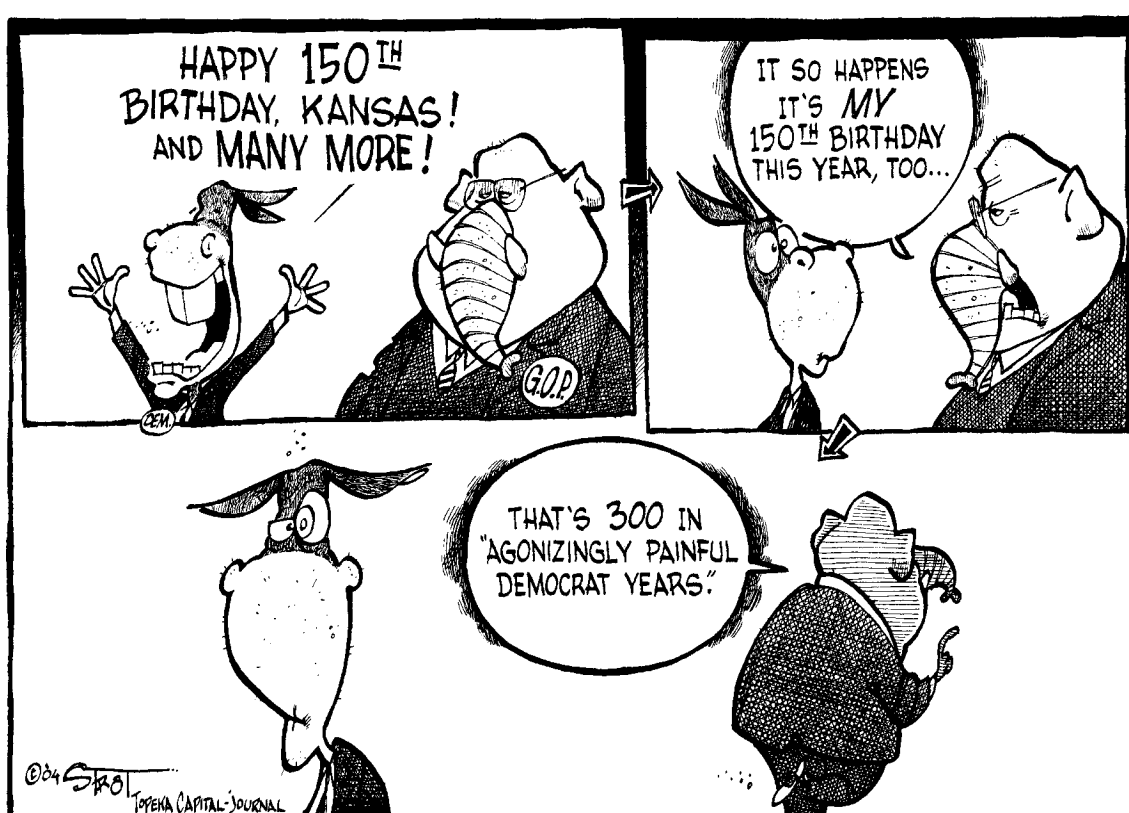
- Stay calm. Give the dispatcher your phone number and ask for a callback when help is on the way.

And get specifics. Be sure help is coming to you. Dispatchers are good, but emergencies can be confusing.

As always, communication is key. On the road at night, bad communication can cause serious delays.

From the Bible

Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee.
Deuteronomy 16:17



Bear joins folks at food festival

We had just finished our lunch and were admiring the art and artistry of old friends and new acquaintances when word of the bear reached us.

We were in Creede, Colo., the little town we lived in when our children were young. Creede is an old silver-mining town in southern Colorado. There are only about 700 full-time residents in the county, and most of them are our friends.

It's a bit of an art colony, with world-famous watercolorist Steve Quiller leading the pack of weavers, wood carvers and painters. It is also the home of the Creede Repertory Theatre, where dozens of young actors and actresses show off their talents each summer.

It was Memorial Day weekend, and time for the annual Taste of Creede festival. All up and down the two-block Main Street, vendors were cooking up tasty dishes and artists were showing their wares.

We had been visiting with two old friends, Rick and Teri Inman. Rick is a chef turned wholesale food distributor and Teri is a weaver of scarves and sweaters. She dyes her own wool, which she gathers from her herds of rabbits and mohair goats. Her products are soft, downy and expensive.

Rick and Teri weren't interested in the bear, which had been treed at the end of the street. They live 17



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
chaynes@nwkansas.com

miles upriver and have to keep close watch over their livestock to make sure the stock doesn't provide a meal for the wildlife.

I grabbed Steve's hand, however, and dragged him up the street. We'd seen bears before in downtown Creede, but it had been a while.

The young black bear was up a tree at the end of the street as a crowd of onlookers stared and a reporter for the local newspaper snapped away. I was rather surprised we got so close to the action.

Deputy Billy Fairchild leaned over and whispered, "I'm letting the press get close, so maybe he'll get eaten."

