

Fight over party primary hardly seems necessary

More craziness from Topeka. The secretary of state has the Republican party embroiled in a court battle over whether to open its primary for any voter who asked for a Republican ballot.

It's a dumb idea, and wholly unnecessary. In Kansas, voters can declare for a party — and vote in its primary — at the polls if they so choose. Later, they can change their registration at will. What more freedom do we need?

But Secretary of State Ron Thornburg told both major parties they should make a decision on whether to have "open" primaries, where any voter can get a ballot regardless of party registration.

Mr. Thornburg was responding to a federal Court of Appeals decision voiding an Oklahoma law that limited participation in primaries. The court said, basically, that parties, not the state, had the right to decide who could vote in a party primary.

Why the secretary was so concerned is anybody's guess. The decision applied only in Oklahoma at this point, and no one had sued to change the situation in Kansas — yet.

Once Republican state Chairman Dennis Jones opted for an open primary, though, he — and the state — faced a lawsuit. Go figure.

Other Republicans complained that an open primary was a bad idea, and that Jones was out of his authority making the decision anyway. They probably are right on both accounts.

First of all, it seems to us like there is no need to change the way Kansas does things. Voters have the right to choose a primary under the existing system, so why change?

Secondly, until a federal court orders Kansas to do something, why should the secretary of state jump the gun and stir things up?

No reason that we can see.

And thirdly, if states see fit to regulate their elections, why should a federal court interfere? The Oklahoma decision strikes us as another in a long string of meddling maneuvers of activists judges.

There is nothing in the Constitution that says that all things must be done the same way in every state. And there is nothing in our system that says the federal government must set standards and rules for each and every state action.

The whole mess makes little sense, but that's about what you can expect these days from Topeka — or a federal court.

— Steve Haynes

Furnace? Air? This is Kansas

The old adage about Kansas weather proved to be true this week.

You know the one, "If you're tired of the weather, wait five minutes, 'cause it's gonna change."

Who would have thought we would have to run the furnace on the first day of summer? There was no gentle slide into it, either. We literally ran the air conditioner one day and the furnace that night.

Our granddaughter from Texas only brought summer clothes, and I had to buy her a long-sleeved shirt. She has borrowed jackets from her older cousin, whom she idolizes, but they're about six sizes too big for her. I think I'll stop by the thrift shop and pick up a couple of things.

—ob—

This cool snap was welcome in one sense, though. Back in March, it was our turn to host the Koinonia (fellowship) group from church. We had been planning a bonfire and hot dog roast, but Jim got terribly sick that day and we had to trade with another family. Ever since then, we have been trying to find a date where everyone could come and finally settled on last Saturday night. I didn't think a bonfire in the middle of June would be too pleasant, but the menu was set for hot dogs, potato salad and baked beans, so that was the plan.

You know, that bonfire felt pretty good Saturday night. Everybody stayed pretty close to the heat. With seven kids and six adults, there was plenty of laughter and fun. I think I can safely say, "A good time was had by all."

—ob—

We had such a good time, in fact, that we did it again the next night with a Father's Day wiener roast at Jim's dad's place. "That's Pa-Pa's daddy," Alexandria explained to Taylor.

Dad is 87 and still puts in a full day. The one concession he makes



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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is to take a break in the afternoon to watch "Gunsmoke."

A few years ago, Dad gave us two little cherry tree seedlings. Those seedlings are now over six feet tall and produce some nice fruit. My present to Dad was a jar of cherry jelly from this year's crop.

—ob—

Speaking of the cherries, when Taylor and I arrived home last Sunday afternoon, we walked around looking at all the things she remembered from last year. I introduced her to the two new calves, Ollie and Molly, and let her look in the chicken coop for eggs.

During our "walkabout," we discovered that the cherries were ripe and had to be picked before the birds got them all. No waiting until tomorrow.

Armed with plastic containers, Jim and I tackled the two taller trees and we set Taylor to picking cherries from a dwarf tree that had been added to our orchard. She was diligent in her efforts. We oohed and aahed at the appropriate times about how much she had picked and how hard she was working. Evidently that wasn't enough, because after several minutes of silence she said, "Hey, you guys. I sure could use a little help over here."

—ob—

We do a lot of driving, a fact that is not lost on Taylor. She lives in the Dallas area, and it is "city" everywhere. But she understands that we live in one town, her Aunt Jennifer

and Alexandria live in another town, and Grandma works in yet another town.

The other day, we were leaving Norton, heading for home. Taylor asked, "Is this Norcat, Grandma?"

"No, this is Norton," I said. "But, in 20 minutes we'll be in Norcat."

She had obviously been thinking about it, because a few miles later she said, "No (pause for emphasis). I think we're in the middle of nowhere."

