

Why raise highway tolls to pay for college repairs?

What was she thinking about? Gov. Kathleen Sebelius proposes taxing drivers on the Kansas Turnpike to pay for fixing up old buildings at the state's colleges and universities.

The governor proposed raising tolls every two years to bring in \$575 million. The money would be used to pay for repairs at state universities. Up to \$300 million in state bonds would speed the remodeling projects, and those would have to be paid out of the tolls — with interest.

The plan met a cool reception in the Republican-controlled Legislature. Everyone except college presidents — from the Turnpike Authority to the truckers — came out against the plan.

Reggie Robinson, chief executive officer for the state Board of Regents, called the plan "serious, creative and comprehensive." OK, he would.

The state has to do something to fix up its colleges, but the governor's plan — though creative — just doesn't make sense.

Why tax truckers and other drivers to fix up classrooms?

Why not telephone users or electric "rate payers?"

Makes just as much sense.

If the Kansas Turnpike has that much excess toll generating capacity, maybe the authority could use the money to expand capacity on the

crowded section between Kansas City and Topeka — or even build a whole new road from the Kansas City airport to Manhattan on the north side of the Kaw River.

But using tolls to finance colleges?

It's just a disguised tax increase, and not very appealing at that.

Doing something about the nearly \$727 million in building repairs supposedly needed at state colleges is one of the top issues facing the Legislature this year. Kansas should do something about this problem, but a tax increase is out of the question.

This is one of the problems created by the state's fixation on public schools over the last 10 years. Colleges and universities have been left to fend for themselves.

They've raised tuition sharply, but have raised no money for building repairs and renovation.

The Legislature needs to come up with a plan. This isn't it.

They should pare the list to essential projects and find a way to pay for those.

If you want to tax people fairly, usually you apply a tax to those who benefit from the spending, or to the state at large. Taxing drivers to pay for colleges just makes no sense at all.

Creative, yes. Sensible, no.

But it is that time of the year in Topeka.

We can and must do better. — *Steve Haynes*

Memories live in holiday cards

I told you last time, part of my task while Cynthia was gone was to de-Christmas the house.

I didn't go whole hog. The lights outside are buried in snow, and it may be April before we can find all of them. I did coil the extension cords up in case we need them, so the outdoor lights are off.

Maybe this weekend, I'll take down the lights on the aspen tree, which is bare since the ice melted. The ones on the bushes are frozen in.

Inside, I hauled everything to the basement, where it waits someone smarter than I to pack it into the storage tubs. I'm not allowed.

And I left the big tree in the living room, lights ablaze, for Cynthia's return. (She finally got to it two weeks later. She likes the lights.)

Then I had to deal with the Christmas cards. They were everywhere. She stuck the first two dozen in a cute Santa card holder she bought. His beard is made up of steel coils that hold cards; it hangs on a door.

That filled up and she started standing them upright on the mantle. Then the table. Then the little table. By New Year's, the living room was pretty well papered in them, but they were still coming in.

Cynthia said to throw them away, and I will, but I had to skim through them one last time. They represent a pile of memories, our whole lives passing before our eyes.

Both of us still get cards from a few high school friends we've kept in touch with. I wish there were more. I suppose I could look some of the others up.

Then there are relatives. Cynthia has lots of those, cousins from both sides with kids and grandkids and even great-grandkids. I just have my



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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older cousin Mary Lou, who had three boys and six grandkids and sends pictures of all of them.

Yeah, I'm a little jealous, but she is older.

My brothers and sisters, their card skills are hit or miss.

Cynthia gets cards from all sides of her family, her dad's nieces and nephews, and on her mom's side, a couple of cousins, including George the general. I've never actually met him, but there's a book about his career.

We still get a fair number of cards from old colleagues and neighbors in Kansas City, though we've been gone for 26 years. We both had our first "real" jobs there and all three of our kids were born in Wyandotte County.

There's Marietta, in Philly now, who was on the copy desk when I started at *The Star*, and Bob, maybe the smartest bureau chief I worked for. Marietta's retired, but Bob and his wife raise free-range organic turkeys in Maine. No kidding.

From Colorado, we get cards from both places we lived, Creede, up in the mountains, and Monte Vista, out in the great San Luis Valley. We still see a lot of our friends there in the summer, but some have retired and moved and we keep up with them only through the Christmas letters.