He asked the photographer and all the rest of us to move back.

"If the bear eats all these people," he said, with a grin, "I'll be in real trouble."

Having seen the bear, we moved over — there was still food to taste and friends to greet. Steve saw the game warden leave town with his bear

trailer.

Later, the newspaper ran an article saying that the bear, a year-old male, had been tranquilized, removed from the tree with a cherry picker, tagged and taken off to the far mountains, where he would have to make his lunch from berries and grubs instead of hamburgers and city trash.

They tag the bears, and they'll give them two free rides. If one comes back a third time, he's toast.

Bears have been a problem in the mountains the last few years. It's been dry and the state dropped the spring bear season several years ago.

The double whammy of more bears and less food has forced many a bruin to go looking for lunch in a trash can.

I hope that is our only bear of the summer, but I'm not counting on it. And I'm not putting the trash out back when I visit Creede this summer.

Grandma keeps the kids busy

Let the games begin!

For anyone with grandchildren visiting for the summer, that's the Grandma Games. Grandpas can play, too, but it's usually the Grandmas who make up the rules.

I met my youngest daughter, Kara, in Oklahoma on Saturday to do the grandkid swap. Five-year-old Taylor is staying with us for three weeks and the Grandma Games are well underway.

First, if you're a working grandma like me, you must have a very understanding employer who is accommodating to a flexible schedule and allows laptop work at home. And one who also looks the other way if you bring said grandchild into the office for an hour every now and then.

That accomplished, the next rule is to fill their every waking moment with as many activities as possible, especially things they can't do at their own home. It's part of the game to ensure the kid will want to come back next year.

Our granddaughter who lives close by gets to be part of the action, too. So far, I have planned for them to help catch five hens and one rooster that we are buying to replenish our flock, milk a goat, feed baby



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
cplotts@nwkansas.com

buffalo calves, go to the museum, and all that is just within the first two days.

Just for good measure, we'll probably throw in some of Alex's ball games. She's old enough now that she has outside interests of her own. I don't know if we can keep up that pace for the entire three weeks, but at least we'll get off to a good start.

Seriously though, part of the fun of coming to Grandma and Grandpa's house is just to be the center of attention. When we have our grandkids, we try to make kid-friendly food, nothing too exotic. Peanut butter and jelly, hamburgers, hot dogs, pizza and tacos are always crowd-pleasers. We try to do things they might not get to do at their own homes (see buffalo calves above) and even give them some chores to do.

The other thing I like to do is just let them play. The playhouse Jim built a few years ago has been a god-send. Their imaginations can run wild without the benefit of a computer or batteries. The girls have tea parties and imaginary families. They create elaborate role-playing scenarios complete with titles and behaviors.

"You can't go to work," one scolds "You're the baby, remember?"

It's a special time when grandchildren come to visit. You get a chance to see how your parenting turned out. Your kids are a pretty good reflection of your parenting, and the way they parent their kids is probably the way you parented them.

It's a perfect example of, "You reap what you sow."

Citizen wants governor to see west

To the Editor:

Enclosed you will find a letter that I sent to the Honorable Kathleen Sebelius, governor of the State of Kansas. I would like to have the letter printed in the "Letters to the Editor" section of *The Oberlin Herald*.

I really did send Gov. Sebelius a map of the state. I believe the letter clearly states feelings that many of us in western Kansas have.

Sam Eldridge
Oberlin

Dear Governor,

A few weeks ago, I sent you an email in which I attempted to explain a couple of facts.

Fact one: The great State of Kansas extends far westward past Salina. I figure this fact must have been a shock to you, governor, because I received no reply. It is readily apparent to us who live in western Kansas that the fine folks who run the state government think our state consists of only Topeka, Wichita, and Salina. (Of course, the folks in

Letter to the Editor

western Kansas are remembered at tax collection time.)

I want to help. I have enclosed a map of the state of Kansas. If you study this map carefully, you will see that what I am saying is 100 percent true. We are out here, governor, and we deserve far more from our state government than just tax collection notices.

Please feel free to post this map in a good location in the Capitol building. This way, state employees can actually see for themselves what a big state we have. This will help citizens in western Kansas when they call the state government. They will not have to waste time convincing state employees that they really do exist.

Fact two: The economy in western Kansas needs help. We are hurt-

ing. There is no need for a special commission or a new governmental study to determine this.

The economy in Topeka is doing just fine, and I am delighted that my tax dollars are being used so nicely in Topeka. Visit our town, governor, and look at the "for sale" signs that litter our community. Take time to view the empty buildings where businesses once were. Feel free to talk to many of our populace who work two or three minimum wage jobs to survive, and oh, yes, pay taxes.

You may think I am being curt or disrespectful. I assure you, I am serious, and mean no disrespect. Our state government disrespects us far more every day by ignoring us, and using our citizens only as tax mules.

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

Phone: (785) 475-2206 Fax (785) 475-2800

E-mail: obherald@nwkansas.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 wantads/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, Norcatur, 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.)

