

Blizzard cleanup by city, county crews well done

County and city crews deserve a big thank-you for the work they did last week during the first winter storm of the season.

The crews and staff went above and beyond the call of duty.

Sunday night, when the power first went out in Oberlin, City Foreman Dan Castle, Lineman Ron Beneda and Ron Solko, power plant operator, headed into the storm. Mr. Solko ran the city plant while Mr. Castle and Mr. Beneda went out in the bucket truck to fix icy lines.

The men worked until around 2 a.m. Monday morning and then were back at work that same morning before 8 a.m.

With stranded motorists at The Gateway, Kent Ploussard walked to work Monday, where he stayed for 30 hours cooking and serving motorists and boys from Sappa Valley Youth Ranch. Other staffers helped cook and serve.

Everyone pitched in. They answered phones, passed messages, got things fixed and helped out others.

Sheriff's department and police officers helped dig people out, get them to a safe place and check on people.

The county crew was no different. Calling out 13 people, the crew headed out on Monday to clear roads so a few people with emergencies could get to town. On Tuesday the crew started cleaning the airport, hospital, Good Samaritan Center, courthouse and county roads. As the men worked to clear the roads, they kept in contact by radio.

Listeners could hear them as they worked,

spurred by thoughts for those stuck out in the country because of the drifts.

More than once, we heard the men discuss people who might be elderly and live alone. They would stop, get out of the grader and knock on the door to make sure the person was OK. If they didn't find them, they checked to see who had picked them up and made sure they were OK.

The men showed compassion for others, which was heartwarming. They were busy. They didn't have to stop at those homes, they didn't have to be worried, it isn't in their job description to have a heart, but all of them do, and it shined through last week.

Sometimes when you are the one still without power, when your road isn't yet plowed or the snow is piled up at the end of your driveway, you forget what the county and city crews and staff do to get things done in a storm. It is time that they are thanked for their work and their service to others.

So, thanks. Thanks to all the crews, all the staff and all those who cared for others during the blizzard.

Thanks to each person who got the power back on all over the county, thanks to those who cleaned up the snow, thanks to those who cooked, who answered phones, to the neighbors who picked up their single friends and thanks to all of you who gave from the heart to help someone else out.

It's great to see people who care.

— Kimberly Davis

Publishers celebrate 25 years

Dec. 1 quietly passed, and Cynthia and I raised a glass to mark our 25th anniversary as newspaper publishers.

As they said in the song, what a long, strange trip it's been.

We had put in nearly 10 years in Kansas City when we took the plunge, or I had, anyway. She didn't graduate pharmacy school until 1971, and we were married that summer. I had been at *The Kansas City Times* for a year by then.

We enjoyed our time in Kansas City. I was a reporter and then an editor for the morning *Kansas City Star*, and she was managing a drugstore for the Revco chain. Our family grew to two daughters and a son. Kansas City is a great town, and not a bad place to live.

But at the drugstore, Cynthia had shift work. With only two pharmacists, they traded days and nights. At a morning paper, I always worked nights. It was fun, even when the kids were little.

By the time the eldest was in first grade, though, we never saw her. She went to school in the morning and came home to a babysitter. After a day when we drove two hours to take a walk in the woods, we decided there had to be something better.

A friend at work introduced me to weekly newspapers. He worked at Hallmark and at the paper, and he dreamed of owning his own paper. He spent hours pouring over the financial reports of papers for sale. I began to realize that you could make a living in a small town.



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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I just had no idea how small. That summer, we made a couple of trips to look at papers. The one that kept calling us was the crazy one, in a tiny Colorado mining camp, at 8,800 feet elevation, with barely 800 year-around residents.

When we went over the books and talked to the owners, though, it made sense, and by October we'd sold the house, bought a four-wheel-drive and moved to Colorado. We arrived right before Thanksgiving, kids, plants and suitcases in tow. We hadn't even signed the contracts on the paper yet.

Creede was, if nothing else, an adventure, start to finish. The house we had rented wasn't ready, so we wound up in a two-room tourist cabin with three kids, who promptly came down with the chicken pox.

The old owners showed us the ropes and helped us out for two weeks, then disappeared. We hadn't a clue what we were doing, but somehow we got it done. Being a reporter, I found, didn't prepare you for dealing with advertisers or printing contracts or Wolf Creek Pass in the winter.

I'm not sure we exactly prospered, but our operation grew. We

learned a lot. We made a lot of friends, and I suppose a few enemies, though I can't honestly name one right now.