Then there are new friends in Oberlin, and friends from our travels to newspaper conventions. That list seems to be growing. This year, we got a batch of cards from Nebraska people we rode the submarine with.

There were fancy cards, homemade cards, kid-made cards, printed cards and personal cards. Jim, a big Missouri fan, always has a tiger on his. A couple of women do their own artwork every year. About a third include a letter, some a short note.

The saddest cards — though we've gotten a couple that brought tears just with the stories they told — but most years, the saddest are the ones you don't get.

Some card comes back, marked "unable to forward." Maybe they moved. Maybe you'll never hear.

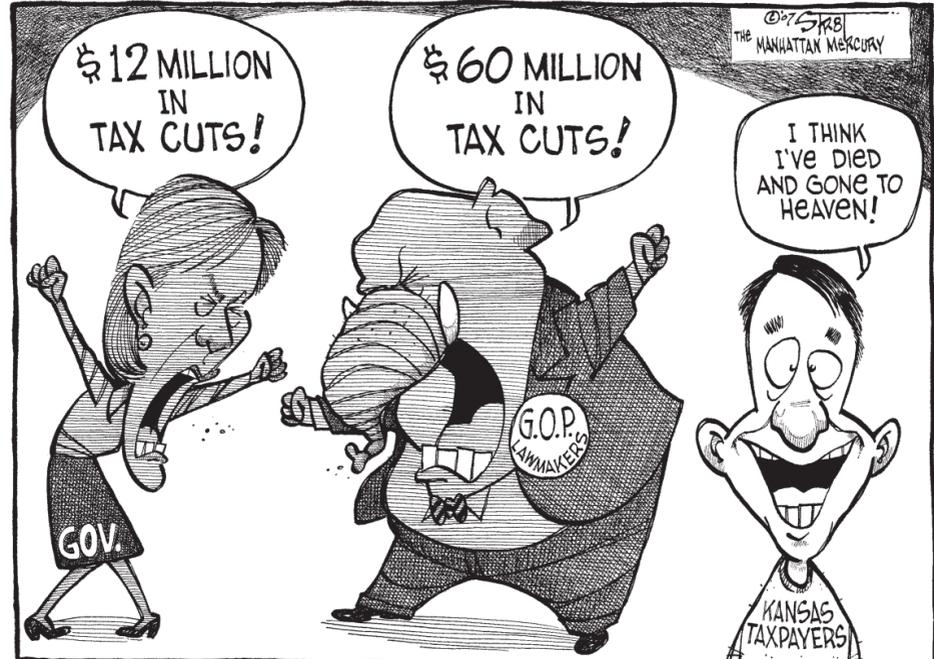
There seem to be more of those every year.

I count the stack, more than 65 and I'm sure some fell by the wayside. There're the Diddies, who lived next door when I was growing up. One from the national office. A birthday card for one of us from the bank. Even a card from the accountants.

At Christmas, they're all priceless, at least until the letters are read and the decorations come down.

Then it's out the door. There'll be another batch next year.

And a couple I may hide away.



Baby won't be little for long

A picture confirmed my worst fears: Baby Ani is growing up.

Our daughter Jennifer e-mailed us the picture last week of 6-month-old Aniston sitting up. Sitting up. I can't believe it.

The last time we saw her, she was only 3 months old. Practically a newborn.

"She'll be in college before I see her again," I lamented.

"There, there, G'ma," Jennifer said in a consoling voice.

It didn't help.

Jim and I share the fate of other long-distance grandparents, seeing our grandchildren only two or three times a year. If your grandchildren live close, don't miss a moment. And please, don't take the privilege for granted.

Grandparents fill an important role in their grandchildren's lives. Usually, grandparents are nonjudgmental and accept their grandchildren for what they are.

That's an important relationship to have with kids, especially as they go into their teen years and try new things. Like haircuts and colors, earrings, maybe nose rings, fashions and music.

Grandparents can usually see through all those trappings and see the real person emerging from the youthful follies.

I remember my dad had a real hard



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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time accepting long hair on boys, but when it came to his grandsons, all he would say was, "When are you going to cut that hair?"

They would laugh and say, "Oh, Grandpa."

My theory, whether it's your children or grandchildren, is to take plenty of pictures. The weirder their outfits and the more outrageous their hair, take pictures. Lots of pictures.

Then, when they grow up and have kids of their own, they can't say a thing about their children's outlandish outfits because you've got the evidence.

