

Seatbelts would give children safer ride on bus

You have to wear a seatbelt to drive your car. The law doesn't allow you to make that choice anymore.

Your kids had better be belted in, or you'll get a ticket.

Heaven help you if you have a baby bouncing around in that buggy.

Airline passengers have to wear a seatbelt. They want you to keep it on even when the "fasten-seatbelt" light is out, go figure.

You need a seatbelt to drive a go-cart.

Dale Earnhardt Jr. has to wear one to drive his car, or he'll get fined.

They're even starting to put the things on ski lifts, and next, who knows, maybe Amtrak will have them in its coaches.

So why, in God's name, don't school buses have seatbelts?

It's easy to say that school buses are safe, and they are one of the safest modes of transportation, no doubt. But on average, 9,500 kids are hurt in 23,000 school bus crashes each year. Ten die.

School buses have to stop before crossing a railroad track.

School buses have a stop sign to flag drivers and stop them from whizzing by while they're loading and unloading.

School buses have to let kids out on the right these days; no crossing the highway after the bus is gone.

School buses have to be clearly marked for safety.

So why the heck don't school buses have seatbelts?

You can't tell us that kids aren't bright enough to buckle them.

Or our schools are worse off than even Congress suspects.

You can't tell us that kids wouldn't be safer belted in than bouncing around the bus in a wreck.

That just defies logic.

You can't tell us the drivers and teachers are too busy to make the kids strap in.

They'd be a lot easier to manage tied down that they are loose and squirming.

No, it's not that, is it? It's the money.

It'd cost some bucks to put 40-50 three-point harnesses in all those school buses.

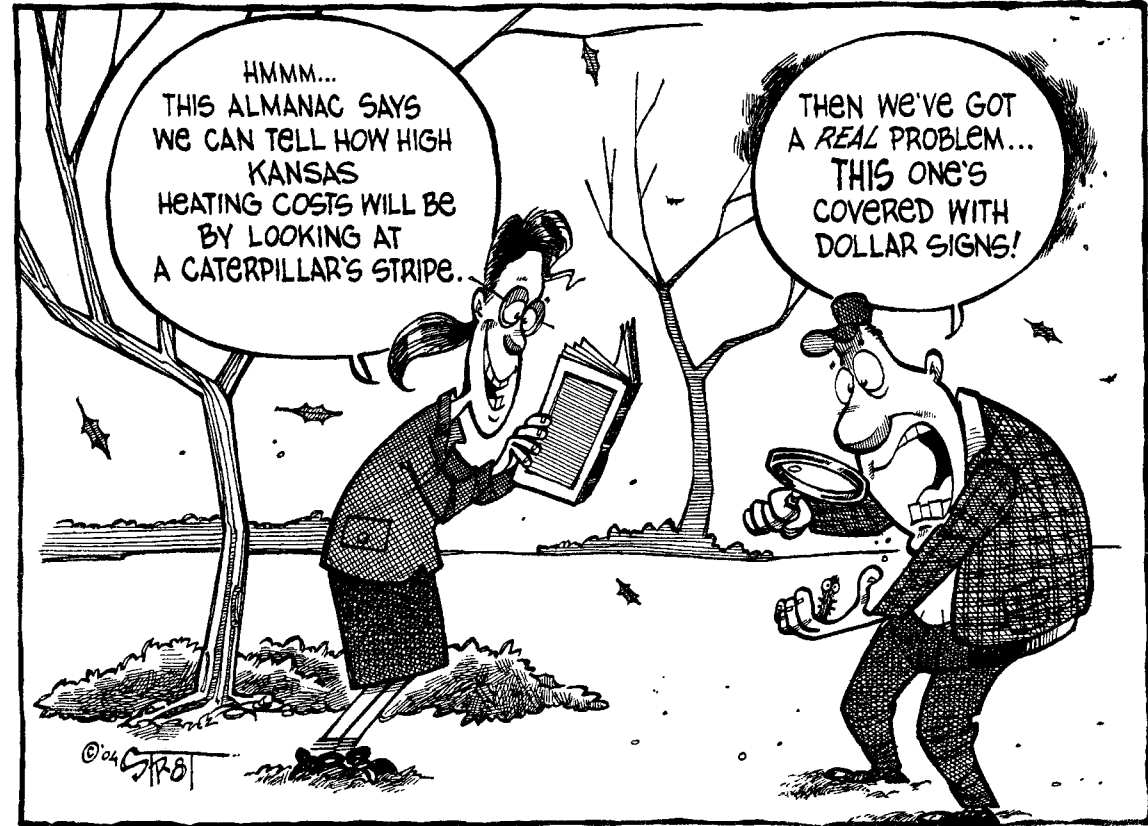
It'd be hard to rig the aisle seats, too.

