

State's deer herd took too long to build to kill it

Every year about this time, Tom Bell of *The Salina Journal* issues a call to wipe out Kansas' deer herd.

Generally a decent sort, Mr. Bell evidences a hatred for wildlife that borders on the pathological. Probably, he's not old enough to remember the days when there were no deer in Kansas.

It hasn't been that long.

Half a century ago, deer were a rarity. By the beginning of the 19th century, they, along with the native elk, bison, antelope, puma and other species had been eradicated from the state by rampant market hunting.

In the early 1900s, portsmen acted to preserve what was left of the state's wildlife. As part of a national movement for conservation, Kansas began protecting its fish and game.

Wardens were hired, seasons and rules established. Eventually, biologists were hired to decide how to best manage populations. Science replaced unbridled greed.

And slowly, ever so slowly, the old Forestry, Fish and Game Commission brought about the miracle of modern game management.

Many Kansans can recall the day when the best part of a trip to Colorado was seeing a few deer or some elk. You didn't see them here.

Eventually, though, the deer herd grew.

Antelope returned to the western plains. Games birds such as quail and pheasant became more common. Stocking and management and new federal reservoirs made fish abundant.

A major industry based on hunting and fishing, wildlife watching and tourism was born.

And Kansas became a place, once again, "where the deer and the antelope roam."

Not all species have been restored. Bear and mountain lion, wolf and buffalo, even elk, once lived here. No one wants to bring back something that might eat you, or be way too big to handle on the road.

But the wildlife industry, taken as a whole, is huge, and yes, Mr. Bell, it's worth the chance of a few accidents.

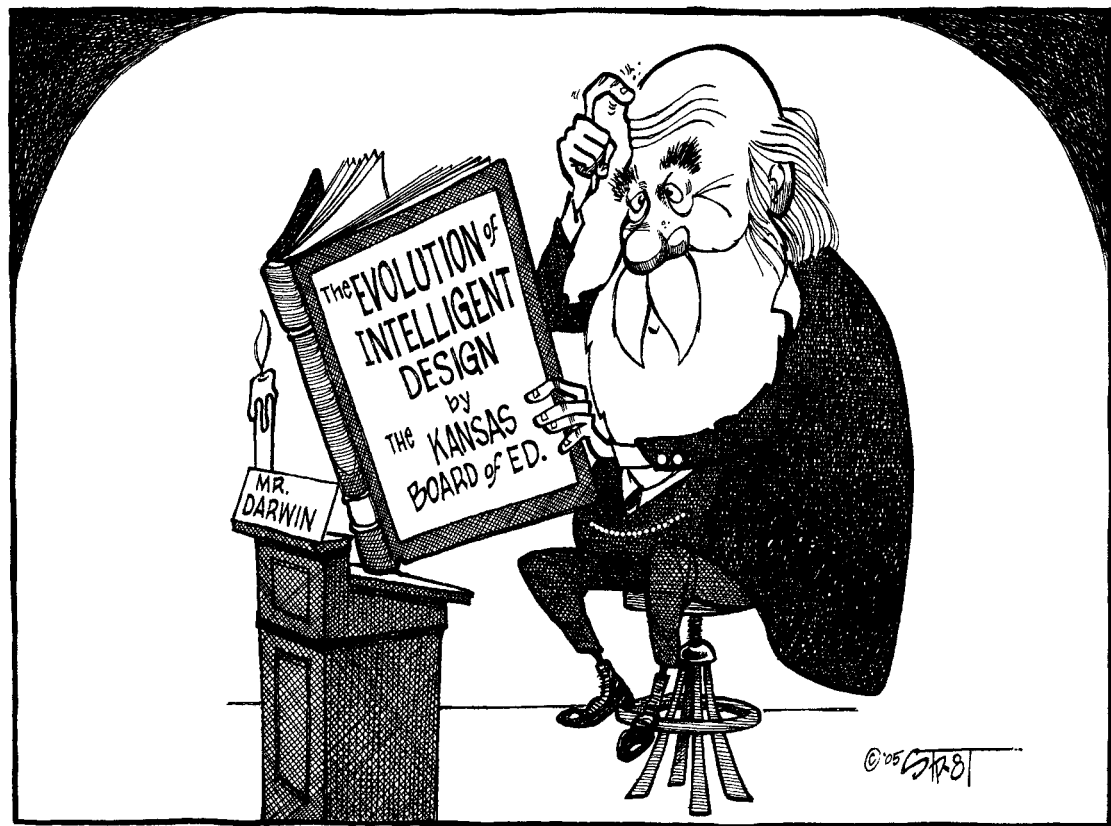
It's not just the dollars that count, but the endless hours of pleasure that Kansans and visitors alike derive from our wildlife that make it all worthwhile. Only the curmudgeonly can't appreciate the beauty of a deer in flight or a quail on the wing.

