

Landowner, government in prairie (dog) standoff

Government agents enter land against the owners' will, spreading poison.

An armed officer stands guard, keeping the landowner away.

The government plans to send the landowner the bill for killing his animals.

This happens in Communist China, perhaps? Soviet Russia? Fidel's Cuba?

No, western Kansas, where the deer and the antelope play, and the skies are not cloudy all day.

It's a high-stakes game of prairie dog eradication, and the script just drips with irony.

The land in question is owned by Larry Haverfield, a maverick rancher who touts unorthodox grazing ideas and thinks that deep down, prairie dogs might not be so bad.

He's convinced there's a place for all of God's creatures and he *sure* doesn't want the county telling him how to run his ranch.

His neighbors don't see things quite that way. They share the average western prejudice against prairie dogs. They read all the stories about how we've killed millions and millions of the little critters, reduced the range and driven them near to being listed as an endangered species.

And they think that's a pretty good start.

Most of them, if they could push a button and eliminate every single prairie dog from the face of the earth, they'd do it. In a heartbeat.

Larry Haverfield thinks you should leave some, maybe not all, the rodents around. His neighbors think he's nuts — maybe worse.

Other landowners want Haverfield's dogs eliminated. They have the Logan County commissioners and the weight of the law behind them. Commissioners, under pressure from other landowners, refused to approve any plan from Haverfield that includes keeping prairie

dogs around.

What really rankles many landowners is that Haverfield and a couple of friends have invited the federal government to help them "manage" the prairie dogs by reintroducing the black-footed ferret on their land. This rare, endangered species lives among and eats prairie dogs. How well it can control them remains to be seen, since only a few hundred of the cute little devils remain.

Commissioners and landowners fear if the endangered ferret is let loose in Logan County, they'll never be able to poison prairie dogs again.

Opposition is at a fever pitch, and you can almost see the villagers gathering, pitchforks and firebrands in hand, to confront the evil that lurks.

On any given day, we're sure, most of the farmers, ranchers and county officials of Logan County are decent, conservative types who support the National Rifle Association and belong to the Farm Bureau. They likely espouse the freedom to own guns and private property.

Property rights, however, go just so far, and in Logan County, they apparently don't cover harboring vermin — or cute little endangered ferrets.

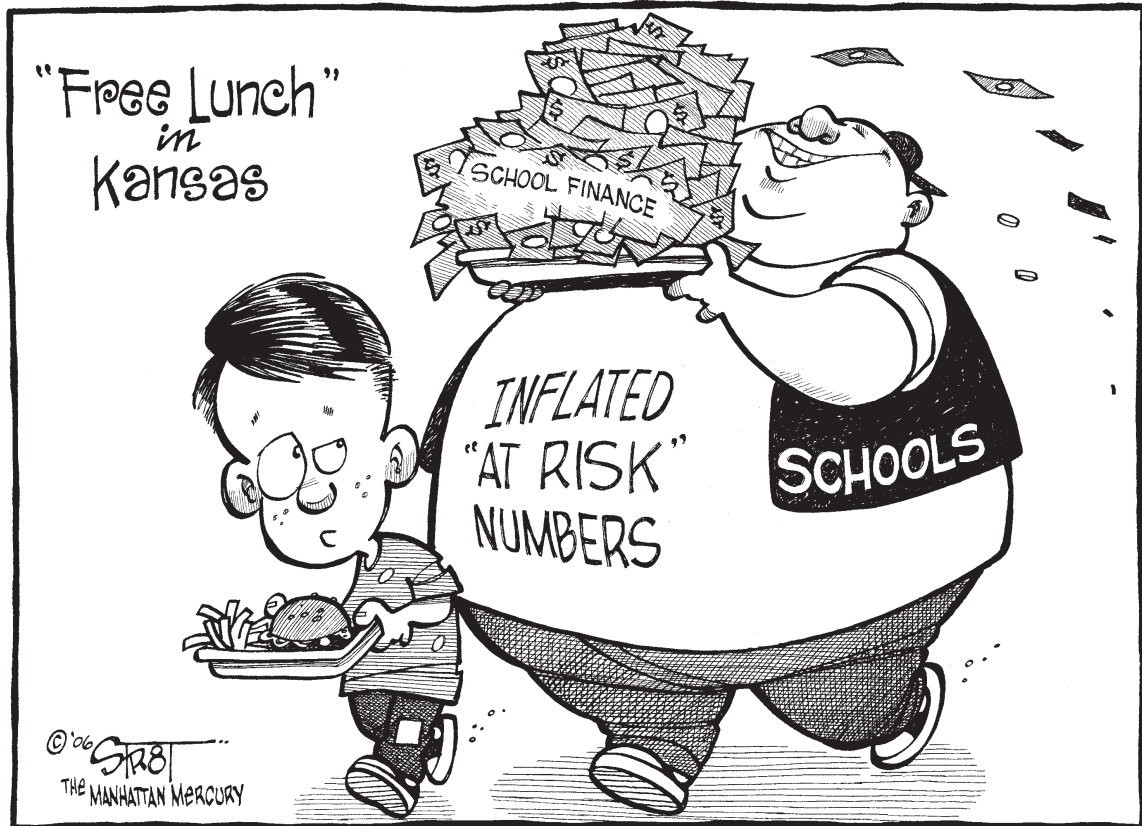
How else can you explain the county sending exterminators unannounced onto private land and an armed officer to keep landowners from interfering.

