

## Americans won't put up with scandals like Iraq jail

Let's put this whole Iraqi-jail-fun-and-games thing in some sort of perspective:

The jail incidents, and the Army trials that will keep them in the news into next year, are news because in this country, we care.

Some armies would laugh at the things American prison guards were caught doing. In some armies, it's perfectly acceptable to shoot civilians or humiliate, rape and pillage.

Ours is not one of them. We have rules. We expect our soldiers to abide by them, and most of them do. So it's news when a few don't.

Many countries would try to sweep the whole thing under the rug. The government would deny it happened, reporters would be shoed off or arrested, the guilty would either be transferred or just disappear.

The whole thing would go away.

Not in America. We are free and open. We put the culprits on public trial, and then have to listen to defense charges that somehow the Pentagon and President Bush planned the whole thing. The guilty parties were "only following orders."

Sure, that's likely. The president and Donald Rumsfeld are sitting around the Oval Office, and Mr. Bush says, "Say, Rummy, let's have some of our prison guards sexually harass some Iraqi prisoners, raise an uproar in world opinion, and lose me thousands of votes at the same time.

"Oh, and be sure they are dumb enough to record the whole thing on video tape."

"Yes, Mr. President. Do you want us to send them a selection of sex toys for the show?"

Right.

No, the point is, Americans won't put up with this kind of thing.

In World War II, we prosecuted prison guards for smashing the mouths of Japanese prisoners to steal their gold fillings. In Viet-

nam, we prosecuted soldiers for everything from theft to drug charges to murder.

In our own country, we've managed over the last 50 years to do away with a great deal of police violence and abuse through better training and public pressure. Rodney King may have taken a beating, but in the end, he won the war.

But it's because we believe in the rules and take great pride in our Bill of Rights and our sense of decency that we have the specter of public trials in the Iraq jail abuse scandal.

Some would say that what the prison guards did was not that big a deal. They posed the prisoners in sexually embarrassing positions and made them do things most of us would not want to do. As far as we can tell, no one was injured, but the treatment was psychologically brutal. It was done for no good reason but the entertainment of bored guards.

So it's not a murder case? Still, the guards need to be punished, as do any higher ups who knew about and either condoned the treatment or looked the other way.

There's no doubt, the way the army works, that some careers will be ruined. Some guards will go to jail. That is as it should be.

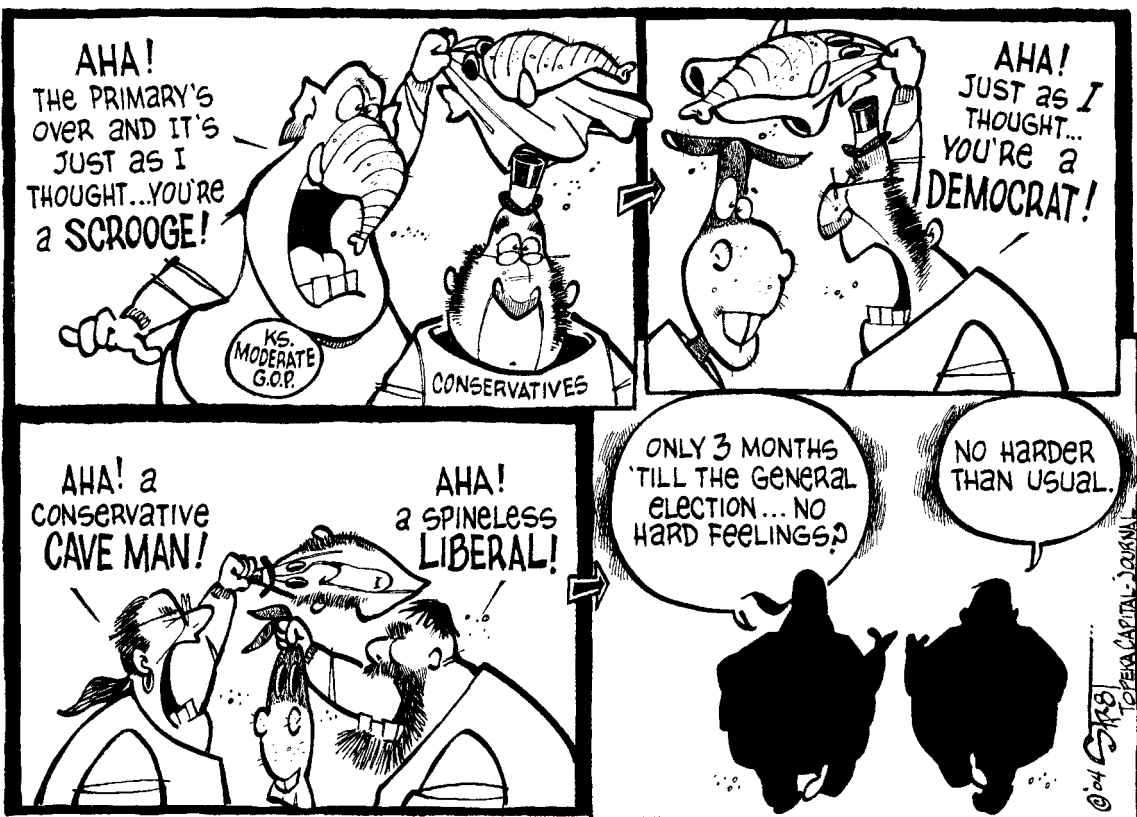
This week, it's Pfc. Lynnndie England, a West Virginia reservist, who is in the dock. An army investigator said he thought combat stress and a jail riot a few days before had contributed to the lack of discipline among the guards, all reservists called to active duty.