From the Bible

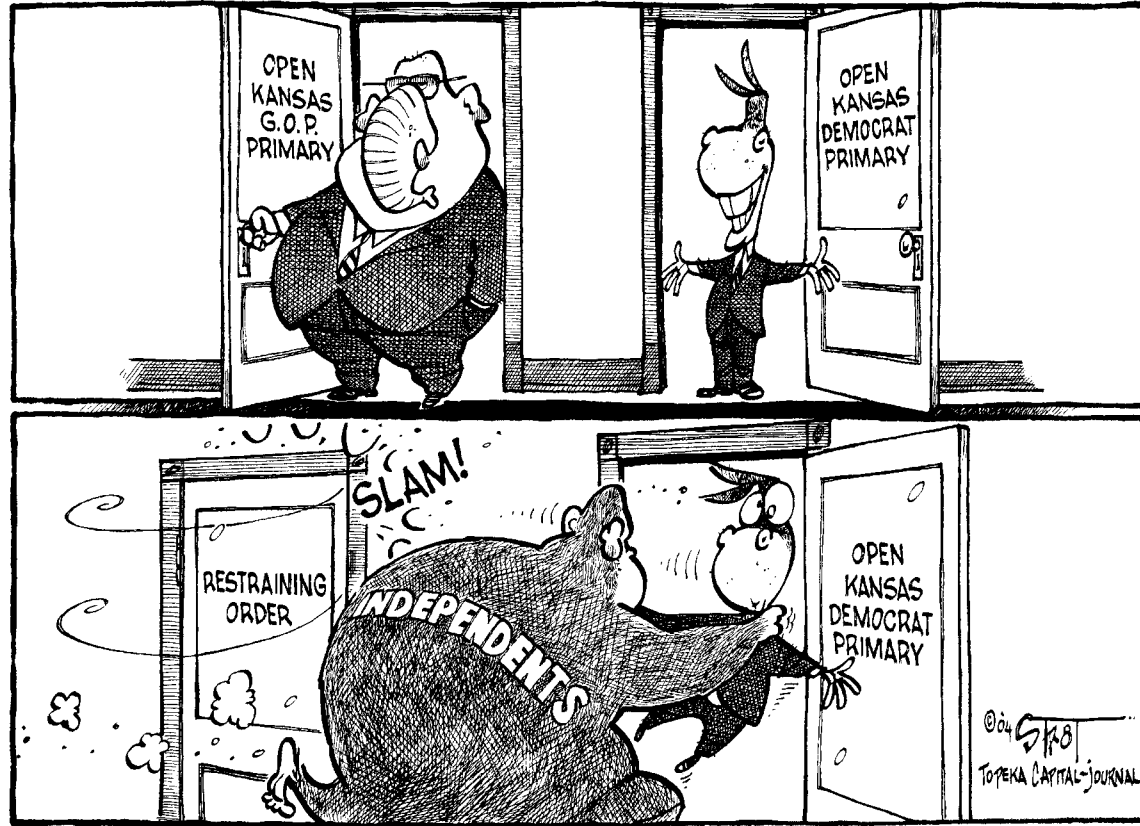
I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. John 10:9

Reader likes farm stories

To the Editor: I enjoy reading the farming news in your paper.

The letter you published by Brenda Breth regarding the Oberlin School District touches on many of the problems and concerns here in Tucson, where my spouse taught for 26 years. I would like to thank you for devoting a half-page to such an excellent letter.

John Montgomery
Tucson, Ariz.



Cat finds garage too fascinating

My cat has been spending more time at the neighbors than at our place lately.

Not voluntarily, however.

Molly Monster, our gray-and-white alpha cat — at least, she thinks she's the alpha cat — was missing two weeks ago. She wasn't at nose count Sunday night, nor was she around when I checked on the feline population Monday morning. By Monday night, we had started to worry and I was ready to make the rounds of the neighborhood.

I wrote out the classified for a lost cat, but it was too late to get it in that week's paper. I figured if we didn't see her for a week, we would never see her again.

I was upset. Molly was the fifth cat we had lost in 10 years in living in Oberlin.

In the previous 20 years, we had only lost two cats. We had had cats run over, poisoned, and die of injury, infection and old age, but we had only had two that just disappeared.

Why was Oberlin the black hole of catdom?

The first cat we lost here was Baby, a nice little male Siamese. He was daughter Lindsay's cat and she figured somebody stole him. Steve and I, however, remembered that there was a big rain before Baby disappeared and the street out front acts



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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as the storm sewer for this side of town. We think Baby got caught in the current.

Next we lost Dixie. She was a very careful cat, always cautious and spooky. We never found a clue of her whereabouts.

Then a couple years later, Pomeroy disappeared. This was the first babysat cat we'd lost. Pomeroy belonged to son Lacy, who had to send the cat home when it kept getting arrested by the animal control officer in Lawrence.

Pomeroy may have just wandered off, and since he had lived in five or six homes in his three years of life, he may not have known how to get home. Still, I looked everywhere. No Pomeroy.

