

## We needn't be in a rush to force English on people

Sometimes we just want things to happen too fast.

As the Kansas Legislature and those in other states across the country try to come to grips with how to integrate immigrants into society, they are looking at making English our official language.

Bad idea, lawmakers. Laws don't force people to change; social pressure does.

Just give it time, and what you want will be accomplished.

Across this country, schools were taught in German, French, Italian, Chinese and a hundred other languages. City council meetings and church services were conducted in the language that the people could understand — Bohemian, Spanish, Irish, Yiddish, German, you name it.

Each new wave of immigrants brought with them their language, religion and customs. They set up communities where they socialized mostly with each other and were comfortable.

But their children weren't comfortable. They wanted to move over the hill, across the river, into the next neighborhood. They needed to learn new things, new ways of doing things and frequently a new language.

So they did. They learned English, though many kept their native tongues because they still wanted and needed to communicate with parents, grandparents and friends back home.

Then their children came along. Mostly, they heard English at home. That's what Mom and Dad spoke, so that's what they spoke.

They saw Grandma and Grandpa now and then and picked up a few words of old tongue, but without much practice, they didn't keep it.

Occasionally, a great upheaval would quicken the process.

In Kansas, the Eudora City Council held its meetings in German until the beginning of World War I. It was probably difficult to switch, but it was politically expedient to switch to English. Social pressure came to bear.

Today, we see these early waves of immigration through rose-colored glasses. We all want to be Irish on St. Patrick's Day, but 100 years ago, you might have found it hard to get a job if you were Irish — or Polish or Chinese.

Today's immigrants — Mexican, Asian, African — band together and speak Spanish or another tongue.

But their children and their children's children will go over the hill, across the river and into the next neighborhood.

They will learn English and speak it to their children and integrate into the social structure, not because the government tells them to, but because of social pressure. If you don't speak English, you don't get the good jobs, you can't do business with people in other communities and the world.

But it takes time and no one, especially the Legislature, wants to allow enough time for natural social change to occur.

What's the rush? It'll all work out.

— Cynthia Haynes

## Visit becomes trip to funeral

We had been planning a trip to Arkansas to see my brother Don after he got a grim diagnosis following cancer treatment.

Now we're on our way to Little Rock, but it's for Don's funeral. The whole family is gathering and we'll have a great reunion, but there will be a huge hole in our family circle.

Don was a communicator. He will forever hold the title of being the only person to out-talk Jim Plotts.

He was a junior or senior in high school when I was born, so our relationship came later.

He and his wife Liz gave me my first real vacation. My invitation to join them was based on me helping babysit their 2-year-old daughter, Pam.

What a trip. We stayed in real motels with swimming pools and ate in restaurants.

Don was a career Air Force pilot. After 20 years, he retired to Little Rock, where he invested in a partnership in a plumbing, heating and air conditioning business.

It became the family joke as to how long it would take Don to ask about your heating system when he came to visit. Ten minutes was the max before he would ask to see the furnace.

He is the second of our siblings to die. A little girl born between Bill and Dick died in infancy.

But I wouldn't wish him back to the pain. There are lots of things worse than dying — and one would be living like that.

—ob—

Don loved to tell a joke, and no



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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one laughed harder at his jokes than he did. He would get so tickled, he would almost cry.

But he wouldn't quit, and soon everyone would be laughing because he was laughing.

He was tender-hearted. His wife used to say it was embarrassing to go to the movies with him because he shed more tears than she did.

—ob—

I'm lucky to be taking a trip anywhere. I took a little "trip" Friday night that landed me in the emergency room.

I slipped on an icy sidewalk and slammed my head onto the concrete so hard it threw my glasses over my head and "sprung" my jaws.

The physician's assistant on duty gave me a thorough exam and assured me I would be OK.

"But, you're going to be sore the next day," she said.

She was right.

—ob—

Friends, co-workers and my church family have been very gracious. Some day, I hope to repay the kindnesses.