But Pvt. England, he said, she just seemed to be bored and looking for some fun.

Some fun, indeed.

This is not our way. This is not how we expect our army to behave. And it's American to do something about it, openly, before the world.

That is a good thing. — Steve Haynes



## Dad glad to drive with daughter

Notes from a cross-country road trip:

Children really should stay closer to home. It's a LOT more convenient.

But who could resist the chance to spend three days with a 20-something daughter who's moving to the East Coast?

So last Tuesday, I saddle up and start driving. In a 1,370-mile journey, I figure that by the time I get to Lawrence, I'll have finished nearly a quarter of my trip. And still be in Kansas.

The next day, we leave my truck at Kansas City International Airport, where the new parking lots are arranged by terminal and I park in the wrong one.

Crossing Missouri should be easy — it's only 246 miles — but Missouri is the worst state to drive in. I-70 is the only freeway from Kansas City to St. Louis, a key link in the transcontinental lane, and way overcrowded.

Add to that the fact that Missouri is about 10 years, maybe more, behind in major maintenance. It's rough, crowded and traffic is fierce. And that's the quiet rural stretches.

Missouri is green, rolling, with roadsides dominated by billboards, fireworks stands, porn shops and peep shows. Truckers must get really bored.

We lunch at the G&D Steak House, a cool place where the meat is rare and fine, and the service is... well, there isn't any. You order at the counter.

Why do they sell fireworks year around? Who uses them in the winter?

Then there is St. Louis. It's my turn to drive. We bypass St. Charles on a new freeway, but we have to rejoin the main route on I-270. It's rush hour. It's raining. It's a parking lot, with random vehicles trying to crush, smash or merge into you. We



## Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
schaynes@nwkansas.com

lose an hour.

I think she planned this so I'd have to drive.

Once over the Chain of Rocks Bridge and across the barge canal, though, we're footloose and fancy free on good roads in Illinois. We fly through field and pasture around East St. Louis and find I-64 east. This is traveling.

Illinois roads appear to be as good as Missouri's are bad. I-64 is not crowded, and we make good time. The weather remains gray, and Illinois is pretty — if you like cornfields, flat and green. It's easy driving, but we miss the hills along the Ohio River that may be the most scenic part of a most unscenic state.

And they say Kansas is flat.

Across the Wabash River and into Indiana, there's more flat land, more cornfields. Light is fading as we approach the Hoosier National Forest and the freeway begins to climb, twist and turn. It's like that all the way across the east half of the state. First the hills of the forest, then deep valleys cut down to the Ohio.

And then like magic, we pop out into New Albany and shoot across the river.