Sound sort of un-American to you?

Apparently, property rights are only for those we agree with.

With all due respect to the feelings most ranchers and stockmen have about prairie dogs, maybe this is carrying things just a bit too far.

— Steve Haynes



Decorating more fun with kids

It's just not as much fun decorating for Christmas without the kids.

Son did come home for the weekend. Although he missed Thanksgiving, we had turkey and all the trimmings on Saturday.

We even had football and basketball games. He wasn't so interested in KU football, he said; Colorado is his team.

However, he loves KU basketball and almost yelled himself hoarse as the Jayhawks beat the defending national champion Florida Gators.

Before he got to do that, however, his father dragged him into helping decorate the bushes around the front of the house with hundreds of sparkly Christmas lights.

Then I made him help me put icicle lights all over a 12- to 14-foot aspen tree in the front yard. It looks a little strange in the daylight with strands of white wire hanging all over, sort of like very thin toilet paper. But at night, it's very nice.

I had to figure out what to do with the icicle lights.

I picked up two big bags at a community yard sale in Colorado this summer. I didn't have a clue what was in them, but figured that most of them would work.

Except for a few odds and ends, the bags were full of icicle lights — and they all worked.

We've never done icicles on the house. We've trimmed around the porch when the children could be



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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cajoled into climbing the ladders and stringing them from the eaves, but our house is tall — real tall and skinny. It's not a good house to hang lights off the eaves, and icicle lights just demand eaves.

I suggested putting some up on the garage, but Steve was not buying it. He's the one who suggested the tree.

So while the neighbors behind us and across the street have icicles hanging from their eaves, we have ours dangling from a small tree.

After son left on Sunday, I brought the tree up from the basement. It's a family heirloom. My mother-in-law used it every year and kept it in her basement all set up except the ornaments. When she died and the children divided her things, somehow the tree got put in with our share.

I was surprised, but every year, when we bring it upstairs, I remember her.

After straightening branches, I plugged it in. Most of the lights still

work and there are enough that those that don't just don't matter.

I put some of our hundred of decorations on it. We have balls we bought the first year we were married, macaroni angels from school projects and collectible ornaments, gifts from friends.

Around the bottom I put the non-breakables — plastic clowns, needlework snowflakes and fabric angels, anything the cats can steal but can't break. During the season, I'll find these all over the house and return them to the tree. The cats are happy and so am I.

I do miss the children, though. I miss their bickering over which ornament got to go on the tree and which had to stay in the boxes. I missed cleaning up the broken balls and allowing someone else to hang the stockings.

The house is decorated. I'm satisfied. Steve's satisfied. The cats just stole another ornament. It's Christmas time. Enjoy.

Family enjoys Dallas holiday

Our family had a wonderful Thanksgiving. How about you? Did you eat too much? We did. Did you stay up too late? We did. Did you spoil the grandkids? We did.

I almost feel bad that our daughter Jennifer had to go back to her home in San Antonio with the baby. After spending three days with a grandmother, a grandfather, two aunts and an uncle dotting on the baby during her every waking moment, it might be hard to keep her entertained.

Little Annie was the best baby. Almost 4 months old, she responds to all our antics. She smiles and coos on cue, which elicits more clowning and goo-goo talk. I discovered she especially likes to have you blow on her belly.

For the eighth year in a row, we all met in Dallas at the home of our daughter, Kara; her husband, Adam; and their daughter, Taylor. Our oldest daughter, Halley, also lives in Dallas, where she's trying to start a real-estate career. The first day there, Jim, Halley, Jennifer and Kara went shopping. Adam had to go to work. I stayed home with the kids to get a head start on some of the holiday cooking.

Annie's big sister Alexandria and Taylor were busy doing their own thing, so it was just Annie and me. I put her in her car seat and moved her



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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around the kitchen floor while I cooked.

Every now and then I would rock her seat with my foot and say something dumb like, "Are you helping G'ma cook?"

She would coo and gurgle appropriately. We were a great team.