Perhaps, rather than calling for the wholesale slaughter of our deer, we should be asking people to just slow down and enjoy them.

Except for Mr. Bell.

He should just stay home and watch television.

—Steve Haynes



Memorial recalls enemy within

Before there was 9-11, 168 people were killed in a terrorist attack on the federal building in Oklahoma City.

At 9:02 on April 19, 1995, a rental truck carrying a bomb made from Kansas fertilizer exploded by the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, partly collapsing the nine-story building and damaging many churches, a YMCA and other buildings in the vicinity.

It took almost two weeks to pull all the bodies from the rubble and identify them. Then it took another five years before a suitable memorial was ready.

Steve and I visited Oklahoma City last week. We went to the art gallery, the Cowboy Hall of Fame and yes, we visited the memorial. Not to have gone would be like visiting Washington, and not going by the Lincoln Memorial.

After a little more than 10 years, the scars are mostly gone from downtown Oklahoma City. What was left of the old federal building was torn down. The churches have been repaired. The YMCA has been relocated to another building and its old home removed.

The young woman who gave us the tour gave us a memorized and rehearsed narrative of the blast and its aftermath. I wasn't impressed by her posturing. She has said this too many times, and she obviously wasn't around when that bomb went off.

What did get to me was what I saw.

As we got off the bus, we were next to a chain-link fence cluttered with memorabilia. There were teddy bears, notes, photos, hair ribbons, toy trucks and even a birthday card to someone who died 10 years ago.

Open Season



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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It's obvious, while some of these things have been there for years, relatives, friends, parents and spouses still mark special events with new items.

Inside the memorial, 168 chairs line up to nine deep on a grassy slope where the old federal building stood. Each chair bears the name of a person killed in the blast and each is set in a row representing the floor the person was on when the blast went off.

Among the chairs are 19 small ones, mostly in the second row. That's where the day-care center was. That's where 19 children died.

Each of the chairs has a glass base with the name of the victim on it. On three of the chairs there are two names — one for a mother and one for her unborn child.

Inside the museum, after you get past the gift shop and the elevator, you are led on a journey from a time in the early morning as people drop their children off at the day care center and head for their desks to begin another day.

You get to sit in on a tape of what looks like a rather dull hearing at the Oklahoma Water Resources Board. In the middle of the explanation of how the hearing will be conducted, there's an explosion, the lights go out and you can hear the people

screaming and scrambling to get out of the doomed building.

The tape was found in the rubble. Another room shows items taken from the debris — broken glasses, shoes torn apart, scraps of paper, damaged computers and tele-phones.

Above it all, television monitors show you the rescue effort as people are rushed from the burning hulk of a building into ambulances and given first aid. Other monitors show supervisors trying to find their employees and frantic parents trying to get to where they had left their children.

No Islamic terrorist here. It's easy to forget that the people who hate us sometimes are us.

From the Bible

O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

Psalm 95: 1-3

OK, so she's a little bit corny

We're planning our annual pilgrimage to Texas for Thanksgiving. This year, though, all the kids are making me sign a waiver that states I will not, under any circumstances, stand on the bed, or any other object, to adjust, turn on or dismantle any fixture, light, or appliance.

Nor will I fall, trip or discom- bobulate myself in any way, shape or form.

Last year at this time, on our first day at Adam and Kara's house, I was standing on the bed in my room, trying to turn on the ceiling fan (they had very high ceilings). I accidentally stepped in my suitcase and fell. Something popped, and I spent most of the holiday week in bed or directing the kitchen action from an easy chair.

I would like to think their concern for my well-being is based on their selfless interest in my health. However, I know better. The girls, Halley, Jennifer, and Kara, don't want to cook Thanksgiving dinner by themselves again.

Oh, Jennifer even tried the old "schmoozing" approach: "It just doesn't taste as good as when YOU cook it."

Puh-leeze! I know a snow job when I hear one. They don't want me to know they can do it.

