

It would be wise to heed advice of Alan Greenspan

Those of us who live outside the housing bubble may not understand it, but Alan Greenspan does.

And the nation's economic guru does not like what he sees.

The median price of a single-family home hit \$208,500 at midyear, up 13.6 percent in just two years. Prices in some areas, California for instance, are much higher.

And low interest rates, coupled with high demand even in the face of spiraling prices, keep pushing the figure higher and higher.

Who can afford to pay?

A lot of Americans, apparently.

But Mr. Greenspan, board chairman of the Federal Reserve, and the nation's preeminent economist, says the boom is not based on value or logic. He expects it to burst.

This is the guy who warned us about "irrational exuberance" right before the "dot-com" bubble burst, souring the stock market for more than two years.

There's a good chance he knows what he's talking about.

Kansas prices are more down to earth, running around \$105,000 in Wichita and Topeka, considerably less out here on the plains. California, on the other hand, is off the face of the earth, \$665,000 in Orange County southeast of Los Angeles. In Colorado, Boulder tops the chart at \$335,000.

Those are median prices, of course. Some homes sell for a lot more, and some for less. But in a world where you can still buy a pretty

nice house for \$75,000, the city prices are pretty scary.

Yet people are paying them.

What Mr. Greenspan is afraid of is that the boom is based not on any yardstick of value, but on speculation and greed. If it is, the bubble is bound to burst.

When it does, a lot of people are going to have trouble paying their mortgages. Banks will be looking at loans that homeowners can't repay. And collateral that isn't worth what they've loaned.

It could be the formula for another recession, maybe worse.

We may think we're lucky out here, where speculation has hardly touched housing prices, but our mortgage rates are bound to go up because of this.

The Federal Reserve is going to try to tighten the screws on interest. We'll wind up paying more for a home, even if our prices stay down.

The overall economic fallout could be much worse.

We should consider ourselves lucky we don't live in Orange County, or in Boulder, but we all stand to lose if this house of cards comes tumbling down.

Let's hope Mr. Greenspan can arrange a soft landing in the few months he has left before his term expires, and let's hope that President Bush has a replacement who can command the respect and confidence of the country after he is gone.

—Steve Haynes

Storm all noise, little damage

Stop! Stop! No more. We can't take it.

Stop raining.

Just kidding.

You never hear someone from Kansas complain about rain. The lightning show and winds that accompanied it the other night were something I could live without, though. Jim was gone and it sounded like the roof was coming off.

Amazingly, there was not much damage. The worst I saw was our neighbor's metal building tipped over, resting on the lawn tractor that had been parked inside. There were the usual broken tree branches, but no uprooted trees like I expected to see.

My heart goes out to our neighbors on the Gulf Coast. Sustained winds of over 100 miles per hour is unimaginable. And, now they are expecting to get hit with a "water surge" perhaps 28 feet high.

—ob—

Jim spent three days in Texas with my daughter and her family. Kara's husband, Adam, recently built a shop on their property for his business. He asked Jim if he could come down to help him finish the office and ceiling.

My son-in-law is a real "go-get-



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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ter." He and his best friend formed a partnership and have gone into the patio/pool furniture business. One of the aspects of that business is the need to "re-strap" pool chairs and chaise lounges for large apartment complexes and motels.

It's sort of a niche market, but that's what being an entrepreneur is all about: Seeing a need and filling it.

I'm very proud of him. If you would like to see his website go to: www.oasischairrepair.com.

—ob—

Jim also got to have our 6-year old granddaughter, Taylor, all to himself. Jim planned ahead and took along some of his long balloons so he could make balloon animals. She especially liked the parrot on a swing, but she wouldn't let her mother touch it because "she might

break it with her fingernails."

He had lunch with her at school one day. I asked him, "How was it?"

Keep in mind, when I asked how it was, I wanted to know what the cafeteria was like, what were the other children like, how did Taylor interact with them, and what was her teacher like.

"They sure feed those kids good," he said. "We had chicken nuggets and tater tots."

Well, nobody said he was a reporter.