We're stunned by the beauty. Louisville's waterfront is all lights and action as we cruise by the barge terminals, bridges and buildings. I know, by day, it's just a city, but at night, it's spectacular. It's nearly 11 p.m. Eastern Time, and the freeway is nearly empty.

We need gas and food. We use our Dillons card at a suburban Kroger

and buy lunch meat. We find a room. We crash.

Next day, we turn southeast and head for home. The day, still rainy, is brighter and the horse country of Kentucky is beautiful. The roads are not as good as Indiana or Illinois, but still OK. I-75 is a busy north-south route. We stop in Corbin, home of Col. Harlan Sanders' first restaurant, which still serves KFC. We don't go in.

From here on, the mountains are prettier and prettier until we get to North Carolina and the Great Smokies. The highway goes through the gorge of the French Broad River, and I have to call Cynthia to tell her it must be part of her heritage.

Then it is up and over, just north of the national park. The country is rugged and beautiful, but quite different from western mountains. Also a lot more humid.

Then it is down onto the Piedmont as we race for Columbia, where daughter's apartment keys await. We are two hours off schedule and pressing the 7 p.m. deadline, but we'll make it.

We've talked for two days, and haven't had a single argument — that will come later — and it's been a great trip. We're tired, we still have to unload and the woman at the apartment office insists on reading not only the rental contract but the rules and regulations, word for word.

Three days, 1,370 miles, and for my daughter, I'd do it again. Not soon, though, I hope.

## Senior status starts to look good

I can't decide if I want to be considered a senior citizen or not.

A few years ago, if a teen-aged checker asked me if I qualified for the senior discount, I would get indignant, puff up and reply, "I'd rather pay the full price than admit I was that old."

Now, I scan the advertisements to see if I qualify for the discounts or if I have to send Jim in, since he just crossed the bar to the higher age range some stores require. I've noticed, too, that store clerks don't often ask anymore if I qualify. They just assume.

If they were smart, though, they would ask everyone if they qualified. Think of the goodwill they would create for their store. Every little 90-year-old lady for miles around would shop there just to be flattered.

—ob—

How many car accidents are caused at this time of year, do you think, when a passenger yells, "Look at those naked ladies!"

Naked ladies are, of course, a long-stemmed, pale-pink flower that blooms around the first of August every year. I apologize for not knowing the botanical name of these unusual flowers, which derive their name from the fact that there are no leaves on the long slender stalk. I



## Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
cplotts@nwkansas.com

probably couldn't pronounce it anyway.

We have several clusters of the beauties, and I cut a large bouquet for my desk at work. I wouldn't be home enough to enjoy them there, and they are very short-lived, so everyone at the office got to enjoy them with me. At least I think they enjoyed them. No one complained of allergies.

—ob—

A phone call last Wednesday afternoon made my day. A little voice on the other end said, "Hi Grandma. I knew you would want to know everything about my first day at school."

It was Taylor, and she had just finished her first day of kindergarten.

I asked the usual questions: Did she have fun? What did she wear? Did she make any new friends? Is her teacher nice? Did she learn any-

thing?

When Taylor talks, you need to "listen fast" because she runs at a rapid-fire rate punctuated with "Guess what?" That is actually a rhetorical question, because she often does not wait for you to answer, "What?"

Without hesitation, she informed me that she did have fun, that she wore a pink dress with flowers on it, that she made two new friends but she couldn't remember their names, and that her teacher was nice. But there was a hesitation when I asked if she had learned anything, followed by a long, drawn-out, "We-l-l-l-l-l."

That's what I thought. Just forget about school. She already knows it all.



# 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@nwkansas.com

## Nor'West Newspapers

### STAFF

Steve Haynes ..... editor  
Kimberly Davis ..... 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, 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.)



## From the Bible

The LORD is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure. Isaiah 33: 5, 6

## Traer Road gets bladed

To the Editor:

Often we are quick to criticize "the county" when our roads are bad.

On Saturday, July 3, the Traer Road was maintained. This road had become very rough after the wonderful rain on Thursday. I appreciate the holiday weekend work. As a rule, Road Supervisor Tim Stallman

## Letter to the Editor

and the crew do a good job. Thanks.

Rich Grafel  
Traer