

## State of Kansas to get a new campaign slogan

Kansas is poised to unveil a new state slogan and a new advertising campaign.

Here's hoping it creates fewer snores than some of the late and mostly unlamented campaigns foisted off on the state by big-city advertising agencies with grand ideas and few scruples.

Kansas used to be the Wheat State or the Sunflower State. A lot of people still think of us that way; those are identities that spring from our nature, and they seem to stick.

Tourism promoters desperately want Kansas to be something it isn't, however, and advertising agencies are perfectly willing to play along — as long as big bucks are involved.

So it was that Kansas once became the "Land of Ahs," a not-so-subtle play on words involving a famous film. But the slogan "Ah, Kansas!" was loosely translated "Aw, Kansas?" in the back seat by children strapped in for a run across the Great American Desert.

Kansas is a beautiful state, but our highways avoid the best parts — too many hills to build through — and bereft of trees, our roughest terrain seems mild compared to neighboring states.

Kansas has history, hunting, fishing, scenery, open spaces, peace and solitude. It has a pioneer farming heritage and a clean, invigorating spirit that deserves to be shown.

Unfortunately, what we're liable to get from the state's latest effort is another expensive slogan and the need to spend millions of dollars "updating" the signs at entrances to the state.

Every administration, it seems, has to change those signs. The current version was designed with the aid of Linda Graves, wife of the previous governor. It features a sunflower that's rather cold and abstract, in pale yellow on a blue background that fades purplish.

The best that can be said for the Graves signs is that they were a big improvement over the "confetti Kansas" signs put up under Gov. Joan Finney. The idea was that Kansas was so exciting that it was fairly bursting at the seams, but the visual impact on a sign was disquieting. Another ad agency triumph.

Then you get back to the "Ah Kansas" era, which featured exciting brown signs and even more exciting slogans.

The real Kansas is out here. It's a nice place, though we suspect, it'll never rival Colorado or Wyoming (Slogan: miles of empty desert before you get to Yellowstone!) as a destination. For one thing, the skiing is never going to be any good.

The best border signs we ever had date back to the Bob Docking era, when a simple green sign was crowned by a big sunflower. The slanted "stems" of those signs still hold up most of the border greetings.

Sometimes the simple approach is best. We need to market what we have, and we need to draw more people to our state. We don't need another expensive slogan from some high-priced agency that wouldn't know a purse from a sow's ear — or a cow from a pheasant.

— Steve Haynes



## Family equals frayed nerves

Having all the children home for the holidays was fun — and nerve-racking for all of us.

The children are no longer youngsters. Our oldest is 30, married and living in Georgia. She has been out of our home for a dozen years. In fact, she hasn't lived in Kansas (except for one summer during college) since she was 6.

The next daughter is 27. She graduated from college and taught for three years before going to graduate school. She has a steady boyfriend and lives in South Carolina.

Son lives in Lawrence, where he works, hangs out with his friends and raises cats. He's 24.

Son came home for Thanksgiving and he and youngest daughter were home at the same time last year. However, because of her job, husband and distance, oldest daughter hasn't been home for a year, so we haven't had our family together since she was married in August 2002.

This weekend, they were all here, and we were all wondering how we lived together, mostly in harmony, all those years.

Not that they fight. They all get along quite well.

It's just that they take up so much room these days.

For the last five years, Steve and I have had the house to ourselves. Children's bedrooms have been converted into storage and an office.



## Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
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Suddenly, we had people sleeping in beds that haven't been occupied in years. There were five adults needing to use one shower within an hour.

The grocery cart was overflowing and the fridge holds stuff I can't even pronounce. (What is humus, anyway?)

Our dining room table usually has plenty of room for us, the daily mail and a pile of newspapers.

This week, even the poinsettia I put out had to be moved to a side table. We filled all spaces and piles of Christmas cards were shuffled from place to place.

I was proud of us all, however. We were five adults used to living apart, and we got along beautifully for four days. We even took everyone on a road trip and no one got upset, even though three adults in the back seat of an Explorer is a tight fit for a three-hour drive.

The kids were home because it was my mother's 80th birthday, and we all jammed ourselves in the truck and went to visit Grandma in Con-

cordia on Christmas Eve.

We grabbed Mom out of the nursing home, went out for Chinese food, took family pictures and piled back into the Explorer for the three-hour trip home.

We skidded into town in time for church, then went home for our traditional Christmas Eve meal of steak, twice-baked potatoes and green beans.

Oldest daughter is back in Georgia now. Son left for Lawrence on Sunday, since he had to work Monday.

Only youngest daughter remains. She will be hitting the road this week for South Carolina. Since she's a student again, she has a little more time off.

I'm a little sad that they're all gone or going, but I've got to admit, there's a lot more room around here now. And I suspect they'll all be glad to get back to their own places.

It's nice to visit, but it's nice to be home again. And in our family, home is where the cats are.

## Four days work, three to play

Strange how Christmas on a Saturday can confuse you.

At my office, it was decreed by our boss that Friday would also be a holiday. Her "Monday Memo" is an intraoffice communiqué intended to alert the staff to upcoming events, potential stories and assignments. Last Monday the memo read, "The office will be closed Friday — don't even think about coming in." It went on to say we would have our office party Thursday and to bring food.

