

Rainfall is welcome even if it cancels our celebration

You just can't get anything done around here this month. Farmers would be able to get their wheat in, such as it is. If it weren't for all that pesky rain. Most towns can't even have a proper Fourth of July, with fireworks rained out for two days straight. City officials can stop worrying about what day it is. Nobody's watering the lawn. Go figure. For five years, it would hardly rain at all. Now it doesn't want to stop. Yet, with the inconvenience and the loss in quality of what wheat there is, we don't hear anyone complaining. Not at all. Corn is growing. Milo is sprouted. Sunflowers are reaching for the sky. Pastures are green. No one thinks it is too wet, at least not so far, as if such a thing is possible in western Kansas. So, it seems, everything has changed. And curiously, nothing has changed. Farmers still gather to talk about the weather. Crews wait to get combines back into

the fields. The price of wheat will be the same tomorrow as it was in May, or nearly so. The government keeps trying to make things right, but the farm population keeps dwindling. There'll still be a lot of 60-something farmers out there, with darned few 30-somethings to buy or lease their land. There's one more big shakeout coming. But there will be a fall harvest this year. The corn probably won't die and shrivel like it did last year. Combines will reap corn and milo as the weather turns cool, at least, if the rain stops long enough to let them into the field. Heck, at this rate, there could be some wheat standing in September. Nobody's complaining. The drought may not be over, but things look a heck of a lot better than they have been. July 14 would be a good day for fireworks. Or July 24. We'll take the rain.

— Steve Haynes

Trade off aided by cell phones

Taylor asked, "What color is the cap on your milk, Grandma?" "Red," I told her. "I'm going to tell my mom to get that one, 'cause it's the best milk in the world!" That's probably not going to fly with weight and health conscious Kara. So far, it's always been skim milk at her house and she will be agast at the thought of her daughter guzzling gallons of whole milk.



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
cplotts@nwkans.com

who let us come see his buffalo herd. He probably keeps a pocketful of replica arrowheads just for kids, but Taylor believes it was dropped by a real, live Indian who used to ride the Plains. She also had to take home all her Sunday school papers, Happy Meal prizes, pine cones she had gathered and some of the rocks she picked up. Adam and Kara, along with Angelia and Chantelle, arrived before us at what we had determined was the half-way point. Cell phone communications allowed us to tell them, "Keep on a'comin'," because we weren't as far along. Eventually, we made the connection and did the trade: one 5-year-old for a 13-year-old and a 10-year-old. Pretty much even-steven. That completed the third leg, and now our house is buried in suitcases, clothes

and all kinds of "girly" things. We have church camp planned for both of them, two county fairs, wiener roasts, and hopefully, lots of fun. The fourth and final leg, I suppose, will be when we have to return them to their mother, but that's almost five weeks from now. We'll be fine as long as we don't falter.

From the Bible

And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Luke 12:42, 43

Honor Roll

Welcome and thanks to these recent subscribers to *The Oberlin Herald*:
Kansas: Martin LaRue, Mike Tacha, Rosalia Stephens, Carl Wahlmeier, Mark Carter, Jennings; Carl Neff, Karen Carpenter, Verl Crabill, Norton; Mary Anderson, Osborne; Dianne Bareiss, Overland Park; Bill Solko, Herndon; Nancy Woods, Garden City; Matt and Lyn Cheney, Rexford; Bill DeMay, Jeff Jenkins, Sue Elliott, Olathe; Don and Cindy Whiteley, Lawrence; Gerald H. Hickert, Keane Wurm, Hays; Juanita Relph, South

Hutchinson; Eleanor Rogers, Darrel Bruggeman, Edna Colson, Gary Huntziker, Selden; Mike Pomeroy, Enterprise; Vincent Ritter, Paul Neff, Dresden; John R. Moellering, Grinnell; Gerald Karnes, Larry Screen, Salina; Trevor Urban, Bonner Springs; Curtis May, Hunter; Doyle Morton, Coldwater; Bill Fowler, Ottawa; Connie Larreau, Donna Wilson, Wichita; Rolland Parr, Rossville; Delpha Whale, Hutchinson; Tillie Pitner, Atwood;
Oberlin: Gary Juenemann, Mary Noone, John Juenemann, Tracy and

Michael French, Ira Kolsky, Francis Hurst, Karon Scott, Wesley Benda, Darrell Hickert, Betty Grout, Billie Bryan, Francis Moore, Eula Juenemann, Loyl Wilson, Hirsch & Pratt, Mr. and Mrs. R.L. Gaskill, Elaine Thomas, Merla Rhodes, Dorothy Hunt, Helen Brooks, Darwin Sagel, Bill Flynn, Patty McIntire, Ellen Horn, Dr. Doug Fair, Edward and Vivian Russ, Jim and Phyllis Screen, Virgil Kump, Randy Olson, Travis Hissong DVH, Dale Overmiller, Duane Berry, Jay Ketterl, Dorothy Machart, Gordon Matson.



Cliff dwellings yield sore muscles

Mesa Verde is a wonderful national treasure, but it's a long ways from anywhere. We were in Durango, Colo., and our itinerary called for a visit to the cliff dwellings in Mesa Verde National Park. We hadn't been to Mesa Verde for 30 years. All I remembered about the park was that it was hard to get to the cliff dwellings and that it was really, really hot the day we decided to visit.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
chaynes@nwkans.com

We were in a car that had vapor lock problems. We had to either sit in the hot sun for an hour waiting for the car to cool off enough to start, or put cool washcloths around the gas line. We learned to do the cool washcloth trick quickly and used it often on that trip 30 or so years ago. This time, we would be on a tour bus with other members of the National Newspaper Association, which was holding its summer board meeting in Durango.