From the Bible

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

II Corinthians 4:5

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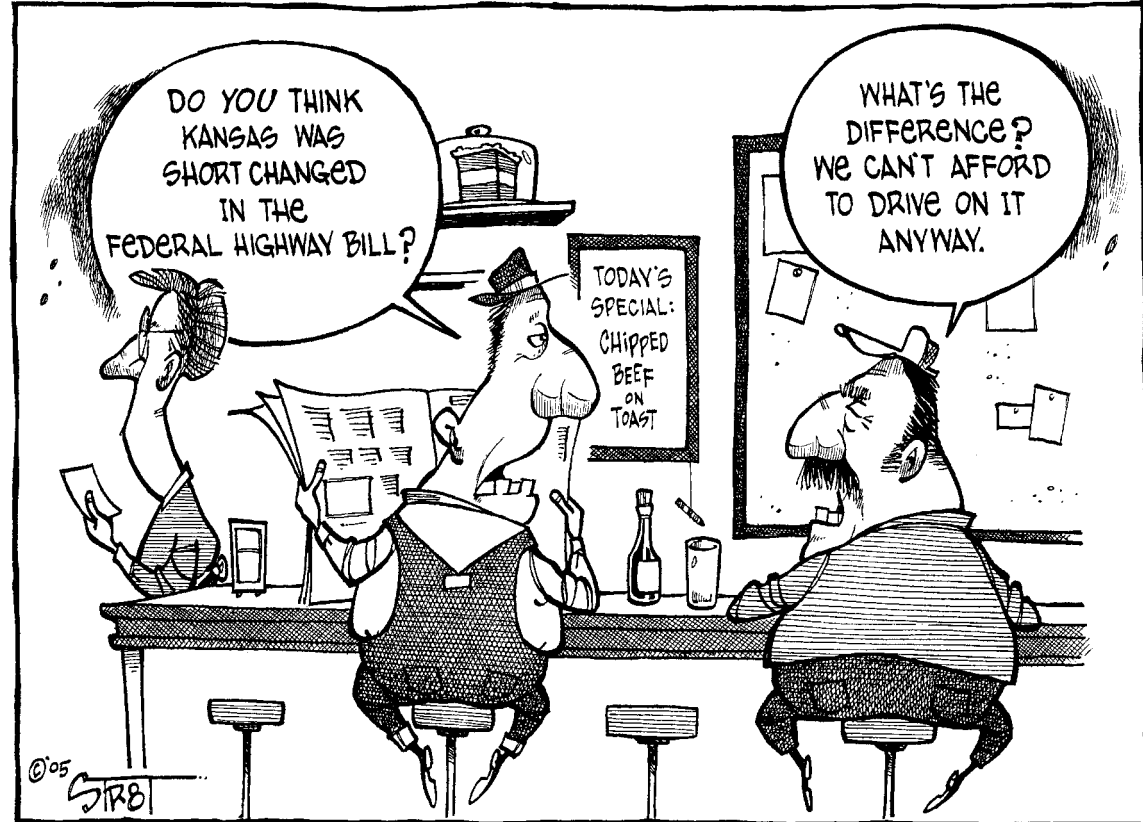
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Small cafe has show all its own

You could just about make a sitcom out of the little cafe in the middle of NoWhere, Colo.

We were tired and hungry, and the threatening rainstorm was just starting to get serious when we pulled into the parking lot of the restaurant on the edge of town.

Outside, the storm broke. Inside, the air was warm and the waitresses harried.

There were three rooms. On one side was the dining room with booths, tables and a big salad bar. In the middle was a small counter with stools for the inevitable coffee drinkers. On the far side was the bar with more tables and the ever-present large-screen television with a football game and no sound.

The place wasn't exactly packed, but it had more customers than one waitress could reasonably be expected to serve.

Still, the nice looking blonde with a name tag that said "Cindi", was movin' it top speed, handing out menus and water, slapping silverware on tables and removing dirty dishes as she served up extra helpings of coffee and tea to the folks at the counter and rang up those who wanted to pay.

We sat down and, after delivering a steak and all the trimmings to someone in the bar, dispensing coffee and discussing the special of the



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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day with an earlier arrival, she was at our table with menus, a smile and an apology for taking so long.

It hadn't been that long, we assured her. We weren't in that big of a hurry. We'd get home when we got there.

She suggested the ribeye steak special. Sixteen ounces of marinated goodness, she assured us.

"And it comes with an all-you-can-eat salad bar, Texas toast, vegetable and your choice of potato," she added.