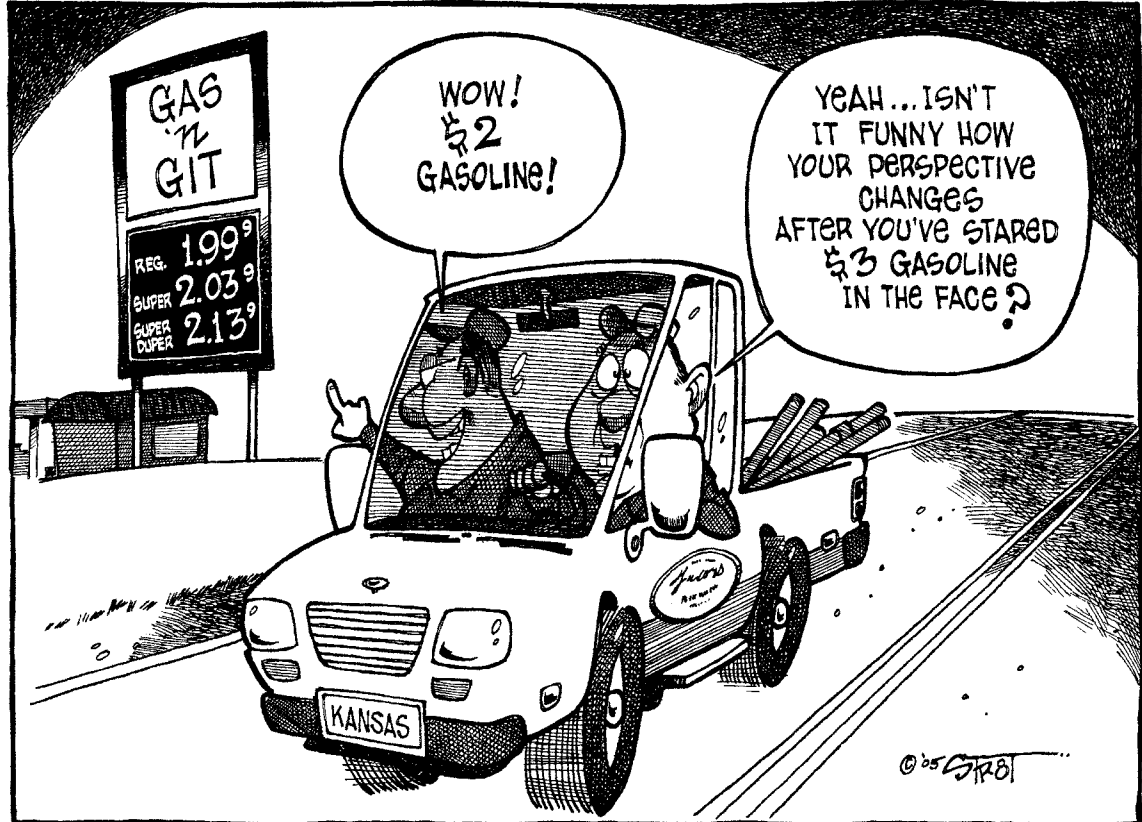
An out-of-state chain bought our competitor and took aim at our papers. Cynthia was managing a pharmacy for Dillons and working at the paper. When we sold, we had the luxury of looking around for another business.

And that turned out to be in Oberlin and St. Francis, a little more than 12 years ago, so we've spent nearly half our time as publishers now in Kansas.

It's been rewarding for the experiences we've had, the stories we've seen, but mostly for the people we've met. Readers and neighbors become like family. Sometimes they get a little irritated, and sometimes they're a little irritating, but still family, and you wouldn't trade this ride for anything.

It's not over yet, of course. There's a lot of adventure still on the horizon, but 25 years is both a landmark and a watershed.

A strange trip, yes, but so wonderful, so interesting, so unexpected and so rewarding. And so *not* in the city.



Counting too many cat noses

There are too many cats wandering around this house, and I wish I knew for sure whether it's four or five.

Youngest daughter brought her boyfriend home for Thanksgiving. Her boyfriend is allergic to cats.

The reason we have four cats to begin with is boyfriend. We knew the relationship was serious when youngest daughter dumped two of her cats on us earlier this year.

Steve thinks two cats is sufficient. I would like three. With our two and her two, we have four — more than either of us wanted.

With boyfriend's visit on the horizon, we had to make plans. He would bring his decongestants, but we needed to decontaminate the house.

We locked the cat door and sent the cats to the garage, which also has a cat door. Food, water, beds and the litter box went on the porch table, which is in storage for the winter.

The cats did not take this kindly. Every time the back door opened, a cat or two would make a dash for the kitchen. Most we caught, but there was a time or two we played ring-around-the-table. The cat would go one way and whoever was trying to catch it would go the other.

One busy morning, I spent 20 minutes trying to catch one that got all the way to the living room. She would go on one side of the sofa; I would counter. Then we'd both go to the other side. I didn't think there



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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was going to be any way to catch her. Then she jumped up on the back to relax in her favorite place, and bang, she was out the door.

