

Why do judges get break when violating the rules?

If you get a speeding ticket, you might have to pay a fine, go to court and pay a little more for auto insurance.

In many towns, you'd also find your name in the newspaper.

Suppose you're arrested for drunk driving. You'd be taken to the county jail, booked and photographed. You'd go to court. You'd pay a really big fine. You might lose your license.

And your name, in many towns, would be in the newspaper.

No one wants their name in the paper — at least not in connection with a crime — and sometimes people will do almost anything to keep it out. They beg, they plead, they cajole. They ask the police not to release it. They pressure the editor.

But under our system, that's part of the price you pay for making a mistake. Our court system is public. Part of the penalty is having everyone know you blew it.

You were speeding. You were drunk. You were wrong.

That is not a bad thing. If the threat of having your name in the paper keeps just one person from driving drunk, then it is a net benefit to society.

This standard does not apply to one select group in Kansas, though.

Judges.

Though most are selected by committees in a distinctly non democratic process, and appointed by the governor more or less for life, judges who make a mistake often escape public scrutiny.

The Associated Press found that just eight of 65 cases involving violations by judges in the past six years had been made public. It's

like, if you're a member of the club, and a gentleman, then a slap on the wrist is sufficient.

No need to alarm the public.

Though it is our job, as voters, to approve or disapprove of judges' conduct and vote on them every few years, we don't get much information.

Even in those cases which did become public, in most, little information was given out. Even a doctor accused of medical violations faces more public scrutiny.

Yet judges must stand for election, and voters are supposed to make informed decisions on whether to keep them.

In the cities, and for the Court of Appeals and Supreme Court, judges are appointed and usually serve until they retire. They must stand for a "yes-or-no" vote on retention every four to six years, but no Kansas judge has been voted out of office in our memory.

Generally, in statewide races, judges win by landslide numbers. That may be because voters don't know why they should not vote yes.

In rural areas, by contrast, district and magistrate judges still run for office. They can face a challenge every four years.

Sometimes, if another lawyer has the gump-tion, and voters are fed up, there is a change. Not often, but the threat is there. It keeps courts in line.

With the current scandal involving a Supreme Court judge meeting with legislators and discussing the pending school finance lawsuit, we need to take another look at this system.

If we are supposed to judge the judges, shouldn't we know when they mess up?

— Steve Haynes

Tip guarantees bountiful crop

This weekend we managed to get all our flowers in the ground or in pots. All that is left is to plant are six tomato plants.

Every year we try to grow tomatoes. And, every year we fail. This year, however, I have some inside information that guarantees a bountiful crop. Friday night, I met a woman who has the reputation of growing excellent tomatoes. The secret, she said, is to make sure each plant is pollinated. When the plants are in full bloom, I am to take my finger and lightly touch each blossom, thereby pollinating the tomato.

It sounds a little personal, but I am willing to do anything to get some good tasting tomatoes.

No offense to the local grocers, but "store-bought" tomatoes taste like wet cardboard with a hint of tomato flavoring.

—ob—

Every town around, and every resident in every town, is sprucing up for the approaching weekend. School reunions plus Memorial Day will add up to a jam-packed few days. Some of the "sprucing up" has to do with houses and yards. Some has to do with graying hair, new clothes and old wrinkles. Lots of us are asking if it's possible to lose 50 pounds in five days.

This is the 45th reunion year for the Class of '61 and Jim has been involved with the planning of his class's activities.



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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That's one thing I appreciate about Jim. He didn't say he would help and then expect me to do his job. I need to take a lesson from him. I am always making promises that he has to help me keep.

No, he wrote every one of his classmates himself, included envelopes, and recorded replies. He has gone to the planning meetings and is really looking forward to seeing his old friends.

—ob—

I just watched Katie Couric do a segment on "The Today Show" about men who capture alligators in Florida cities. She said if you are being chased by a 'gator, to run in a zig-zag pattern. She said that alligators don't have peripheral vision.

Seems to me that if that's true, the 'gator would see you every other zig. If I'm ever chased by an alligator, I think I'll take Matt Lauer's advice and climb a tree.

Jim is reading as I type this and he just said, "That's what I want to watch: you climbing a tree."

"Fine," I said. "You can stay on the ground with the alligator."