We decided that the steak was for us. We could eat huge salads, the potato and vegetable and some of the steak and save most of the meat and the toast for dinner Monday night.

We could see the cook in the kitchen, a big man with a sad face. He never smiled, but he moved food out of there quickly and efficiently.

The only time he seemed at a loss was when a woman with a to-go box

told him he had forgotten to put a hamburger on her bun. She was laughing but he looked shocked and confused.

After surveying the box, he shoved his spatula into a big pile of French fries and parted them to display a burger.

The woman said she thought he was playing a joke on her, and he said he wouldn't do that in a tone that insinuated that next time, she'd better check again.

Meanwhile, Cindi was getting some help from the dishwasher, Mindy Lou, who although she wasn't sure what to do, was trying to take orders and serve coffee.

While Cindi appeared to appreciate the help, it reminded me of the help a 6-year-old gives you — lots of trying but not much real help.

I left Cindi a big tip. The food was good, the service passable and watching the staff better than television.

What will we do about Iraq?

What are we going to do about this war in Iraq?

Support for the war, and the president, drops lower by the day.

Opponents cry for an end.

A liberal, anti-war mother camps outside the president's ranch.

She gets more publicity than he does, it seems.

What is happening in Iraq, anyway?

More than 1,800 American troops have been killed. Thousands more Iraqis have died.

Rumors abound that President Bush will start bringing the troops home "next year."

Yet the Army says it's planning for four more, at least. Parts of an airborne division are being mobilized to provide election security.

Most disturbing to many, the president's rationale for the war, Saddam's weapons of mass destruction, turned out to be a myth.

Whether you believe the government lied — like that never happened before — or our intelligence was so bad they really believed he had them — and that's more than possible — it stinks.

Weapons of mass destruction were never the issue, though.

This war is about the balance of power in the Mideast, the future of Israel and America, the global war on terrorism, and yes, freedom for



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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Iraq.

Those who are against the war have been consistent. They predicted it would fail, denounced it as folly and they continue to predict failure.

In fact, they are hoping for failure, praying for failure.

It's not the war they hate; it's the administration.

Television cameras and Page 1 headlines focus on bombings and attacks on American troops. You'd think everyone in the Mideast hates us.

Opponents conveniently forget the thousands who line up to cheer American troops advancing on Baghdad, the thousands more who cheered when Marines helped pull down Saddam's statue.

They ignore the fact that there's been no major terrorist attack on American soil for nearly four years. They ignore the fact that we've taken and held Afghanistan and Iraq, and given a new era a chance

to start in that sorry part of the world.

There are two sides in Iraq. One side wants us there as long as we are needed. The other wants us out so Saddam's corrupt regime can come back.

The anti-war crowd in this country would never admit they want that, but it will happen if we pull out too soon.

The people planting bombs and undermining the nation-building process in Iraq are not good people. They are not, for the most part, patriots or nationalists.

They are people who thought the old regime was good, people with no objection to blowing up innocent civilians, to the torture chair, to terror and death.

The American people will have to decide what is right.

Will 1,800 of our soldiers have died in vain?

Was this fight worth picking?

We shall see.

Keep children from using tobacco

To the Editor:

A new initiative is underway in Kansas designed to limit Kansas children's access to cigarettes and other tobacco products. "It's Everybody's Business," is a collaborative effort by several agencies and organizations including the state Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services office of Addiction and Prevention Services; Kansas Department of Health and Environment Tobacco Use Prevention Program; Kansas Department of Revenue Alcoholic Beverage Control Division; the Tobacco Free Kansas Coalition; the Kansas Family Partnership; and Regional Prevention Centers.

In the coming months, this coalition will be working to educate retailers about the consequences of selling tobacco products to minors. We've established free resources that retailers can use to educate their employees about Kansas law on to-

Letter to the Editor

bacco sales to help them comply with the law. Onsite training programs for retail clerks and managers will be conducted by prevention specialists. Print materials will be made available to retailers in their stores to deter illegal purchasing attempts and illegal sales.

Kansas currently ranks almost dead last in the nation for compliance with underage tobacco sales

law. Our goal is to achieve a higher standard of compliance that will make our children healthier. To see how you can help, go to www.itseverybodysbusiness.org.

Kim Chain
community prevention consultant
Northwest Kansas Regional
Prevention Center
Goodland

Write

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