

Sunday alcohol, beer sales could keep business local

Should Oberlin stores be allowed to sell beer, wine and liquor on Sunday?

Absolutely. Now that Kansas has modernized its liquor laws to allow Sunday sales, there is no reason why Oberlin should not fall into line.

It's a local decision now, and it ought to be a simple one.

There's no reason to force people to drive to Nebraska — or even another Kansas town — to buy a six-pack on a Sunday.

There is no reason to allow business and money to flow out of town when we can keep it here.

Oberlin's beer and liquor dealers are small business people who need all the income they can get. We should support them.

This isn't tall that big a deal. We already have liquor stores and beer in stores. We doubt allowing Sunday sales will increase liquor consumption here by more than a drop. But every dollar counts to a small business, and most are struggling.

It's hard to imagine any serious drawbacks from allowing Sunday sales. It's legal now to

drink on Sunday, but we're not seeing any problems around town.

Sure, there are alcoholics and drunks addicted to booze. It's a major social and medical problem. But they buy their stock now, legally, on weekdays.

It's customary in Kansas for a few preachers to oppose any change, in any town, in liquor laws. That could happen here.

Religion and the Sabbath should not, however, be part of the discussion.

It's true that Sunday is a holy day observed by many, but not all, churches. Under the U.S. Constitution, though, the government is not allowed to "establish" a religion.

It's up to churches to convince their members either to drink responsibly or to abstain from alcohol, whatever their beliefs require. That is not the city's concern.

The facts of life are these: Oberlin people do drink, and Oberlin consumers and businesses will benefit from this change.

The City Council should approve it and move us on into the 21st century.

— Steve Haynes

Water will remain expensive

Elsewhere in this issue, you'll find a detailed account of Oberlin's water woes by Managing Editor Kimberly Davis.

Kim has spent a lot of time trying to pull together the reasons why our town has so little water, and what we can do about it.

It all comes down to money, of course: For \$1.5 million to \$2 million, the city can build a water treatment plant and have all the water we will ever need.

The real culprit here is not the city nor the engineers, though there have been times when city water projects have not come together exactly as planned. That's just the way it is looking for water.

The real culprit here is the federal government, which keeps tightening standards for drinking water. Contaminants which no one ever thought about — including uranium and arsenic — keep Oberlin from using wells with plenty of capacity to slake our thirst.

These "trace minerals" have obvious drawbacks: arsenic is a heavy metal, used as a poison, while uranium, we all know, is radioactive.

But 10 years ago no one even looked for them in drinking water. Today they're prompting a \$2 million treatment plant.

So have we been drinking bad water all our lives, or is this just another federal boondoggle, an "unfunded mandate" they slipped in under the radar screen?

I'm no scientist. Maybe the trace elements don't matter. Maybe they're part of the reason we have so much cancer today.

Whatever the truth, scientists say they're bad for us and the feds won't lend a town any money for water work unless the town meets the new standards. Even if we want to drink the water, it seems, we can't afford to.

So it's probable that Oberlin will wind up building a treatment plant so we can use the wells taken out of service for fuel, nitrate and uranium



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
schaynes@nwkansas.com

contamination, and whatever else the feds can think of. Interestingly enough, they won't treat the water enough to take out all the contamination — just enough to meet federal standards.

So you'll still get your daily dose of radiation.

With a treatment plant, at least, we'll have plenty of water. And the weather cycle should shift, replenishing the groundwater supply in our wells.

But I hope we have learned a few things during the years of shortage. I hope the city will keep the heat on people to conserve water.

Back when there was plenty, most of us used more than we needed. I was one of those. Water was cheap and we had no reason to conserve.

In the future, even if water is plentiful, it won't be that cheap, not with

a treatment plant to pay for. And, hey, we've been lucky. A lot of cities have been treating water for decades.

While you'd hope we see an end to the even-odd watering system, with the bizarre result of people setting alarms at midnight to start a sprinkler, there is no reason not to encourage people to be wise in water use.

No daytime watering in the summer heat, for one thing. Most of it just evaporates.

No watering the street, and no watering every day.

Extension experts say it's best to water deeply once a week, not a little every day, anyway. Wet ground just promotes shallow root and fungus.

The drought will return some day, and if we've learned to save water, we'll be ready for it.

Photo Policy

The *Oberlin Herald* wants to emphasize photos of people doing things in the community. If you know of an event or news happening that we should attend, please call 475-2206.

Please be sure to allow a couple of days' notice so we can arrange to be there.

