

Kansas Supreme Court needs to be reined in some

Things are out of control in Topeka. The courts are running things, not the Legislature or the governor. Maybe it's time to reassess. Sure, the courts are supposed to interpret the laws. They can strike down a law they claim is unconstitutional. That's their role in our three-part democracy. But the Kansas Supreme Court has gone way beyond that. The court ruled Friday that the Legislature is required to put up all the money specified in a 2001 consultants' report to pay for a "suitable" education for all Kansas children. That means more than doubling the \$142 million the Legislature saw fit to give schools. In effect, the court says it and the consultants will decide how much the state spends on education, not the Legislature. That's a direct affront to the authority of the Legislature to appropriate money and the governor to run the state. In a supposedly balanced three-branch government, one branch has seized power. But you have to view the decision as part of a decades-long struggle over the school budget. Mid-sized schools, led by Salina and Dodge City, claimed they were not getting a big enough share of the state budget. These schools lost their battle in the Legislature, so rather than going home to lick their wounds, they sued the state. To date, they've

spent more than \$2 million in state money on the case. (And that alone is an affront to our democracy.) Taxpayers the last two elections have put more and more conservatives in the Legislature, and these members have blocked nearly every move for a tax increase. That, they say, is what voters want. The voters' will is of little consequence to the judges, however. They're appointed from lists gathered by committees, with the final choice made by the governor. Theoretically, they stand for re-election, but no one can run against them and there is little debate and less understanding of what they do. School officials, naturally, want more money. They're willing to spend our money to sue us to get it. Is that how we want the state to run? Maybe it is time to rein in the courts. One way to do that would be to return them to the political arena, where judges would once again run for office. Where those with differing views could run against them in November campaigns. Where the will of the people would count. Another, less drastic, suggestion would be to give the Senate the power to approve judicial appointments. Either might make courts consider the balance of power and back off the stance that they alone know what is good for Kansas. The present situation is crazy.

— Steve Haynes

Life hectic for busy grandma

Have you noticed how some preachers "do" great weddings and others "do" great funerals?

The preacher who did the funeral for my sister-in-law, Liz, must have been a "funeral man." Of course, it helped that he knew her as a member of his congregation. He told stories that made you laugh, then he would switch to a poignant memory that made you cry. And, he had the knack for observing common, everyday things and making a spiritual connection between them and his message.

Another sister-in-law wrote and delivered a eulogy that was absolutely perfect. The weather was perfect. Friends and neighbors brought food, just like they do here. The family was all together. The children, Pam and Tim, who Liz was so proud of, were there for their dad. It was a fitting farewell.

—ob—

Life has been a whirlwind since our return, due in part to a certain little 6-year-old named Taylor. She is non-stop energy, and because of it, I've had to pick up the pace. My life is pretty busy, but it's a different kind of busy.

"G'ma! Come look at these ants!" takes on the same kind of urgency as the deadline for a story.

I love the way children make friends. Taylor met Peyton at vacation Bible school her first week here.

Sunday afternoon, I called to see if Taylor could play at Peyton's house while I went to the prison for chapel services. In that hour and a half, the girls became best friends. Long story short, after their playtime, Peyton came home with us. The girls played at the park, in the



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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playhouse and on the swing, fed the calves, had a wiener roast, then had a sleep-over at our house. I have to wake them in a few minutes so they can go to the one-day vacation Bible school in our little town.

They are talking about exchanging phone numbers and e-mail addresses so they can keep in touch when Taylor returns to Texas. She even suggested that Peyton could come see her in Texas some time.

Grown-ups could take a few lessons on friendship from children: Play fair, accept each other as you are, and give your friend the big half.

—ob—

It's true. The Kelley "auction gene" has been transferred to another generation.

I took Taylor to her first auction Saturday. I spotted some antique (OK, they were just old) suitcases

that I thought would be cute stacked in the corner of our new television room to hold games, puzzles and toys for the grandkids.

Taylor only needed one lesson on bidding and she was off and running.

"Now, G'ma?" she would ask, waiting to see if I wanted to go higher.

I think I can safely say we cornered the market on old suitcases.

"Pa-Pa, we bought eight suitcases!" Taylor announced as soon as she hit the door.

We won't say anything about the toilet I bought. It was brand new (still in the box) and we didn't need it, but for \$2, I couldn't pass it up.

Bargain hunters, unite! Follow Taylor and me to the next auction. One quick lesson and you, too, can be bidding pros like us.

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Wheelchair mobility not easy

Driving a wheelchair isn't as easy as it looks.

Mom's in a nursing home in Concordia and gets bored with the same walls, same people and same food day after day, week after week.

So we try to spring her as often as possible for short shopping trips and a chance to eat out.

My sister, who is a registered nurse and lives in Concordia, does this about every week. She's the good daughter who visits her mother almost every day and takes care of paying the bills and buying clothes and all the miscellaneous stuff.

She's got these short trips down pat. I, on the other hand, am dangerous.

I'm the other daughter. I get to Concordia, a three-hour drive, when I can, and Steve comes along about half the time, when he can.

Friday was one of those days. Steve and I arrived at the home to find Mom on the lookout for us. She knew we were coming to take her to supper.

Mother fell a little over a year ago and broke her hip. That injury, plus a small stroke, has made it difficult for her to walk, so she uses a walker or a wheelchair most of the time.

