

Open courts, local trials help keep system working

The area won't have a murder trial this week, so we'll be spared the usual defense whining that the accused can't get a fair trial because of "prejudicial pre-trial publicity."

If you listen to a defense attorney, any pre-trial publicity is prejudicial.

That's especially true if it gives the defendant's name, say, or relationship to the deceased — or any obvious facts of the case.

There probably is such a thing as "prejudicial" publicity. In a culture where murder is rare, people take great interest in this ultimate crime. In a region where we count murders by the decade, rather than by the year, a single homicide is a major event.

People want to know about the crime. They'll talk about it, over the paper or at the coffee shop.

And, of course, they'll talk about whether the defendant is guilty. They usually are. Most murders are no mystery.

The defense of the guilty — and occasionally the innocent as well — being what it is, though, lawyers will make whatever motions and whatever arguments serve their cause. The plea of "prejudicial pre-trial publicity" and an accompanying motion to move the trial to another part of the state have become a standard part of the defense arsenal.

If a judge feels the motion is valid, he should grant it. Moving the trial now and then, is a small price to pay for a free and open court system. In most cases, a defendant can get an unbiased jury at home, or at worst, in the next county over.

What we cannot afford is to give in to the temptation to close up these cases and keep the details secret.

Some will argue that people don't need to know what happened. In a very narrow sense, that might be true. If their interest is only prurient, they can go buy a cheap detective novel. There is some of that in any murder case.

But in a democracy, it's vital that the public as a whole knows how major cases are handled. They need to know if a defendant is being treated fairly by the system. They need to know if the poor are oppressed or the rich treated lightly by the courts.

And they won't know if trials are closed or so much of the evidence is kept from them that they cannot form a reasonable opinion. That's why our courts traditionally are open and our courthouse files can be inspected by any citizen. The Founding Fathers had seen the abuse possible when courts did not answer to the people.

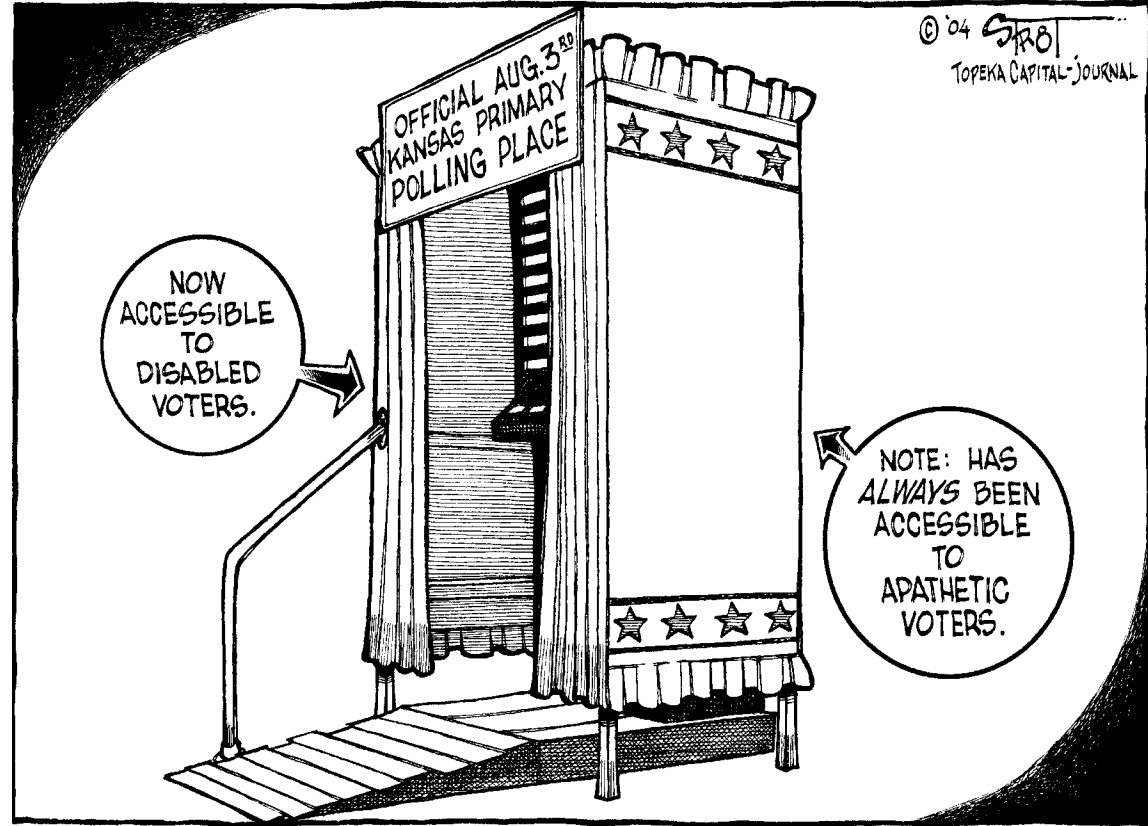
Defense attorneys will continue to file motions. That's their job.