Space in the paper is limited and so is the time of our staff, so we may not be able to get to every event, but we will try.

Because space is so limited, we *cannot* run team or group photos, any pictures of people lined up or of people passing checks, certificates and the like. (We will always try to make room for a story about any of these events, however.)

We do run wedding and engagement pictures and "mug" shots with stories and obituaries, when they are provided to us. Please remember that we need a clear, sharp picture. Dark or fuzzy prints will not work.

We cannot return photos unless you submit a self-addressed, stamped envelope with clear instructions for return. Other photos submitted may be picked up at our office within two weeks. After that, they will be disposed of.

Laser proofs of photos which have run in The Herald are available for 50 cents each, first come, first served. Special-order laser prints of photos will be available at \$3 each for about two weeks after publication.

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170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243

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

E-mail: obherald@nwkansas.com

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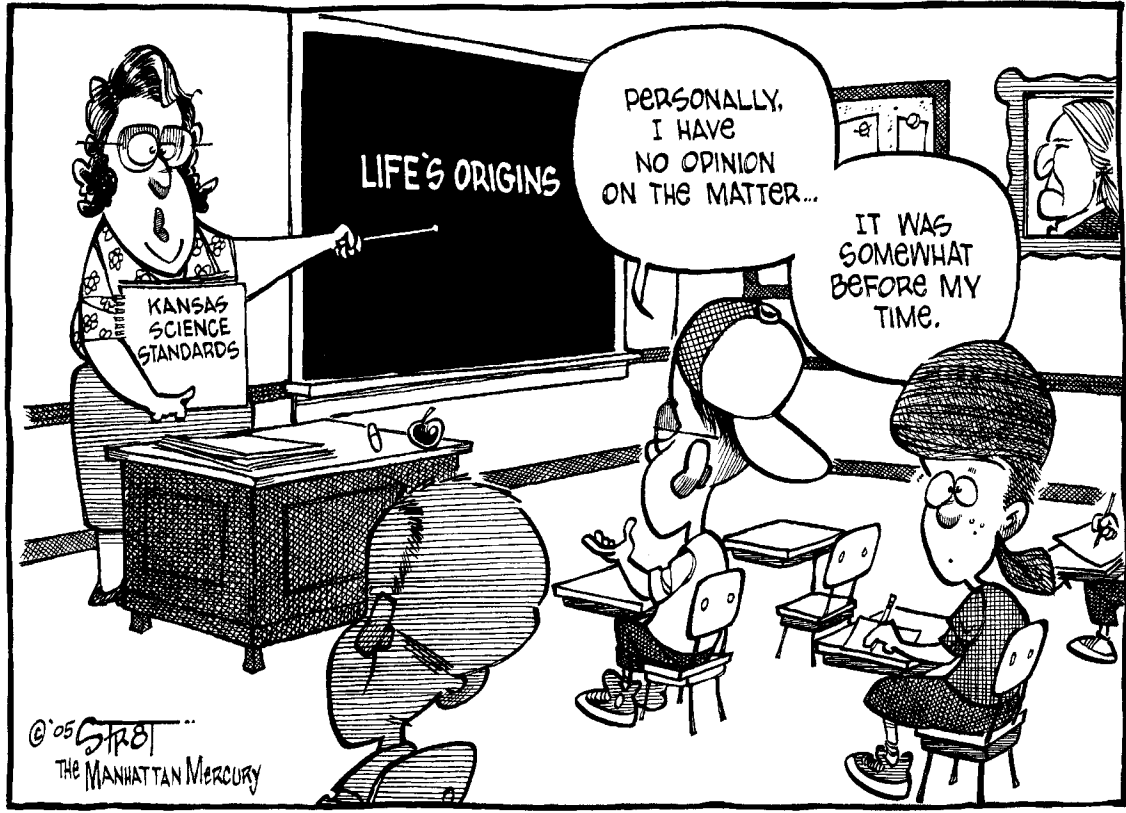
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Ready and waiting impatiently

Grab. Yank. Pull. "Why isn't he ever on time?" "Why do I always have to wait?" "We're going to be late, again." "Doesn't he think my time is as valuable as his?"

Grab, yank, pull. Mutter. For some reason, Steve and I can never be ready to go to anything at the same time. This includes going home after work, going to dinner, leaving on a trip. You name it, one of us is always ready and tapping his or her foot as the other wanders around doing some last-minute, have-to chore.

For many years, we almost didn't get out of the office at all.

