

Addiction is a disease; legal solution's don't help

Why is it when the War on Drugs fails, the answer is always, "more of the same?" The latest failure, oddly enough, stems from one of the few real successes we've had in this decades-long war.

Putting cold tablets behind the counter at drug stores has cut the incidence of meth labs in Kansas by more than half in just six months. And that is great news as far as it goes.

Cooking meth is a dangerous sport. We don't need drug labs in Kansas.

But making the drug harder to produce, while it makes the state a safer place, does nothing to lessen demand for the drug.

We still have a lot of meth addicts. They're going to get their "stuff" from somewhere.

So now law enforcement officials report a rush of Mexican and Asian imports to fill the gap left by home-brew meth labs.

What we should see is that we're not going to find a legal solution for our drug problem, any more than we found a legal solution for our alcohol problem.

Addiction is a disease.

Addicts need their drugs. Making them illegal doesn't change anything for the addict.

If we want to do something about the drug

problem, we need to start with the addicts and help them. With the children, and teach them. With society, and find out why so many of us fall prey to addiction.

As a people, though, we don't learn these lessons very well.

We tried to end alcoholism by banning alcohol.

It didn't work.

And we're little better off in terms of treating the problem than we were a century ago.

When other drugs arose, we made them illegal.

It didn't work.

Yet we keep trying to find a legal solution to the problem.

The solution isn't in the law. We can't hire enough cops and build enough prisons to stop the drug trade.

We can only corrupt America and, ultimately, fail.

We need to focus this war on helping people kick their drug habit, one addict at a time.

Then, we might have a chance for winning.

The way we are going is just a waste of lives and money.

— Steve Haynes

Spanish test easier this round

The Spanish class Jim and I are enrolled in had its first test last week. It was an oral test. The teacher sat in the hallway outside the classroom and, one-by-one, we went out to meet our fate. Actually I was anxious to get it over with so I went first. I didn't want to have time to forget what I had rehearsed so carefully in the car on the way to the school.

I took two years of Spanish in high school. But I am really learning things, now, I know I missed 40 years ago. It is starting to make sense.

Flashback to high school. Back in 1961, our high school had a state-of-the-art language lab. Each student had their own cubicle with headphones and taped lessons.

We also had a dictator for a teacher. He had a little Hitler-like mustache and a wooden pointer about two feet long, that he would slam down on your desk if you fluffed a word.

And, he yelled. A lot. I was fresh off the farm, living away from home for the first time, ga-ga over the boy that sat in front of me and totally terrified.

Fast-forward to 2006. We are in a class of ten where, Jim and I, no doubt, are the oldest ones. The teacher is young enough to be our daughter and has asked us to call her by her first name.

She is very fluent herself, but is able to simplify her instructions to make them understandable. She is professional, but not the least bit



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
cplotts@nwkansas.com

scary.

Of course, it helps our mental attitude to know we are taking the course for fun, instead of a grade-point average towards graduation.

—ob—

This is the week for hospital reports.

My brother, Dick, is recuperating quite nicely from hip replacement surgery. He said he picks up his walker when he walks, but keeps it close just in case. The pain is mostly gone.

Our youngest daughter, Kara, had the LASIK eye surgery done Friday to correct her vision. She said everything went fine and her vision is much improved. No need for glasses or contacts.

And finally, Jim's dad, also "Jim," is in the hospital with pneumonia.

Initially, he didn't want to go. He thought he just had a bad cold. Later, though, he said he was sure glad Gene (his other son) insisted he go to the doctor.

We visited him last night and he is almost enjoying his hospitaliza-

tion. He thinks the nurses take good care of him. He even brags on the food.

—ob—

Every columnist in northwest Kansas is probably commenting about the weather. So, I'll fall into lock-step with them.

Only, what do you say? There really is no weather. The days are mild, the nights crisp. It's bland, bland, bland.

What we need is two feet of wet, wet snow. Then it can go back to bland, bland, bland.