It takes more than an hour just to get to the park from Durango so we sat back and enjoyed the beautiful mountain scenery and watched for traces of the big burn, which took thousands of acres and dozens of homes near Durango two summers ago. The fire damage could be seen on hillsides where only the dead trunks of trees remain. It will be years before these skeletons fall over, but new growth has started in most places. Once you get to the entrance, it's another hour to the ruins. We stopped at Cliff Palace, one of the largest of the cliff-dwelling sites. There are more than 100 rooms and several kivas. Archeologists now believe this was a ceremonial site used by the surrounding peoples as a religious center with just a small resident population. Mesa Verde itself was a farming community. Scholars believe that the people, who lived on the top of the mesa for about five centuries, built the cliff dwellings in the 13th century so that they would have more land to farm and a place to safely store their produce.

A 20-plus year drought and overpopulation caused friction among the clans of the area and they finally moved out to settle the pueblos along the Rio Grande, from Taos, N.M., to El Paso in the south. Today, the descendants of these people live in the pueblos, including Acoma, Santa Clara and Zuni, and the Hopi reservation. The Navajo in the area are a later migration, as are the Southern Utes, who traded the government the Mesa Verde site for a mountain sa-

cred to them to the west. While climbing down into the cliff dwellings is not for the old or infirm, the government has put in stone steps and log ladders for 650,000 thousand visitors, who swarm over the area every year. After climbing down and around the area and then out again, my legs were complaining. The next day I could hardly walk because my muscles were so sore. The Indians who lived in these rookeries cut small hand and foot holes into the rock to get from one place to another. Now that would have been a fun climb to work — straight up and straight down with hundreds of feet of nothingness in between. After our visit to Cliff Palace, we checked out several other ruins but didn't get off the road again. The ancient Indians probably had a pretty good life for the times, at least until the drought came, but I think I prefer the air-conditioned comfort of our bus. Guess, I'm just lazy — and after that day, a little sore.

Nature's beauty is the ticket

Riding the Silverton train, you have to appreciate the power of nature. The train doesn't go very fast. The old narrow gauge tracks twist and wind their way up the broad valley north of Durango, Colo. Cars fly by on the highway or slow to pace the engine. The train seems like a living, hissing thing, a relic of the silver boom. It draws three or four trainloads of tourists to the canyon every day. Most probably do not appreciate the awesome power of nature that created and shaped this place — and continues to mold it even today. The train is the real thing, of course. It's been running up to Silverton since the days when 10,000 miners dug silver and gold from the icy slopes above the little town late in the 19th century. True, many of the cars are steel replicas built in the 1960s, and the engines are the last narrow gauge models built for the Colorado mountains in the late 1920s. But there are plenty of 1880s coaches left, and the engines cut their teeth hauling stock and ore out of the mountains in the era before paved highways. The engine makes an impressive show as it pounds its way up the grade, but nature rules the canyon. Snow slides often block the tracks in the winter. In the old days, Silverton went without mail and



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
schaynes@nwkans.com

supplies for as much as three weeks at a time. Today, with modern equipment, the highway may be closed for half a week at a time. The railroad does not try to keep the line open anymore; too dangerous. Winter trains turn south of the avalanche chutes. High on the ridge, you can see where the huge fires two summers ago burned mile after mile of forest. Today, dead trunks and low grassy growth crown the ridge. Thousands of men and women fought the blaze as it gobbled up trees and barns and homes, but only nature was powerful enough to stop it. Helicopter and airplane drops just sizzled on the rocks. Fire lines were built for naught. The weather and the wind had to change before the flames would die out. Deeper in the canyon, you notice place after place where rails, still bolted together, but bereft of ties, line the river. Floods in the 1960s and '70s swept the track away time after time. The railroad replaced

them, but the constant expense may have helped convince the old Denver and Rio Grande to sell the line. A high, hand-laid stonework lifts the tracks out of part of the canyon, where the glaciers carved a gorge too steep for tracks and river. That has its expense as well. Nature didn't intend man to come down in here. Nature keeps reminding us that we are visitors on her turf. Nature is bigger and more powerful than any of us, than all of us. Wind, fire, snow, floods, glaciers. No one can control them. What we build, nature can easily sweep away. But we are allowed to visit, and Lord, is she beautiful. At 15 mph you can count the wildflowers and identify them by species. We're booked on the last two cars, 1880s business cars that served as traveling offices for railroad officials and now carry charter trips. From the brass rail at the rear, we marvel at the rock formations and count the ties, thankful that Nature let us come this way today.

Reader enjoys stories in newspaper

To the Editor: The picture of the Grafel child at the Relay for Life (in the June 23 *Oberlin Herald*) was great. I think you do great area news coverage. I have quite a few relatives from away from here who take

Letter to the Editor

the paper. I liked the Herndon Ox Roast pictures and story also.

Wilma May Oberlin

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. Mail letters to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan., 67749, or by E-mail

to obherald@nwkans.com. 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-you 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 which do not pertain to a public issue.

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@nwkans.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



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.)