When he'd finish up his editing and was ready to go, I was still doing payroll, so he went back to his office to write a column. I'd finish payroll, but he was still writing, so I'd start on my editing. I was editing as he finished his column, so he would start on ... and so it went for an hour or more until one of us got so hungry we started chewing on the other.

I finally figured out a way to vent both my frustrations and do a job



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
chaynes@nwkansas.com

that can be stopped at any time. I weed.

I go outside and start pulling grass and weeds out of the driveway or garden. At the office, I pull weeds from flower boxes and from the cracks in the sidewalk.

I don't do this with good grace, mind you. I do it with much muttering and frustration.

Even as I mutter to myself that we're always late and it's always his fault, I know it's not true. Still, it relieves the frustration of waiting. I'm not good at waiting.

My new plan seems to be working.

Since I'm not off doing some project that just has to be finished when Steve is done, we're done

when he's done. We can leave.

This gets us home to supper a lot sooner. We don't seem to get to eat any earlier but we get home sooner.

If we are leaving the house, we get wherever we're supposed to go sooner.

And it has two added bonuses. The garden, flower beds, driveway and sidewalks get weeded.

And it's good exercise. Those weeds don't come out without a struggle.

So if you see me out on the sidewalk giving a weed the what-for, you'll know that Steve is still in the house or office doing whatever.

I'm just not sure what I'm going to do when winter arrives and the only thing left to pull out is my hair.

Improvising is half the fun

Our "nest" has been empty for several years now. Our kids were grown and gone before Jim and I got married.

But, today, MY nest is empty. Jim left this morning for a few days in Texas to help our favorite son-in-law, Adam — our only son-in-law, actually — put the finishing touches on a new shop he built for his business.

And, if I know my daughter, she'll have a long list of "jobs" she needs done.

Jim is one of those guys who can do almost everything. If he hasn't done something before, he'll figure out how to do it.

I wish I had a nickel for every time he's said, "Let me study this out for a minute."

He might have to use bubble gum, baling wire and duct tape, but he'll be able to make it or fix it.

This is a priceless talent to have when we go to Juarez, Mexico, to build a house. We're planning another trip for the end of October, so that's probably why I'm thinking about my husband's handyman skills.

Conditions there are sometimes primitive, so it's great to have a man along who can light the stove, hot-



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
cplotts@nwkansas.com

wire the generator or get the plumbing to work.

We had our team's first organizational meeting last night, and everyone seems excited. We talked about menus (food is always our first concern), how many changes of clothes to bring and where to get water.

I think half the fun of any undertaking is the planning. It's always exciting to look ahead to something, to anticipate.

The other half of the fun is how to improvise when you didn't plan for every contingency. One year, I had biscuits on the menu one day but I forgot to bring a cookie sheet. I discovered that a metal pot lid works just as well.

Necessity is the mother of invention, right?

Speaking of invention — gas prices have been the hot topic re-

cently. High prices are hurting everyone, and they might hurt for quite awhile. But something good will come of it, I'm convinced.

Public demand will cause engineers to design engines that run on different fuels. Perhaps, not too far in the future, we might be driving cars that run on water, or electricity, or on ethanol, or on methane gas. Who knows?

I do know that Yankee ingenuity will come up with something.

From the Bible

There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.

Proverbs 21:20

Can we do more to keep businesses?

To the Editor:

I have recently moved back to Oberlin and have noticed that things have changed so much.

One of the most severe things I've seen is the many businesses that have closed and only a few new ones have opened to replace them. I have heard that the businesses that do open do not stay long.

I was wondering if the City Council and the people of Decatur County are aware of how important small business is to the survival of this town. It's economics 101: If there are no businesses, there will be no shoppers or tourists, and if this happens, then the inflow of money this town needs to survive also stops.

Letter to the Editor

There is very little to keep the younger generation here or draw people in because there are no jobs, and eventually you will be looking at a ghost town.

My questions are: What does a business have to do to survive in this town?

Why are the businesses taxed so much that they feel that they need to move to another city to keep their doors open? (I have heard some complain about this.)

Why don't the county and city

take care of the businesses with incentives to keep them here?

And, what is the vision of this town?

Julie A. Cunningham

Oberlin

EDITOR'S NOTE: Good questions. Let us add one:

Why do so many people here do all their shopping at chain stores in Nebraska? Don't they care about the future of our town, the need for jobs here, the future of our lifestyle? It's not just a city and county problem.

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.

Mail letters to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan., 67749, or by E-mail to obherald@nwkansas.com.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and

expect readers to do likewise. We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses

which do not pertain to a public issue.