—ob—

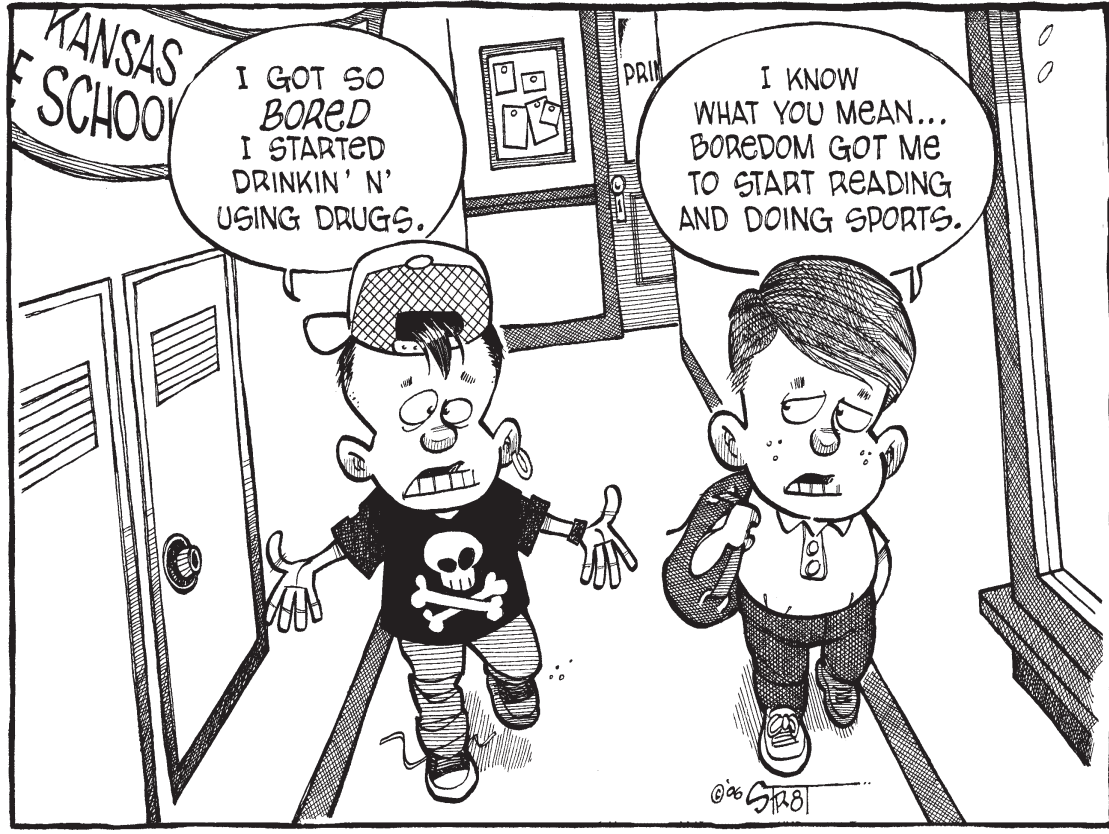
Jim had the honor of uniting a couple in marriage Friday night. It was a simply beautiful ceremony.

The bride's children were the witnesses and provided the most poignant part of the wedding. The entire new family lit a unity candle to signify their oneness. It was a beautiful moment.

Congratulations, Rex and Trendy.

From the Bible

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.
Ecclesiastes 11: 9



Communication key for park

One of the best things happening in Oberlin is the revival of Sappa Park.

Volunteers from Pheasants Forever took over the farm lease and started managing the park for wildlife. They pulled fences and cleared weedy areas.

Others have been working to build a wetland with a small fishing pond, a start perhaps on restoring water-based use of the park. The lake itself has been dry since it filled with silt in the 1960s and the state abandoned it.

Still other volunteers have restored the roof of the historic shelter house, cleaned up the monument by the dam and hauled off junk cars and trash.

And now the city's park committee has hiking trails marked and mowed.

The park has never looked better, not since the days when the lake was full and Oberlin kids learned to fish, swim and water ski there.

People are starting to use it more. But there is trouble in paradise.

Some days, the volunteers are, it seems, working at cross purposes. They don't always communicate or agree on what needs to be done.

There is pressure on the city crew



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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to do more at the park. As volunteers establish features, someone has to maintain them. Even the county commissioners have been asked to help with mowing and upkeep.

None of this is insurmountable. Everyone involved in the park is working to renew it because they love the outdoors and want to see Oberlin have a great natural resource. They are all people of intelligence and goodwill.

But the lack of communication is starting to spill out into the public arena, where it could threaten the very future of the park everyone loves.

If everyone just gets mad, the weeds will grow and the park will sink back into decay.