Those pictures prove the next generation will grow out of it, just like the last did. And turn into pretty decent human beings, just like they did.

—ob—

We helped with the local telethon again this year.

I was one of the emcees, so all I

had to do is show up on time, try not to trip over the furniture, smile a lot and talk. But I chaired that committee for several years and I know how much hard work goes on behind the scenes long before the cameras ever roll.

Lots of deserving organizations will receive much-needed money because of the telethon. So, to everyone who operated a camera, manned a telephone, sang a song or made a sandwich, I say, "Good job."

From the Bible

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea....

Psalm 46: 1, 2

Seniors can get some fun exercise

To the Editor:

Well, it's February, the weather has finally improved a bit, and it's time to implement those New Year's resolutions!

We would like to invite each of you over the age of 60 to join us in an easy-going and fun adult exercise class for men and women.

We meet at the Golden Age Center at 9 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Each class lasts an hour, including a warm-up, cardiovascular training, weight training and a cool-down period.

We work on development of strength, coordination, balance and flexibility in every class. The weight training we do has been shown to mitigate and even reverse the effects of osteoporosis.

Class members report that they have a more positive outlook, sleep

Letters to the Editor

more soundly and enjoy other physical activity more. They also say they can tell that their balance has improved.

The class is free. We are now enrolling new members for the first quarter year. Support for the class comes from a grant from the Sunflower Foundation through the Kansas Department on Aging. Oberlin

was one of the first sites selected last year, and we have money for three years of classes.

So, do some good for somebody — your body! It will thank you.

Call Rhonda at (785) 475-1500 with questions, or join us at 9 a.m. on any class day.

Rhonda J. May, Gary Sanden, instructors, Oberlin

Stranded couple liked story

To the Editor:

Thank you so much for taking time to ask us questions and write the article on us while we were stuck in Oberlin. This will be a great me-

mento to have for our scrapbooks to remember our first anniversary.

Brian and Wendy Mehaffey
Denver

Phone man offers storm advice

To the Editor:

As a local representative for AT&T, in response to the winter storms that hit western Kansas, I wanted to make a few comments about telephone service in an emergency. AT&T central offices do have back up power, so many times, phone service may be available even if the power goes out.

An important thing for you to know is that most cordless phones will not work, because they typically require a power supply. It is a good idea to keep at least one "traditional" telephone (one that does not require separate power like most cordless phones) in the house in case the power does go out.

Of course, AT&T can't guarantee

that service will always work, but many times it will. For example, my home in Garden City lost power three times in one recent storm, but I was able to bring up a traditional telephone I keep in my basement, plug it in, and my family was able to make and receive calls.

Thanks to the power companies for their hard work on restoring power, and to the news people for their coverage of the storm.

Darin Miller
director, external affairs, AT&T (formerly Southwestern Bell)
Garden City

Blizzards of 1948-'49 recalled

To the Editor:

The recent account of our snow storms and cattle losses are a reminder of the 1948-'49 snowstorms in our area.

Cattle in canyons and windbreaks froze to death standing up. Feed shocks in fields had to be chopped

loose with an ax. When the spring melting came, the hawks and magpies had a bonanza. When hungry Mr. Coyote came on a dead critter, there was no doubt in his mind where his impending meal was.

Karl Wendelin
Herndon

Salvation Army says thanks to all

To the Editor:

On behalf of the Salvation Army, we would like to take this opportunity to say "Thank You" to all your readers who helped make this another successful Christmas season.

We appreciate the assistance provided by the many service groups, churches, families, school groups and other organizations that donated countless hours ringing the bells. These volunteers and all who donated have made a huge impact on our efforts.

Together, we are helping people. Because of the generosity throughout the community, neighbors in

need are receiving help throughout the year.

Thank you again for playing such an important role in the work of the Salvation Army where you live.

If you are interested in donating

or volunteering throughout the year, please call (800) 336-4547, ext. 368, for more information.

Brian Carroll
service extension director
The Salvation Army of Kansas

Irate reader blasts editor

To the Editor:

In the Jan. 31 issue of *The Oberlin Herald*, you published a letter to the editor entitled: "Reader's view on Iraq War different."

I would like to point out that his view is only different from the editor's, and not myself, nor appar-

ently 70 percent of the American people and 55 percent of Congress.

Steve Haynes purchased a newspaper because it was the only way the paper would publish his opinions.

Arthur Shelton
Oberlin

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