Newspapers will continue to report on murder cases and the rest of the court system. That's our job.

Sometimes, a trial must be moved to give a defendant a better shot at an unbiased jury, but that's not often necessary. When it happens, it's part of the price we pay for our freedom, for a system that not only offers rights to the accused, but actually cares about them.

In a closed system, those very rights would not exist.

— Steve Haynes.



Child is leaving this country

Youngest daughter is leaving the country.

OK, Steve said she isn't leaving the country; she's just moving to South Carolina.

I say South Carolina is a different country. If you don't believe me, go visit there.

I know that she has been planning this move for some time, but she didn't tell her parents. She knew we would be a pain. Not exactly upset, but full of reasons for her to stay in Kansas.

Not that being in Kansas is that great. Since she moved to Lawrence nine years ago, she hasn't been home for more than a few days at a time. First she was in college, then she had a job. In the summers, she worked either in Lawrence or in Colorado. Home was an apartment, and when she returned to western Kansas, it was as a visitor in her parents' home.

It wasn't until she had finished her third year of teaching junior high science and had been offered her fourth contract, the one that would make her a tenured teacher, that she revealed her plans.

She called us and said that she had quit her job and planned to return to graduate school and get a master's degree in library science. She said she was looking at going to Emporia State University or the University of South Carolina.

We pounced on Emporia State. It's in Kansas. She has family there. Steve's brother Doug has a home in



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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town and his sister Barbara lives in the country nearby.

She visited the campus there, but she really hoped to get accepted at South Carolina. In fact, she got into both graduate schools.

The next call told us that she had let her apartment go, turned down the tenure contract and was visiting the campus at Columbia, S.C., the next week.

She returned with a map of the city, a contract for an apartment and a schedule of her fall classes. Now she's packing and thinking about what kind of job she can get.

Since she has a teacher's certificate and three years' experience, she thinks she can get work as a substitute teacher. However, if that doesn't pan out, she's planning to check out the area newspapers. She worked making up newspaper ads and pages most of her high school and college career. I'd hire her — in fact I tried. She said, "NO".

As a last resort, she could wait tables. She's a good waitress and has made good money working at a restaurant in Colorado in the summers.

We went to Lawrence to see her and her brother Friday. It was a wonderful weekend, but a bit sad.

She had hoped that we could come and help her move. However, both she and her brother have to vacate their apartments on July 31, and we are slated to be at a wedding in Colorado Springs on July 30.

Both children are in the middle of packing, with boxes stacked everywhere. It's really sad to miss the moving.

Daughter has hired a large U-Haul truck. She will pick it up a couple of days early and pack it with the help of brother and many friends. Then she will clean the apartment and retire to a friend's home for several days.

Steve will get to Lawrence as soon as he can, and the two of them will head for South Carolina — a two-day trip with a truck full of furnishings, a bunch of plants and three cats.

We'll miss her, but it'll be a good excuse to get out my passport and go visit South Carolina, in the heart of the Old Confederacy.

Youngster is full of questions

Ten-year-old Chantelle is, to say the least, exuberant. Remember, she is the one we used to call "The Texas Tornado."

During the drive to our house, she was full of questions: do we have sheep this year, can she drive the little yard tractor, can she make a birdhouse for the fair, do we still have chickens?

The answer was affirmative to all of the above, except the sheep. Jim said, "No more sheep."

Anyway, while we were talking about the chickens, Jim told her that a raccoon had killed all our hens except one and that we had bought some new chickens; five hens and a rooster. He went on to tell her that they are bantam chickens and not very big.

In her most innocent city-kid manner she asked, "Does that make them chick-lettes?" We laughed 'til we cried.

The chickens have always held a fascination for Chantelle and she was curious about how you got baby chickens. Without going into too much detail, her PaPa explained that a hen has to set on eggs for about three weeks to hatch baby chicks.

"Could we have some baby chickens, Papa? Could we please, please, please? I'll take care of them. I promise. Please, Papa. Please."

Well, what could we do? We borrowed an incubator from a friend (who threw in a dozen fertile eggs) and after Chantelle was fully briefed, we now have eggs incubating in the front room. The waiting has begun.



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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She is taking this very seriously. I think she has named every egg and considers herself their "mother." When she left Sunday for her week at church camp, we had to swear an oath of allegiance to faithfully take care of her eggs.

"I'm trusting you guys with my babies," were her last words to us.

It's an awesome responsibility. One we better not mess up.

"Please, God. Let at least one or two chicks hatch."