### Write

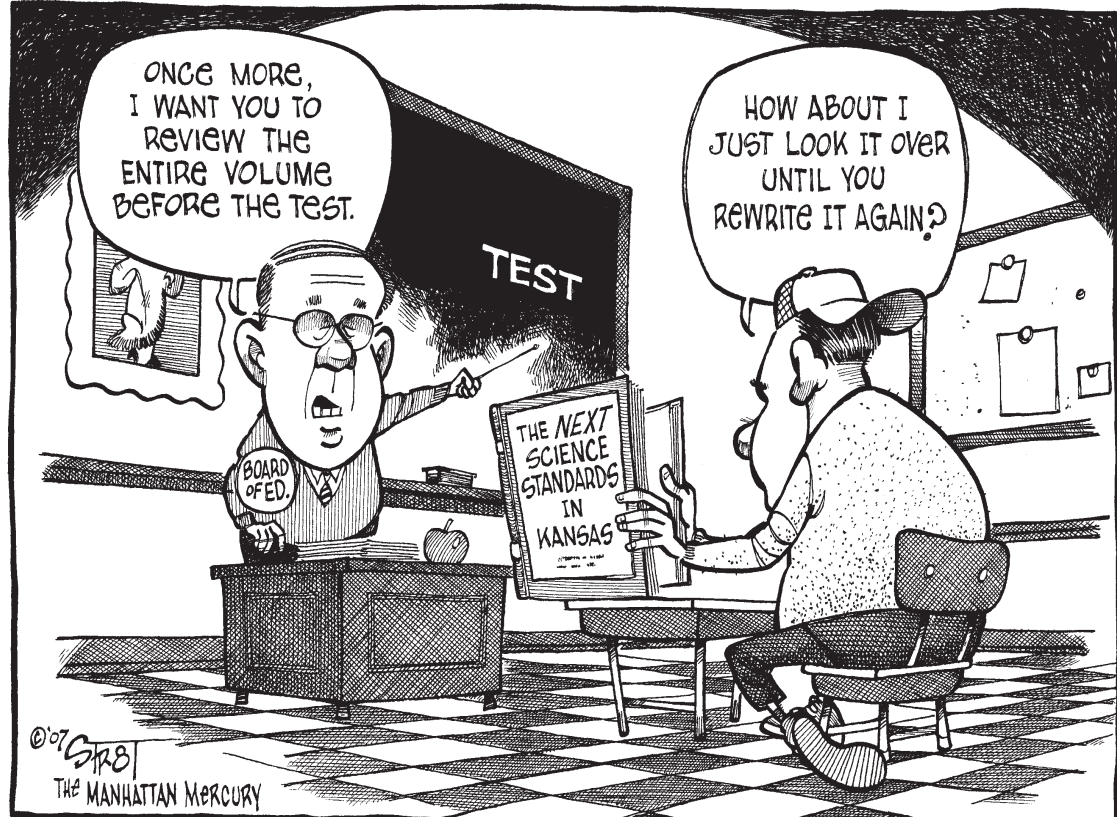
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Mail letters to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan., 67749, or by E-mail to oberlinherald@nwkansas.com.

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.



## Don't lay an egg over rules

Let there be chickens? I don't think I care much — as long as they are hens.

I like fresh eggs. A few chickens in someone's yard, well, who cares? Not me.

And who would mind if their neighbor had a cute little horse so small and so smart it could be house-broken?

It seems to me that the City Council has taken a pretty hard stance here

"Let-them-get-a-foot-in-the-door-and-they'll-have-hogs-next," seems to be the cry.

There's a story about pot-bellied pigs getting loose and causing havoc. Maybe it's true.

A few years ago, the police had to remove a few pets from a man's house. Rattlesnakes. The chief keeps their pictures on his computer.

The city probably is right to ban poisonous snakes, along with "crocodilians" and other exotic species.

Barnyard animals, cows, pigs, horses, sheep and goats?

It's pretty reasonable to require people to have at least an acre of land to keep those.

There must be a reason, though, why most towns ban farm animals these days. A century ago, reading the old papers, you'd find that pigs and chickens occupied city council agendas, not dogs.

People wanted them out of town, and it's hard to tell if it was the smell,



### Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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the noise or just a drive for progress that fueled the drive. Maybe a little of each.

In this day of zoning codes, nearly every city bans or limits these animals. Before we change our rules it might be a wise idea to do some research and find out why.

There should be some limits. The scary thing is, if the ballot issue changing the animal ordinance passes, the council won't be able to address the issue for 10 years. We may be stuck with animals we don't want, requiring another election.

That seems an awkward way to govern.

And yet, I can't bring myself to worry too much about a few chickens. My dog probably would like to have some.

Roosters, that would be a different matter.

We spent some time at a little hotel in a residential area of Mexico last month. It was charming. We walked to the carniceria, or butcher shop, to buy fresh tamales, and to the bodega for beer.

Everyone kept chickens in the

yard. I'd forgotten about roosters.

There's a myth that roosters crow at the crack of dawn. Tain't true.

Roosters crow all day, every day. One friend says they work in shifts so one is always crowing.

Whatever.