Daughter and boyfriend arrived on Monday and things went well until Wednesday night, when son arrived with his two cats.

Daughter and boyfriend were planning to leave early Friday morning, but we had more than 24 hours to figure out what to do with Frank and Jules.

Since the weather was beautiful, my solution was to put food and water on the back porch for our cats and lock the garage cat door. That way we could keep son's cats in the garage, boyfriend in the house and our cats outside for a day.

The only flaw in this plan is we did have to get our vehicles out of the garage. However, I didn't figure the cats would run out in that short time, and as far as I know, they didn't. They're pretty "scaredy." They just hid.

Once daughter and boyfriend headed home, we opened the cat

doors and went to the garage to bring in son's cats. Frank was there, but Jules was nowhere to be found.

It isn't a big garage, but there are a lot of hiding places for a spooky cat. We looked, called and searched without avail, so I left food, water and litter in the garage.

Son left for Lawrence with half the cats he came with and we took off for Columbia, Mo., for a meeting.

Kimberly promised to feed the dog and take care of some things in the house. While inside, she swears she saw a gray-and-orange cat that she didn't recognize.

Since she's on a first-name basis with our felines and daughters', we think maybe Jules is somewhere in the house.

We don't know how she could have gotten in unless she saw one of the others use the cat door and followed suit. We sure haven't seen her.

Still, how can you tell how many cats you have when you have too many?

House bound kids enjoy time

The epilogue to last week's installment reads: Our "stranded" family made it home. They left our house about 11 a.m. Tuesday morning and called late that afternoon from their home near Colorado Springs. Two days of being snowed-in during the blizzard was claustrophobic for the adults. But, it was fun for the kids.

The two oldest girls asked me if they could bake their mother a birthday cake. Seems she didn't get one on her real birthday, and they wanted to surprise her.

Kids in the kitchen never bothered me. So, I turned them loose.

Jim always keeps a few cake mixes and canned frosting on hand in case he wants to bake his own "snackin'" cake. We found a chocolate one because the girls said "chocolate is Mom's favorite." They picked out a can of coconut/pecan frosting because, according to them, coconut was another of her favorites. They asked if they could use some M&Ms to write her name on top because "she loves M&Ms." They also wanted to grate some almond bark to sprinkle on top (that chocolate thing again).

After putting the beaters in the electric mixer and turning it on for them, one of the girls said to me, "Boy, our mom would NEVER let us do this kind of stuff."

I couldn't find birthday candles, so we substituted a votive candle and sang "Happy Birthday." Everyone had a piece of cake and declared



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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it wonderful. That was one "chocolatey rich" cake. Glad no one had a chocolate allergy, or they would have needed a medic.

During our time indoors we watched videos, played cards and computer games. I didn't want to do it, but toward the end of the second night of being house bound I broke out the Boggle game.

I have to be honest; Boggle is my game. I am brutal. I take no prisoners nor make any concession for age. Although, I do allow competitors under 12 to include two-letter words.

My son-in-law thinks I invent words, but every crossword puzzle fan knows "orts" means leftovers. Jumble those letters and you also have "sort" and "rots."

The girls, their Uncle Nick and I played Boggle until we were all tired enough to go to sleep. And, even though they didn't win a game, I told them they would be the only kids in their class who knew that "roe" means "fish eggs."

—ob—
The blizzard thwarted Jim's plans

for Christmas decorating. He had planned to start putting up lights last Sunday but now, a week later, he still hasn't been able to.

This morning he sorted some lights out, so it has begun. The annual ritual of illuminating anything that doesn't move.

We ran into a friend at the store yesterday. She was buying three-pronged splitters to plug in Christmas lights.

"I had these last year," she said. "There must be a 'plug-in fairy' that comes in and steals them."

Yeah, the same "fairy" that steals socks out of the dryer.

From the Bible

As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Mark 1: 2b-3

Be part of deer population solution

To the Editor:

In reference to your editorial on the state's deer herd in the Wednesday, Nov. 23, edition of *The Oberlin Herald*, you stated your position well and said it best.

We agree that a higher regard should be given to the deer population than to blatantly call for mass slaughter of the species.

To do less would be tantamount to what once happened to herds of buffalo that roamed in good old Kansas where we now call home. For a host of reasons, many of them senseless, they were cut down by the millions, to near extinction. Game management was unheard of then. Now it is. And it should be noted that

Letter to the Editor

our state's protectors of wildlife are doing a good job as they strive for a healthy balance.

Your point is well taken, suggesting that we can live in harmony with these beautiful examples of our

state's wildlife, when utmost care is taken and consideration is given.

You're right. We should all join in and be a part of the solution.

Randall Braden
Hays

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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