The best thing that could happen would be for the mayor and City Council, who have a large stake in the park, to ask everyone to send rep-

resentatives to a joint committee to map out a master plan for the park.

A joint committee, not too different from the park committee the city has had, but including every interest group, ought to be able to hash out priorities and negotiate with the city and county for improved maintenance.

Though the budget is tight, the city and county ought to be able to commit to some mowing and other minor work.

The park project, with all its facets, is too important to let die. There are no bad guys here, just poor communication and lack of an overarching plan.

That should be easy to solve to everyone's satisfaction, if everyone approaches the problem with goodwill and charity.

Otherwise, a lot of hard work could go for naught.

She suffers for squished snake

I killed a snake yesterday and I felt terrible about it.

I really didn't have a choice. Mr. Snake was slithering across my lane and a semi was headed for me in the other one. It was Mr. Snake or a head-on collision and so a six-to-eight-foot rodent remover got crushed under my wheels.

I didn't stop. I didn't go back to see if it was still alive or what kind of snake it was. I felt it as the car rolled over its long slithery back. It was a goner.

It didn't make much difference whether it was a rattle snake or a bull snake. Both are good pest removers and since I wasn't planning to take it home as a pet it should have had many more days to keep the local rodent population at bay.

But, it didn't.

I know, I'm being sentimental about an animal many people will go out of their way to run over.

Most people don't like reptiles, amphibians, insects and other cold-blooded critters. But, I like them.

I had no problem with my son keeping lizards when he was in high school.

How could I? I kept a bull snake in my apartment when I was in col-



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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lege and we had several garter snakes as pets when the children were younger and we lived in Colorado.

I'm also partial to turtles, frogs, toads and crayfish. I don't care for most insects and spiders but I usually take a live-and-let-live attitude unless they're trying to live on my garden or in my house.

I'm the sort of person who stops along the road to pick up box turtles and move them out of the traffic. Sometimes I move them all the way home.

For the last several years we've had a large toad living in the garden. This is a great symbiotic relationship. I give Mr. Toad a nice moist, green home and he helps me keep the insects away from my tomatoes.

My children have developed a

love of animals, also.

Oldest daughter takes mice away from her cats and lets them go at the bottom of her garden.

Youngest daughter saves baby frogs, which are born in a fountain on her college campus. The tadpoles are born in the water but can't get out of the fountain when they turn into frogs and will drown unless rescued.

Son — well, he's the one who kept lizards in his room as a teenager. These days he just keeps cats.

And then there's Steve. He puts up with the whole lot of us, catches crickets to feed the lizards, leaves the outside light on to attract bugs for the toad and brings the car to a screeching halt to rescue the odd snake or turtle. I'm not sure if he loves creepy crawlies but he certainly does live with them.

Ethanol may be answer for fuel

To the Editor:

It seems like a timely problem that could be addressed by the people of Kansas: fuel costs! Perhaps it is time to quit blowing smoke and to do something about it.

Why don't the farmers and people band together and help themselves as well as the economy for the whole state? Ethanol seems to be the most complete way to handle the problems at hand.

If a processing plant could be built

Letters to the Editor

and farmers raise corn, and big oil companies can be kept out of the matter, things could be handled very well. There are plenty of intelligent people in the state of Kansas who could get this project under way.

Gasoline vehicles could be converted to use ethanol. Enter mechan-

ics. Railroads and trucks could furnish transport for corn and ethanol.

Let's end our addiction to oil. Let progress begin!

Jack D. Roberts
Longmont, Colo.

P.S. I will also miss my classmate, Jack Metalf.

Celebrate Older Americans Month

To the Editor:

America's aging population reached a turning point this year. One of the nation's largest generations, the baby boomers, started turning 60. As many as 78 million people in this generation stand to make an enormous contribution to the rich character and wisdom older adults offer to all of us.

This May, we will celebrate Older Americans Month. This year's theme, Choices for Independence, reflects a continued commitment to help our nation prepare for a larger aging population.

Letter to the Editor

Independence for adults as they age relies on a balance of important elements: empowerment in consumer choice; healthy lifestyles that emphasize nutrition, physical activity, prevention and active participation in health care; and access to the tools necessary to make informed decisions.

Last year, 83 percent of the persons Hospice Services provided

care for were 65 or older. Hospice provides comfort, compassion and quality end-of-life care. We support the desire of older adults to live in their own homes and communities.

For information, call (785) 543-2900 or (800) 315-5122.

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