From the Bible

Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplications; in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness. And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

Psalm 143: 1, 2

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

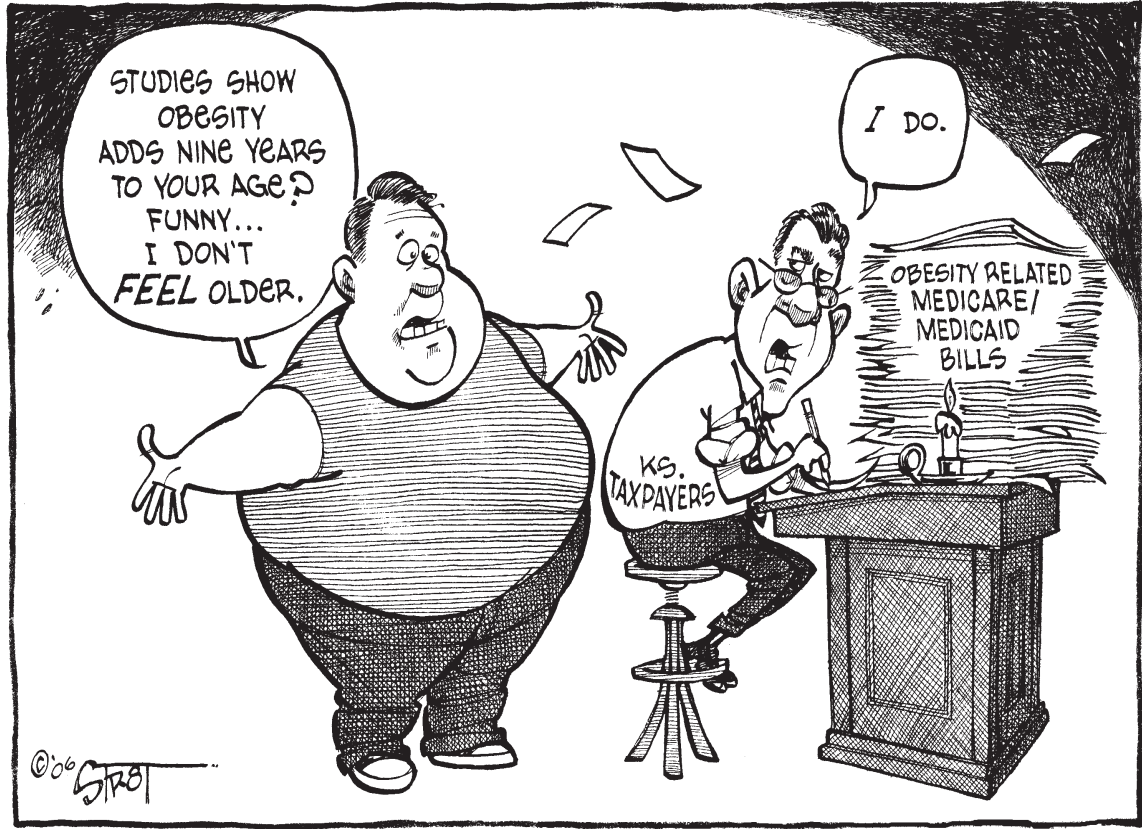
to obherald@nwkansas.com.

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.



One keypad may be the answer

Have you ever gotten the wrong set of keys?

I'm not talking about car keys or house keys or even keys to the office. I'm talking about keypads on everyday items like your phone, calculator, computer, garage door opener or keyless car entry system.

I went out the door and got in my car, used the electronic opener to open the garage door and called the office. As the phone rang, I backed out of the garage and as Pat answered, I pushed the off button. I had meant to push the garage door closer button. The phone is on the dash and the garage door button on my visor.

Now I know why they say it's dangerous to talk on the phone and drive. Heck, I wasn't talking on the phone or doing more than pulling out of the garage at a speedy two miles an hour.

I called Pat back and apologized,



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
cahaynes@nwkansas.com

because it's really rude to hang up on someone who has just answered the phone.

I have always felt that it doesn't hurt anyone to say, "Sorry wrong number," before hanging up.

Pat admitted that she, too, had had brain lapses and started using the wrong instrument to do a job.

My favorite is to try to use the phone pad as a calculator. I punch the number in and then try to find the plus, minus, multiply or divide sign.

It's about then that I realize that there will never be a little piece of paper popping out the top of the phone with my total on it.

Hey, calculators and phones have evolved into the same shape, even.

Someday, perhaps, we will have one keypad that will allow us to work at the calculator and phone. It will raise our garage doors and grind our garbage. It will be wonderful—and no one will ever know where it is.

Is eavesdropping a good thing?

President Bush came to Kansas to sell his secret eavesdropping scheme, and a lot of people seem to buy it.

I'm not so sure.

The president has a right, maybe even a duty, to spy on foreign enemies. When American citizens get involved, it's a whole different set of rules. We need careful safeguards, because it would be easy for the government to grab too much power here.

Just what is the difference?

We're talking about electronic spying here, space-age technology so secret that few even understand how it works.

Just assume that your government can listen in on a phone call most anywhere in the world, or read e-mail when and where it pleases.

Assume that your government knows many people who are terrorists or terrorist supporters, bad guys who won't like the United States or what we stand for.