Roosters in town would be grounds for suspending the ordinance forbidding hunting in the city limits.

Roosters should be fair game, open season. Blast 'em away, I say.

But I think I could deal with a few chickens, long as they don't mess with the neighbors, and with a miniature horse or two.

### From the Bible

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily.

Psalm 102: 1, 2

## Veteran worries about Iraq War

To the Editor:

As this war in Iraq continues, it brings memories of friends I lost in another war that wasn't necessary.

First to go were Charlie Bales, Jim Humpheries, Darrell Borders and Willis Toomes. Then Gary Cox and Jerry Kirkendall died and I asked, why?

I am still asking why? Why haven't we found Osama bin Laden? and why are we in Iraq?

This veteran, with two tours in the Navy, wants the troops brought home.

Politicians and their rhetoric continue to repeat history.

Greedy political supporters continue to stuff their pockets with the big bills, only allowing the overflow of assorted change to hit the floor.

## Woman says crews work hard

To the Editor:

Two hundred lane miles, eight men, four trucks and 24 hours. Add 24 inches of snow, unpredictable winds and freezing rain. Priceless.

This combination makes for an interesting day at the Oberlin office of the Kansas Department of Transportation. The team of men is responsible for covering all highways in Decatur County when bad weather strikes. Keeping up with Mother Nature can always be a challenge, but these men rise to it.

I know, we hear about how it can't be done, how it isn't done, and how it isn't done well enough, but I ask you to consider how this works.

Tom Weishapl has a crew of eight to work what we consider those nightmarish roads. Only so much can be done at 20 mph in an oversized truck in a blizzard.

There are pretreaters that can be used on these roads, but only under certain conditions. You can't use them when the elements don't cooperate.

The plow drivers can't ticket the people that blow around a road-closed barricade, they can only watch as they end up in the ditch, then wonder why the state plow is passing them by in their time of need.

While safety is the priority, for us and them, the crew may not be able to help you immediately if you get

### Letters to the Editor

Here the common man, who defends the country, scrambles for the loose change.

Yes, the common man again dies to defend the wealthy.

Just how many volunteers who enlist in the armed forces are wealthy? I think you can count them all on one hand.

Yes, I am mad. After 9-11, I wanted to re-enlist but was turned down because of my age.

Someday, I hope someone starts a war, and no one shows up.

Has it come to the point in our American way of life to trade patri-

ots for oil in order to support our way of life?

Surely, the money spent in foreign wars and aid could be relegated to building a stronger defense of our soil and producing our own energy, rather than depending on slick sheiks and their magic carpets.

And what about displaced hurricane victims and illegals?

As I fill out my tax returns, I ask why my say isn't important? I pay my taxes just like everyone else, but because I am a common man, my voice isn't quite loud enough.

Jim Merriott, Oberlin

stuck; you might have to wait some when you end up off the road.

They are not responsible for getting you pulled out, but they will make sure you are OK and contact the dispatch office.

Some things they would like you to know are that they can only treat with salt and sand and prepare for the worst. All too often they see their hard work covered up just about as soon as they turn around and come back the other way.

Their day isn't 8 to 5. During a storm, they are on duty 12 hours,

with half of the crew, until the next shift.

While we sit and question what our road crews are doing, they are considering what they will face next because we all know no one can tell what Mother Nature is going to do. They can only try to keep up with her.

If you would like to know the condition of the highways, call 511. Information on this toll-free line is updated every hour with the most current information.

Patti Skubal Oberlin

### Photo Policy

The Oberlin Herald wants to emphasize photos of people doing things in the community. If you know of an event or news happening that we should attend, please call 475-2206.

Please be sure to allow a couple of days' notice so we can arrange to be there.

Space in the paper is limited and so is the time of our staff, so we may not be able to get to every event, but we will try.

Because space is so limited, we cannot run team or group photos, any pictures of people lined up or of people passing checks, certificates and the like. (We will always try to

make room for a story about any of these events, however.)

We do run wedding and engagement pictures and "mug" shots with stories and obituaries, when they are provided to us. Please remember that we need a clear, sharp picture. Dark or fuzzy prints will not work.

We cannot return photos unless you submit a self-addressed, stamped envelope with clear instructions for return. Other photos submitted may be picked up at our office within two weeks. After that, they will be disposed of.

Laser proofs of photos which have run in The Herald are available, first come, first served.

# THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

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

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

E-mail: oberlinherald@nwkansas.com

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

### Nor'West Newspapers

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

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Subscriptions: One year, \$33 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$38 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$42 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$50-\$250 (in US dollars only) 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.)