A couple grand per bus, anyway. More to retrofit old equipment. And there are thousands of buses across the country.

Schools probably don't have the money. It's scarce these days.

But these are our children and our grandchildren.

Shouldn't we do it anyway?
— Steve Haynes



No senior discounts for her

Some of my old friends still aren't used to my salt-and-pepper gray hair.

I know it must have been quite a shock for them, but to someone who never knew the "before," this is just the way it is.

Jennifer, Alexandria and I drove to Texas on Saturday to get a head start on Thanksgiving preparations at my daughter Kara's. We stopped for tacos and chicken strips at a little town just across the Oklahoma line. It was Jennifer's treat and the check-out lady said, "That will be \$5.38. And with your senior citizen discount, that will be \$4.97."

Jennifer tried not to look at me, but then I jumped up on the counter and screamed, "Senior citizen discount? I'll give you a senior citizen discount! You could have at least asked. You didn't have to assume. I'd rather pay full price!" It was kind of hard for her to ignore me.

"Excuse me," Jennifer said. "I'm paying and we're taking the discount. Get over it. It's just the hair."

That made me feel a little better, but I fussed and fumed the rest of the way to Dallas.

—ob—
Roses are still blooming in Texas and my son-in-law Adam planted pansies in the back yard this morning. We sat outside on the patio in



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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our pajamas and drank coffee until it was time to get ready for church. The kids were even running around barefooted. It is balmy. I lived in Dallas for seven years, and I do miss Texas winters.

When winter finally comes, it may snow once. Maybe twice. But winter lasts about a week, and then it's spring again.

—ob—
Part of my job at the newspaper is to write feature stories. Since I'm kind of a natural snoop, it's perfect for me. I really like people, especially interesting people. And interviewing people is nothing more than talking to them.

Last week, I met a young couple who should start writing their own book. They are the parents of a 2-year-old and a set of triplets. My, my, my. The stories they'll have to tell. I admire them for their positive attitude. Never once during our time

together did either one of them complain about their lot in life or what they have or don't have.

Perhaps more importantly, I never heard any fussiness or crying from any of their children, a good sign that everybody is getting plenty of attention. Not an easy task with four children of any age.

My mother always said you could take care of two kids with one hand tied behind your back, but that third child just upsets the apple cart. Wonder what she would have said about having three at a time?

From the Bible

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High . . . Psalm 92: 1

Lousy basketball, but they won

I've been to junior high basketball games that had better shooting, and I had better seats.

But, hey, we won, and it isn't every day that you get to attend the official season opener of the No. 1 college basketball team in the nation, see your son and enjoy the company of several thousands of your closest friends.

Steve scored KU basketball tickets from a friend at the University.

The Jayhawks were ranked No. 1 by the pollsters before the season began, and they won pre-season games against such major competition as British Columbia University, 82-51; Langara College, 101-46; Fraser Valley All Stars, 98-76; Burnaby Mountain All Stars, 98-76; Emporia State, 115-70; and Washburn, 79-70.

Friday night, however, they went onto the court at Allen Fieldhouse for their first non-exhibition game and almost blew it.

After watching the Sweet 16 on television at the end of last season, I was expecting a great game and a score somewhere in the 100s.

But, last year's team wasn't on the court, and the Jayhawks who were there, needed to practice a bit more.

Their shots didn't sink and their rebounds didn't happen, but then



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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Vermont was even worse.

At the half, Kansas had hit 34.4 percent of its field goals and Vermont a measly 29.4 percent. The Jayhawks had 27 rebounds to Vermont's 21.

Only in three-point shots did the Kansas statistics look pretty good, with 42.9 percent of the outside shots going through the basket while Vermont was able to sink only 21.1 percent.

We were ahead but only by three points, 31-28.

As the second half started, it looked grim as Vermont surged ahead to a 58-54 lead. But our boys came back and won the game.

It wasn't pretty, as the boys in blue hit 38.2 percent of their two-point shots, 37.5 percent of the three pointers, and 69 percent from the freethrow line.

But a 68-61 win was enough to

keep our team on top.

The best of the game was watching senior Wayne Simien hit 25 points and make 14 rebounds, and seeing Christian Moody take a ball tossed in by a teammate from the sidelines and dunk it before the Catamonts knew what happened.

Vermont was a conference champion last year and KU coaches and players had nothing but praise for the team.

The compliments were returned by the folks from Vermont.

After watching other basketball games this weekend, it's nice to know that some people still know that civility and friendliness go a long way to making basketball a fun sport to play and watch.

But I still think the Jayhawks need to work on their shooting if they hope to keep their crown.

Readers thank elementary students

To the Editor:

We want to thank all the grade school children and their teachers for the wonderful, moving program they presented on Nov. 11, in honor of all veterans, at the grade school.