—ob—

On our return home Saturday night, we discovered how the "children" we left behind had entertained themselves. The two kittens, Pete and Sammy, had somehow knocked a roll of paper towels into the bathtub. Next, they managed to unroll it, then shred it.

They had a mountain of paper in the tub. Like kids who say, "Watch me! Watch me!" they perched on the edge of the tub, then launched themselves into the pile. They would bury themselves, only to emerge in a leap to surprise the other.

They want to be held and petted constantly since our return. I think they missed us.

—ob—

When we left Dallas, it was 64 degrees. Last night it got down to 20 here. That's just wrong. I don't enjoy Texas in the summertime, but I do like their winters.

With snow predicted for mid-week, I am sure our winter is here.

Editor's Note: Carolyn, it was 64 degrees here that day, too. You missed it!

From the Bible

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart...

Ephesians 6: 5, 6

Workers make park sparkle

If you've been to Sappa Park since last week, you've seen the job a volunteer crew did cleaning up the old park area about halfway down the road to the shelter house.

They cleared dead limbs, picked up trash and mowed the whole area. Looks great.

Others were busy hauling and burning downed timber, razing old sheds and cleaning up other areas. The park, built during the depression by the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration (CCC and WPA in the alphabet-soup argot to that era) has seldom looked better.

Over the last couple of years, volunteers led by Pheasants Forever and the city's committee have turned the park around, removing fences, mowing, cleaning and clearing. The effort is producing results.

Friday, a brief swing counted four whitetail deer, a covey of quail and a cock pheasant. Saturday, the park was teaming with people playing disc golf, walking the new trails and hunting. Cars were everywhere.

Oberlin's Christmas decorations shine through the night, lighting the way to the holiday season. But not until Thanksgiving.

Don't know if everyone pays attention, but aren't you glad our city crew is willing to hang the wreaths and other decorations one day —



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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can't do it all right before the holidays — and go back and plug them in just in time. In most surrounding towns, those babies are lit up from day 1.

It's a nice touch. And thanks, guys, for getting them up every year.

Speaking of Christmas decorations, from the wreaths and stars to the garland downtown, we owe it all to the members of the Oberlin Business Alliance, who over the years raised the money to buy and repair most of the decorations.

Rusty Addleman pushed the fund raising again and again. And each year, LaMoine Wolfram sees that the wreaths are ready to hang, bows straight, lights working and brackets mended. This year, the alliance replaced the red bows, since the originals were mostly pink.

Oberlin's community Thanksgiving dinner may not be unique — lots of towns have one — but it's sure a fine tradition. Members of St.

John's Lutheran Church have been prime movers in the effort over the years, but the dinner draws from all parts of the community. It seems to have a life of its own: When one set of volunteers burns out, another steps forward.

Hats off the Marvin May and his crew this year. The dinner drew about 120 diners and sent meals out to at least 15 more.

Thanks to the business alliance also for the annual Parade of Lights, which brightens the town the night after Thanksgiving, and for bringing Santa to the courthouse. Events like these keep a town young.

Did anyone else notice the old fella was in the parade three times? He must be quick.

Thanks to Gary Walter at The Bank for getting things together.

If you missed it, by the way, the grand marshals this year were the Decatur Community High volleyball girls, undefeated in regular-season play.

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Help grieving get through holidays

To the Editor:

The holidays, especially the first ones after a loved one's death, can be difficult for a person who is grieving. Friends and family may be unsure how to act or what to say.

In general, the best way to help those who are grieving is to let them know you care. They need to be remembered, and they need to know their loved ones are remembered, too. Friends and family should never be afraid of saying or doing the wrong thing, because showing concern will be appreciated.

Here are some tips that grieving people have shared:

- Support the way your friend chooses to celebrate the holidays. Some may wish to follow traditions; others may choose to change.
- Offer to help with tasks such as

Letter to the Editor

baking, cleaning or decorating. Seemingly simple tasks can be overwhelming while dealing with grief.

- Invite the person to attend church with you and your family.
- Offer to help with holiday shopping or share your favorite catalogs.
- Invite your friend to your home for the holidays.
- Ask if your friend is interested in volunteering with you. Doing something for someone else may help him or her feel better about the holidays.
- Make a donation in memory of your friend's loved one.
- Remember to avoid telling your

friend that he or she should be "over it." Grief is an individual process.

• If your friend wants to talk about the loved one or feelings associated with the loss, listen. Don't worry about talking; just listen.

• Remind the person you are thinking of him or her and the loved one who died. Cards, phone calls and visits help to stay in touch.

Hospice services can help people who are struggling with grief and loss. Hospices provide bereavement support.

Sandy Kuhlman, executive director
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