Last year, Kubla Khan, another male Siamese, disappeared. Again, there was no clue or guess as to his whereabouts.

Now Molly was gone. Or so we

thought. Late Wednesday night, Steve and Lindsay heard a cat crying. They traced the sound to the neighbor's garage. They peeked in through the window, and there was Molly.

The garage door had been up several times over the last few days, so we couldn't figure out how or when she got trapped.

We waited until the next day to have someone let her out, since it was after midnight when they found her.

I canceled the classified, but two days later she was gone again.

This time, I knew where to look. Sure enough, there she was in the garage.

My neighbors like cats well enough, but they'd prefer they stay at our place.

I agree. Still, I'm glad the black hole didn't get another one.

'Our' road in top-notch shape

Driving across the state on U.S. 36, I was struck by the fact that we are lucky indeed to have a sound state highway system.

In rural America today, we depend so much on our road system that it's hard to count the ways.

I had been to the U.S. Highway 36 Association meeting in Hanover, just north and west of Marysville, so I covered a fair stretch of the highway that day. In trips to Kansas City and Denver over the last couple of months, I'd driven it all, and I can report, U.S. 36 is in pretty good shape clear across the state.

The entire road has been resurfaced a couple of times in the 10 years I've been back in Kansas. Except for the stretch between Norton and Norcat, all of it now has at least three-foot paved shoulders, the current standard.

The state Department of Transportation has contracts set to widen and repave the narrow stretch in Norton County, which is the last of the 1930s-style road across the state on U.S. 36. Projects in the last few years have eliminated narrow stretches out by Herndon.

That leaves us with a wide, smooth, safe road across the north-



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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ern tier of Kansas counties. If you go to similar rural areas of nearby states, you won't find the same.

Missouri can't find enough money to keep its highways up. It has more expressways and other four-lane roads than we have, but it has neglected basic maintenance. So has Colorado.

It wasn't always that way. I remember in the mid-1980s driving across Kansas after being gone for half a decade, and being shocked by the condition of the roads.

It took a courageous Mike Hayden as governor to put together a plan to get them back in shape. Some say the tax increases to fund the first Comprehensive Transportation Plan cost him his job. Whether that's true or not, the highway plan, and its successors, have worked.

Today, Kansas roads are in great

shape. We've added new routes, bypasses, interchanges and other improvements to the system. And the Legislature acted this year to ensure that the money will be there to finish the current 10-year plan.

That's all good news. It still leaves Kansas behind the curve in building expressways and freeways and creating some economic development, but even so, we can be thankful for the roads that we have.

At the U.S. 36 meeting, we heard reports from state highway engineers and talked about the association's goal, which is to get a four-lane road started west from St. Joseph across one of the most economically needy parts of the state.

The transportation department has started on the first eight to 10 miles west of the Missouri, but there is a lot of road left to improve.

Student questions sports priority

To the Editor: Sports are very important to many people in our community. Several high school students use them to stay active and love to be involved during the school year and throughout the summer. However, there is a team of equal size, of equal competitiveness, of equal talent right in Decatur Community High School that doesn't have a single page devoted to it week after week in the main section of *The Oberlin Herald*.

This team is given an article every now and then in the *Decatur Dictator*, written mainly by the students who are active on it. I speak of the Decatur Community High School speech team. I can't recall a time when someone from *The Herald* came to our Night of Forensics, where the students perform all their events for the community to attend.

I feel cheated that my team's pictures don't take up a section of *The Herald*, simply because we don't hold a ball or baton in our hands. Maybe the staff feels that they wouldn't be capable of taking "action shots" while at a forensics meet.

Letters to the Editor

I would urge them to think again. One teammate of mine tore (a tendon in his knee) doing a serious solo!

Like the sports enthusiasts, some of whom are even on the speech team, we love what we do. We bring home a trophy every weekend and several individual medals. We just wish our community could see us in the same light as all the sports stars mentioned and read about every week in *The Herald*.

I would like to make one more remark. Every week, I see ads covering many pages of *The Herald*. I see them taking up the space where our Honor Roll could be printed in a more timely fashion. I also see that business must sponsor the Honor Roll so that it will be printed at all. This is an indication to me that *The Herald* finds it a burden and loss of money to recognize all the students who work hard each day at school for high marks. If *The Herald* hap-

pily will cover and print each sporting event, it is very disappointing they will not hold academics in the same or a higher regard.

Furthermore, the Honor Roll is one page only four times a school year, as compared to the two pages each week devoted solely to sports.

I've gone through high school seeing each year as I mature the injustices paid to those of us who are not star athletes, but who dedicate ourselves fully to academics and other activities that enrich our education. I know of star athletes, too, who also participate and succeed in the other areas. It's not about playing down their efforts at all. I simply believe it's time for *The Herald* to add a couple more priorities to their list, and show the community the well-rounded achievements of our excellent students.

Allie Beth Moore
Class of 2004, Oberlin

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