About 60 veterans received a certificate of appreciation from the students and staff of Oberlin Elementary

School for their service. We really appreciated the patriotic songs and program.

On behalf of all the veterans, we

say a big "Thank you"!

Jack and Lois Lamb
Oberlin

Letter to the Editor

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Dining as a 'drive-by relative'

We had breakfast in Lawrence, lunch in Emporia and dinner in Concordia, probably ate too much, but not as much as we might of.

We call it "drive-by relatives."

We'd gone to Lawrence to see the 'Hawks play basketball. In the morning, our son Lacy came over for breakfast, and we talked for an hour over eggs and coffee.

I think he thought the B&B's eggs were a little fro-fro, but he smiled and told the innkeeper they were nice.

The night before, we fed him hot wings and beer, which he likes a lot, no matter what his mother thinks. She's OK with chicken, in its place, but she's never thought that was mixed with hot sauce.

After breakfast, we drove to Emporia, my ancestral home, and the place where my younger brother and my much younger sister have settled again. They both had been out at the lake, but they came to town, got their kids and met us at a local sports bar.

The place is called Bruffs, and they make a killer steak sandwich. My brother assured me I had to have one, and though I tried to beg off, he persisted.

Though it took a while to get the



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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aunts and uncles and nieces and nephews rounded up, we got to lunch in time to see Iowa State rear up and whip the Wildcats. Cynthia and I tried not to gloat too much.

And since we're both trying to watch our weight, we cut lunch in half and asked for go boxes, which Cynthia set on the back seat.

On the way out to my sister's place in the country, we heard a sandwich sliding around back there, and she decided to put them on the floor when we got there. I had to wash the dashboard and make a rest stop. It was another drive-by, really.

As I was finishing the dash, Cynthia called from the barn, and I went out to see a clutch of three-week-old kittens. When we got back to the car, she opened the back door and found two go boxes, neatly opened, clearly empty.

Sis' dogs, it seems, are both neat and efficient, and have good noses. Only one onion slice remained from my ribeye sandwich, nothing of her hamburger steak.

Like I said, we didn't eat as much as we could have.

We took a walk break, then headed for Concordia and dinner with her sister.

We stopped at the nursing home to see her mom. An hour there, an hour downtown at this great new Mexican restaurant, and we were ready to turn tail and head for home.

We figured we could make it by midnight if we moved, and I think she's been down U.S. 36 enough times the last few years, she could drive it blindfolded.

Three meals, four stops, 500 miles and 15 counties later, we were home. It's a big state.

Keep kids in class, paper says

Editor's Note: This editorial in The Hays Daily News has caused some comment in Oberlin. It is reprinted here so everyone has a chance to see it:

Get this for public educator logic: The Oberlin School District's solution for the challenge of the federal No Child Left Behind Act is to reduce student teaching time by two

hours a month to give teachers time to figure out No Child Left Behind.

That's right. The Oberlin School Board last week voted to let the kids sleep in an extra two hours the third Wednesday of the month, when school will not start until 10 a.m. This is to give teachers time to collaborate, train, work on school-improvement plans and make sure they are fulfilling the requirement of the No Child Left Behind Act.

This has to be the best yet response to the federal educational reform mandate.

The debate in Oberlin, which is about 80 miles northwest of Hays in Decatur County, was whether to start late or dismiss early to create

this teacher time. Oberlin Superintendent Kelly Glodt pointed out to the board that teachers still will be working the same amount of hours; it's just the kids that will be in school two fewer hours each month.

This is classic bureaucrat thinking. And it is the reason that we have problems with our public education system.

In some fairness to Oberlin, a contract with the teachers union may be to blame. Such contracts often define the maximum number of hours teachers will work, meaning anything more — even if it is for the good of teachers and students — is not allowed.

The idea of No Child Left Behind is to raise the proficiency levels of all students so that, ultimately, none go through the public education system without learning the basics. This initiative has caused widespread handwringing among public educators and raised questions about the feasibility of its goals.

But no matter how you debate the means to the end, surely less student

classroom time is not among the solutions. Yet that is the effect of the late-start days in Oberlin.

If anything, we should be lengthening school days and looking at year-round schedules that would reduce the learning erosion that takes place during the long summer vacation.

Too often, ideas for more classroom time are treated as preposterous by the education establishment. And yet the countries that are turning out the best-educated students do exactly this.

What is ludicrous is the idea that more teacher down time and less classroom time somehow is a way to better students' education.

Forget about our bureaucracy and teacher contracts and any other contrived barriers. It is time in this country to put some logic into the administration of public education. Maybe such logic will strike Oberlin educators sometime during those extra two hours a month away from the classrooms.
—John D. Montgomery