From that point on, the whole week kicked into high gear to cram five days of work into four. Thursday came and everyone brought their particular specialties. Cynthia provided a ham, Sonya brought her "little smokies," Vicki made a bean dish, Susie brought a cooker full of potatoes, Veronica (actually Veronica's mom) made cheese/spinach dip, Dick and Mary Beth provided a fruit bowl, Carol was sick and missed the party, and I fixed shrimp dip. Some of our families came by for lunch, and it was a day of celebration and well-wishes all around.

Which makes it understandable that Friday seemed more like Saturday. I slept late Friday morning, but when I woke up and went into the kitchen, Jim was busily chopping onions and celery.

"What are you doing?" I asked in disbelief.

"I'm getting the turkey and dressing ready. Dad's going to be here for dinner in a couple hours," Jim said.

"Whoa, Chef Boy," I said. "It's only Friday. Christmas is tomorrow."

"Are you sure?" he asked, suspi-



## Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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ciously.

"Positive," I assured him.

He immediately relaxed and bagged up the diced veggies and stored them in the fridge. At least they were ready for the next day. We sat down with our coffee and really enjoyed the moment ... until noon when the doorbell rang.

Guess who? It was Jim's dad. Jim had invited him to dinner on Friday. And it was Friday.

We all had a good laugh and a nice afternoon with Dad. He promised to come back the next day for our "real" Christmas dinner.

—ob—

Jim and I don't go overboard on presents, but when my husband does buy me a gift, I'd kinda like to get it.

This year, Jim picked up a couple little things for me way ahead of Christmas. Then he forgot where he hid them. It was late in the day before he finally found them.

—ob—

A Christmas Day call from my daughter, Kara, reminded me of the excitement felt by a child.

She said her 5-year-old, Taylor, got up that morning, put on her slippers and robe and came into Kara and her husband's bedroom, woke

them up and said, "Come on guys, get up. I just can't wait for this... for this final moment."

We should all be so excited for the final moment.

## From the Bible

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Luke 2: 13, 14



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## Hotel extras extra expensive

There must be a rule in the hotel business that the more you pay for a room, the more they stick you for extras, especially Internet service.

As you drive the Interstates today, the \$50, \$60 and \$70 hotels are draped with "free wireless Internet" signs. If you have occasion to stay at more expensive hotels, chances are they'll charge you for Internet, and it won't be cheap.

Part of the problem may be that "better" hotels got into the high-speed connections earlier, when they were expensive to install.

Also, these are the same hotels which are used to soaking people 50 cents to \$1 for a phone call.

We've stayed at convention hotels where they had wired the whole place for DSL (digital subscriber line) service, then charged \$10 through a third-party service to get on the Web.

That's a common price for "broadband," \$9.95 for a day. It may not sound bad until you figure you can buy a cable or DSL connection at home for around three times that per month.

It doesn't take much figuring to see that someone is raking it in. Most of these hotels now are stuck with contracts with their providers, though. Many are installing free wireless "hot spots" in the lobby to deflect criticism, but customers



## Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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can't be to happy about it.

In two trips to Kansas City and beyond this month, staying in four hotels — and boy am I tired of that — we found free wireless in most. One, admittedly, hadn't figured out how to make the system work yet. A clerk said she thought they were missing a card or something for their server.

The worst service, and the most expensive, was at the tony Fairmount on the Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, where the fee was \$14.95 for a day. I used the hotspot in the lobby the next day.

That wasn't a bad idea, I guess, since I met several women who stopped to admire my laptop.

"Oh, I've never seen one that small," one cooed.

I had no idea.

Wireless cards have revolutionized computing. Most new laptops come with a wireless card, or at least a spot to put one in. Open your com-

puter, and usually, you'll connect to the Internet.

People are putting wireless networks in their homes and offices. Speeds can be as fast or faster than wired connections, and you can use a printer or server hooked up to the base station.

If you put your antenna up high enough, your neighbors might be able to hook on to your system. You hear about people parking at the curb and surfing the Web, or cruising neighborhoods in search of a "hotspot."

My brother, I found, has a security trap on his wireless system to keep freeloaders out. He had to authorize me to enter his network. I haven't gotten his bill yet, but he was eyeing my credit card.

I'm intrigued, especially if I can convince the neighbors to pay me \$9.95 a day to use my system. Hum.

## Decoys could help lower crime rate

To the Editor:

Friday evening, Dec. 17, one of my vehicles was stolen, allegedly by one of those ubiquitous "ranch kids." Being a progressive-thinking American, my first thought was who to blame.

Oberlinites (Oberliners, Oberlinians?) who know me are aware that I am not all that bright, but it occurs to me that this is a fairly recurrent crime in our community. I would be interested in a comparison of our county's crime rate for car theft to the national average. My suspicion is that "ranch kid" statistics may not even be included in that figure. (My wife is always telling me I am too cynical.)

Let us posit that there is indeed a problem with this local version of Grand Theft Auto (ask your teenager what that means if unsure).

## Letter to the Editor

I was told that the absconder had a two-hour jump on authorities before flags ascended.

I was also informed that the noses are counted every fifteen minutes. Obviously there is a disconnect here. Whatever happened to leg chains?

A great American (I think it was Soupy Sales) once said, "Never bring up a problem without proposing a solution." Here is mine. How about we take a few of those junker cars that plague some yards around

town and leave a couple strategically placed near known ranch escape points? Bam. Two problems solved at once. Junkers off the streets and our good vehicles left unmolested.

My hope is that we do not have to wake up one day to a headline such as "Three killed in head-on crash" before taking action.

Steven E. Stacy  
Oberlin