The wheelchair can be folded and put in the trunk of a car if you shove hard enough. This is what I do when



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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I go to visit on my own.

This time, however, Steve just tossed the wheelchair in the back of his Explorer after Mom was safely in the front seat. I was the one in the back who was worried that a sudden stop would send the chair to sit on me.

We arrived at our favorite Mexican restaurant without mishap and Mom transferred back to her chair.

The door to the restaurant was a problem. The screen opened out and the door in. I tried to hold the screen and door open at the same time while Steve backed Mom in. I let go of the screen too soon and it banged Mom in the shin, her chair caught on the pneumatic door holder and tore it loose from the frame and Steve rolled the chair over my foot. Ouch!

Supper was delicious, however. By the time we were done, my foot and Mom's shin had ceased to bother us and the waiters had re-

paired the door. We left a large tip.

Back at the nursing home parking lot, we worked to unload Mom, who was getting pretty tired. As I helped her move from the truck seat to the chair seat, I misjudged and she sat down on the armrest.

She said she would name the bruise on her butt Cynthia.

As Steve was driving her back up the sidewalk to the door, he was distracted by a cardinal and ran the wheelchair off the concrete. He drives just like that. Mom tipped, but she and the chair were soon righted and we made it back to her room without any more problems.

Steve added bird food to Mom's outside feeder and the cardinal and his wife came to visit as we waved goodbye.

Mom enjoys getting out, but I suspect she wonders if she'll return from these trips with us in one piece and without any major bruises.

Home for the weekend. NOT

This is how crazy my wife is.

We were supposed to go to Colorado this weekend to open up the house.

Two weeks ago, we were just back from a trip to Washington. That weekend, she declared that we were too tired to drive nine hours to Colorado. It'd be too much trouble to pack, and we'd be on the road too long.

So, she said, "We can stay home this weekend. We'll lounge around and work in the yard, enjoy the car show. We never get to go to the car show."

I was too tired to argue, so we scrubbed the trip to Colorado, even though it is sort of an annual tradition.

I figured we have a week's vacation coming up. We can go to Colorado then. It'll be warmer.

Now, it's Sunday. I haven't been near the yard. The hammock is still in the garage. I need to mow the grass. And I have an editorial to write.

What happened, you ask?

Well, first she decided that she really needed to go see her mother, who lives in a nursing home in Concordia. She couldn't decide whether to go Thursday, before the paper in Norton, or Friday, after the paper.

When she stays up late and gets up early on paper day, I worry about her driving halfway across the state. We were supposed to go to dinner on Friday. That was part of the weekend plan. Steak, I thought.

She looked at me with that look. "Well," I said, "you should go see your mother."

It's hard to argue that.



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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"So we could have dinner at that Mexican restaurant in Concordia. She likes that."

Later, she looked up. "Is there a game this weekend? Are the Rockies home?"

"Saturday, 6:05," I said. "Playing the Reds."

She looked at me with that look. I promised to call for tickets.

So we drove to Concordia on Friday. It rained most of the way out and back, but the Mexican food was great. Mom really does like to get out.

We got home at midnight. We were going to walk the dog, but it was raining. That made two nights in a row the walk was rained out, but then, who complains about rain?

Well, the Rockies. They had a rain delay for the second day in a row, but got the game in. They won, but it was 49 degrees at game time.

Saturday dawned bright and clear, giving promise of a decent day for the car show. We went downtown and looked at the cars while the drivers showed and shined, and mostly sat in the shade. At lunch, the air was raucous with squeaks and squawks from little horns the museum ladies were giving to kids. Everyone was having a great time. We got hot dogs and munched at the picnic table.

Then we loaded up and hit the road for Denver. It rained on the way, but true to the weatherman's word, the skies parted as we got to the city. The sun came out. The pavement dried up.

We checked into our hotel and walked down to Coors Field. It was warm and sunny by game time. The Rocks fell behind 4-0 in the first, pulled ahead 6-4 in the sixth and won 7-5.

We strolled down to McCormick's and had soup and shrimp. It was a great Saturday-night date.

Sunday, we had room-service breakfast, then went to church at Holy Ghost, where they have a Latin Mass at 10. We had lunch on the sidewalk on 16th Street.

And we headed home. We had only put in 14 hours on the road, Cynthia declared, not the 18 it would have been to go to Colorado.

I just looked at her. That's how crazy my wife is.

And I love her so.

From the Bible

Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked? Ecclesiastes 7:13

Thanks for all the help during fire

To the Editor:

We would like to express our gratitude to the Oberlin City and Decatur Rural Fire departments for their fast response to the fire last Monday morning and for their extraordinary effort to try to save our business. We truly appreciate their professionalism and tireless effort in putting the fire out.

In addition, we would like to thank the Jennings and Norcatr firefighters who came to assist the Oberlin firemen in the cleanup and investigation. It is apparent these volunteer firefighters are genuinely concerned about keeping our com-

munity safe and keeping property damage to a minimum.

We would also like to thank all others involved, including the emergency medical service, sheriff's de-

partment, city police, and Raye's Grocery for the food brought out to the scene for the volunteers.

Mory and Deena Zoderow
Kenneth Morgan
Oberlin