So your government listens to their phone calls and reads their e-mails.

I think that is a good thing.

I wish, in fact, that your government was a whole lot better at this than it probably is, because then we might know where to find a lot of these people and wipe them from the face of the earth.

It's not quite that easy, or so it seems. No doubt, we've had our secret successes to go with our many secret failures.

Where this gets tricky is when an



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
schaynes@nwkansas.com

American citizen, here or abroad, calls one of those bad guys. The tape, or computer disk or whatever, is still rolling.

I guarantee, if you send Osama bin Laden an e-mail, assuming you knew his address, the National Security Agency just might read it. And then, you might be in trouble. You certainly would go on the watch list.

The question is, is it OK for your government to listen to your conversation with some terrorist financier in Saudi Arabia? Or read your e-mail to an al Qaida operative in France?

Of course, you're not in touch with those people, and neither am I.

But some Americans are. And our Constitution does give us certain rights, among them the right to have our affairs kept private and shielded from government snoops. The law says the government has to have a warrant if it wants to listen in on us, at least in this country.

President Bush is saying if one end of the conversation is at a terrorist hideout abroad, though, all bets are off.

Whether that's OK is a compli-

cated question.

Will the FBI come knocking at your door? Will you be hauled off to Guantanamo Bay and made to watch Qurans go down the toilet? Will you ever even know you've been spied upon?

Well, you might say, it's just terrorists and other radicals they're spying on. But your government has a history of abusing its power to spy. It bears watching.

It may be that Americans are willing to trade the admittedly esoteric rights of a few for the security of the majority. But that might be a mistake.

An agency that's fighting for freedom one week might be just the opposite at some future date.

As the government's ability to spy grows ever greater, we might wake up one day and find that it's all of us who are being watched.

It's not funny. It happens.

Ben Franklin once said that a people who will trade Liberty for Security deserve neither.

That in mind, while we know our government needs to keep an eye on the bad guys, we'd best be keeping an eye on our government as well.

Legislation to assist veterans claims

During the Kansas legislative session last year, I carried a resolution asking for another 60-plus years of cooperation between the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs and the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I did this to ensure service and support for Kansas veterans programs, including filing claims with the federal Department of Veterans Affairs.

My intention is for the State of Kansas to continue to furnish employees to veteran service groups that will help with accreditation, training, and offices for the state employees housed in our VA hospitals.

This has been an effective partnership serving veterans and their families, but it is being dismantled by the state Veterans Commission. Positions have continually been eliminated as VFW and American Legion service officers have retired or died. These vacancies present a serious disservice to our veterans and their families seeking claims.

The commission executive director's solution would be to hire a "pure veterans commission" em-



Letter from Topeka

By Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer
ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

ployee and have veterans groups train and furnish office space for these people, who would, of course, meet the minimum qualification of the commission. Our veterans organizations have a right to be concerned, because these employees could lack experience and qualifications needed to understand the claims being filed by veterans, especially our senior veterans.

I met with state adjutant quartermaster of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Darell Bencken, concerning this. I'm aware the governor has added \$400,000 to the veterans commission budget, but I am not convinced this will solve the problem. I met with a reviser to get an exemption in the wording of the bill for veterans' service representative

of the commission to receive a stipend from veterans service organizations in addition to their full-time compensation. This House Bill No. 2565 has been filed with the Appropriation Committee and has broad support.

Two questions need to be asked of your legislators: will dissolving this partnership between the state veterans commission and the veterans' organizations be beneficial to Kansas veterans and their families? If not, then who does benefit and how?

At a time when we have our young men and women returning from the war in Iraq, along with the many veterans of past wars, we need to be sure the veterans have a voice as to whether this partnership is dissolved.

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

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

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

E-mail: obherald@nwkansas.com

Nor'West Newspapers

STAFF

- Steve Haynes editor
- Kimberly Davis managing editor
- Mary Lou Olson society editor
- Judy Jordan proofreader
- Carolyn Kelley-Plotts columnist
- Cynthia Haynes business manager
- David Bergling advertising manager
- Pat Cozad wantads/circulation
- Karla Jones advertising production
- Joan Betts historian
- Jim Merriott sports reporter
- Whitney Beinke page makeup

Published each Wednesday by Haynes Publishing Co., 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Periodicals mail postage paid at Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Steve and Cynthia Haynes, publishers
Official newspaper of Oberlin, Jennings, Norcatur, Dresden and Decatur County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association, Nebraska Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year, \$30 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$34 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$37 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$20 extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243.

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.
(Also open most Saturdays when someone is in.)