Truth is, I do love to cook a big meal for my family. Nothing gives me more pleasure than hearing my favorite son-in-law rave about my apple pie, or my husband saying my cranberry salad is just as good as his mother's.

I guess I'm from the old school, where good food equals love. And, judging from the looks of the banquet we have each year, I sure do love my family.

—ob—

As much as we love our children, there is no comparison to our grand-



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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children. Part of the fun of the trip is getting to spend time with Alexandria and Taylor.

I'm not sure we can count "travel" time as "quality" time. This year Jim and I are riding with Jennifer. It's about a 10-hour trip, and she has already told me I am limited to one piece of carry-on luggage.

Alex is almost 11 and copes with the endless road miles by sleeping or watching DVDs on her mom's laptop. Jim and I look forward to the time with Alex and, knowing us, she'll also get drawn into a billboard alphabet game (sometimes we change the rules to include signs on trucks), slug-bug (pick a color), or "Let's sing a song."

Alex has heard my "Little Chicken" song and will even request it, much to her mother's chagrin. (Jennifer thinks we're more than just a little corny.) Would you like to hear it? Are you sure? Well, if you insist:

Oh ... I had a little chicken
And she wouldn't lay an egg,
So I poured hot water
Up and down her leg.
Oh, the little chicken hollered
And the little chicken begged,
And, the little chicken
Layed me a hard-boiled egg.

Thanks for the boiled egg ... pass the salt!

—ob—

I am available for your family road trips, too. Make arrangements by calling my booking agent at 1-800-YURCORN, and you, too, can enjoy verse after verse of "Little Chicken." Maybe you would rather hear my rendition of "I'm Henry the Eighth, I am, I am."

I really think I have the Cockney accent down pat.

No? Well, you have a happy Thanksgiving anyway.

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.

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Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality.

No one listening to school boss

Poor Bob Corkins. The state's new commissioner of education is off to about as poor a start as a public official could ask for.

It's probably not fair, but it's hard to see his tenure outlasting the current board, which will change over a year from January.

Caught up in the emotion surrounding the evolution-intelligent design fight, he'll hardly have a chance to make an impression on the sprawling Department of Education before the fall elections.

In a way, that's too bad, because if anyone would listen, his message might be worth hearing. He might at least be able to start a debate on his core issue, the idea of instilling some competition in the school system.

It doesn't look like people are going to hear much of what Mr. Corkins is advocating. Hatred of him and his cause spread before he even took office.

Listening to the questions when he stopped in western Kansas the other day, it was obvious his detractors had no idea what he was saying. They had heard plenty of what he hadn't said.

Mr. Corkins' first mistake is not being a school superintendent. Every commissioner before him was, and most had doctorates in education.

Connie Morris of St. Francis, one of the most controversial members of the state Board of Education's conservative majority, toured with the commissioner and introduced him as "Dr. Bob Corkins."

It's in law, from the University of



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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Kansas, by the way. Not education. And Mr. Corkins is the first commissioner not to have been a superintendent. He's just not a member of the club.

There's been a lot of hysteria about what Mr. Corkins and the board want to do. While the board has focused mostly on a "religious right" agenda revolving around evolution, the new commissioner wants free-market competition in schools.

He told western crowds he wants to do that with some kind of limited voucher system allowing parents to choose among public charter schools and traditional public schools. Charter schools have a lot of freedom to try new ideas and attract students, he said.

No one was listening. Detractors accused him of backing private and church schools over public schools, though he and Mrs. Morris said that's not the issue.

In one revealing comment, the commissioner admitted he has no plan drawn up, and that shows how he's been sucked into this vortex with little thought for tomorrow.

Our guess is he never thought the board would hire him, with his limited experience outside lobbying and the Legislature. He was prob-

ably as surprised as the superintendents.

Competition might be good for schools, though the idea scares administrators, board members and teachers. How to establish it is yet another issue.

And its far from certain that it's a good idea: Free, universal public education is one of the bedrock cornerstones of our society. We won't trifle with it.

It's not likely that Mr. Corkins will get a hearing anyway. The board that hired him, focused as it is on a narrow religious-right agenda, represents a minority of Kansans.

Its members got elected because, despite the lessons of the 1990s, no one much cared who won state board races.

That will change next fall. A new board majority is in the offing, and with it, most likely, a new commissioner.

Evil-lootion will be back in the science standards and all will be right in Topeka.

In a way that's too bad, because this competition thing might have some merit. It's just that in the current emotional climate surrounding the school debate, no one wants to hear about it.

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