—ob—
A friend sent us an "e-toon", and it probably fits Jim and me.

A couple was sitting on stools at a cafe counter. The husband turned to his wife and said, "You know, Dear, in about 10 years we'll look

like that couple down at the end of the counter."

His wife gave him a deadpan look and asked, "You do know that's a mirror, don't you?"

That's us, we can hardly believe we're getting older. But sure enough, now that I have a granddaughter taller than I am, I am forced to admit time is flying by.

From the Bible

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. I John 3:18

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.

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THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

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

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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.)



Writer worries about candidate

To the Editor:

Republicans and Common Sense.

First, I see no reason why any Republican would want to vote John Faber out of office. He has done a great job and is in a leadership position to help Western Kansas in the future.

However, if Republicans think that John Faber must go, then it makes more sense to elect the Democrat challenger than Doug Sebelius.

We taxpayers already have a hard time with one Sebelius in Topeka

Letters to the Editor

raising our taxes. Why send another one who not only would work against us, but who would no doubt drag along three or four other Republicans?

Doug Sebelius said that his sister-in-law is a Democrat but he is a Republican. Of course, that did not stop Doug from taking an important governor appointment with the Wildlife and Parks Department.

Should Doug Sebelius go to Topeka?

I say it will only take the governor three months to "break him to lead."

And I am real sure that Doug is going to want another governor's appointment so badly that his new name will be Pinnocchio.

Arthur Loyd Shelton
Oberlin

Model T provided transportation

To the Editor:

At the time we lived at the foot of "Ankenman Hill" on the east side of the road, the Model T Ford car was credited as "every man's car," and was putting America on wheels, but while simple in design, the Model T was cantankerous in many ways.

If it was cold, one might have to jack up a rear wheel, then put the transmission in high gear in order to turn the crank. If the engine didn't start, one could pour a teakettle of boiling water over the manifold, which sometimes helped.

I think it was about 1922 that Dad bought his first car.

Edgar Lockhart had owned the Model T for a few months and decided to buy an Essex, so he sold the Ford to Dad. Edgar gave Dad a few lessons and left the car to one happy family.

The Ford was much more complicated to drive than modern ones. There were three pedals on the floor. The right pedal was the brake, the middle pedal was reverse, and the left pedal pushed halfway down was neutral; all the way down was low gear.

That first evening, Dad put the car into the lean-to shed attached to the barn. As he lined up and headed into the shed, he became confused as to the purpose of all those pedals. He hit the back of the shed, bounced back, hit low gear, and rammed the shed again, all the while shouting at the top of his voice, "WHOA, you S.O.B., WHOA!"

Well, when he finally killed the

engine, a front tire was blown out and the windshield was shattered. Dad called the family together and swore us all to secrecy until Fred Scheetz of Norcat could supply a new windshield.

About the same year Dad learned to drive, Gus Johnson, our well man at Lebanon, Neb., bought a new Ford pickup to use in his business. Gus loaded all his well-pulling equipment into his new truck and drove proudly out to his first call. He wheeled into the yard at a pretty good clip and, like my Dad, he forgot how to stop. Luckily this farmyard was rather large, so Gus started

going around in a circle. The family heard the dogs barking and chickens squawking and came running out, to see Gus going around in an ever-tightening circle screaming, "SHUT THE CELLAR DOOR!"

One time when we lived where Esther Miller now lives, and we had a really big snow, Merle and I were out digging out the driveway. Bill Nelson came whizzing by on his big John Deere with a blade in front. When Bill noticed what we were doing, he backed up and in about three swipes our driveway was cleared. I never forgot that.

Rex Cozad, Hutchinson

Relay for Life says 'thanks'

To the Editor:

On behalf of the Decatur County Relay for Life committee, I would personally like to thank everyone for your generosity to our 2004 cause.

The cash donations from corporate sponsors totaled about \$2,700 for this year, which is an increase of about \$900 over last year.

Our total cash raised for this year was over \$14,000, a tremendous increase over the 2003 total of \$9,000.

With the agricultural economy so stressed, we feel the generosity of all involved this year was great.

We would also like to thank all of the corporate sponsors that donated in-kind items to the Relay.

Although the weather made us relocate to downtown under the

canopies, the nearly 900 luminaries lined both sides of the street. We are considering making this a permanent site for our event, and would appreciate the feedback of all the sponsors and downtown merchants. It takes out the "weather" factor and made the setup and cleanup easier.

Again, we thank each of you for your cash and in-kind donations and feel that the success of this Relay was due largely to your support.

If we save the life of one person diagnosed with cancer, all the effort will have been worth it.

Our community thanks you and we look forward to the next Decatur County Relay For Life in 2005.

Gary Fredrickson
Decatur County Relay For Life
Oberlin