

## Area needs long runway to support all businesses

Oberlin needs a longer runway at the municipal airport to grow business, to keep business in town and to stop money from flowing over the state line.

Bus and Coach International, the firm that bought and remodeled the old Jennings School, first asked for a runway extension.

The firm has an international market for its new over-the-road buses. It needs to fly executives and customers in to its plant in Decatur County, and right now that means using the airport in McCook.

While the Nebraska field serves the purpose, using it adds more than a half hour to every trip. Executives and guests going to the Jennings plant face spending more than an hour in a car before they get there.

This is not an ideal situation, not for a firm that already has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on its facility here and proposes to bring in, eventually, dozens of jobs, maybe more.

Customers may not want to sit still that long after flying across the country. Executives may tire of the trip. When the firm has a parts operation running, it'll need to be able to ship parts from a jet-capable airport.

The company had wanted to build a new airport near Jennings, but quickly found that to be impractical. The focus shifted to Oberlin, creating an opportunity for development here.

A longer runway not only would serve existing and future traffic for the bus plant, but might draw other businesses to this area. Existing businesses would use it, since at least one has a corporate jet which can't use the

Oberlin airport.

A good airport is vital to economic development, as important as good schools, a hospital, good housing, a golf course or good government. Oberlin's airport, equipped and sized for twin-engine aircraft up to prop jets, was adequate for the last century. In the coming era, most of those planes will be obsolete.

Businesses of all kinds will have jets, and they'll need a longer runway. Even air ambulances, which today operate mostly with planes which can land on the existing 4,300-foot runway, may shift to larger, faster aircraft.

A new runway, at a cost of \$4 million to \$5 million, maybe more, is a big project for a small city. Oberlin has the cooperation of county and regional officials, and will need their help to build it.

The expansion will require state and federal money, and the support of everyone involved, from the city to state legislators and our folks in Washington.

We need this project, not just for future pie-in-the-sky prospects, but to keep our existing businesses. Face it, Bus and Coach executives might tire of driving back and forth to Nebraska. Some day, they might decide their bargain-basement headquarters isn't close enough to an airport.

Today, Oberlin and the state of Kansas are losing thousands in fuel and aviation sales to Nebraska. Tomorrow, who knows?

We could be attracting millions in new business or losing what we have. A lot depends on this runway project. It deserves our support.

— Steve Haynes



## Babies belie shrinking image

Worried about the town fading away?

A quick count along one street Monday produced three young mothers out for a stroll.

One had quite a burden: a baby in a backpack, a toddler in a stroller and an older child walking. When she had to bend over to lift the toddler out of the stroller — guess he wanted to walk — it looked like work.

The next gal was pushing a single in a stroller, but the third had a double pram, fully loaded.

That's not exactly a scientific survey, but we'd guess there's still be students for the schools a decade or two from now. The question is how many.

For the baseball fans, what can I say?

The Rocks — and that's a pretty good name for this team — let another one get away, while the Royals managed to look like a team on the upswing on Sunday.

It's not that the Rockies didn't make it interesting, tying the game twice, but they squandered several chances to put the game away, leaving the bases loaded at least twice.

They have a capable lineup, with two of the National League's top-10 hitters in Todd Helton and Matt Holiday, and plenty of others capable of hitting 300 (who aren't). But they lack power and seldom hit in the clutch.

It's not like the days of Don Baylor's Blake Street Bombers. You have to ask yourself, did the



## Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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team shoot itself in the feet by dampening the balls and moving away from home-run power? It's sure not as much fun these days, and with just 25,000 fans for a Sunday game rather than the 50,000 close friends of yore, the difference shows.

Sunday turned into a loooooong day as the Rockies tied the game in the ninth and again in the 10th, with the game going more than 4 1/2 hours. The 10-5 final score was deceptive; until the 12th, both teams were in it, but neither could put it away. By the time the Royals surged ahead, both were out of bench players and pitchers.

I still think any day at the ballpark is a good one.

But as we were rolling into Oberlin at 11 p.m., after nine hours on the road and five in the ballpark, Cynthia might have questioned that.

With harvest still more than a month away, it's way too soon to predict. Still, it's hard to recall a nicer-looking wheat crop this time in May.

Most fields are dense with tillers and big four-row heads of grain

ready to fill. Many may need a little rain, but we had some last week and the forecast for more is good.

A lot of people noticed that Sappa Creek dried up east of town when the city cut its sewage flow over to the new lagoon system south of the creek. As far east as the old dam at Sappa Lake, nothing but sand lines the bottom.

One city official alleged the project engineer said it might take a few months for the new ponds to spill, filling the creek again. That said, we asked a lawyer, who estimated that, given the vastly larger surface area of the new system, the lagoons might never spill enough to make the creek run.

Now, who would you believe? The engineer or the lawyer?

There is still some water in ponds below the dam, by the way, but they seem to be drying up. You have to wonder what the backers of a wetland at the park are going to fill it with. The effect on fish and animals living in the creek remains to be seen.

Stay tuned.

## Flowers need to hold off a bit

They say it helps to talk to the flowers. Me, I've been doing a lot of begging this week.

"Please, please, please, don't bloom yet."

Memorial Day is next Monday, and our irises, peonies and wild roses are all trying to bloom now. If they'll hang on for just two more days, then they can let 'er rip.

When the timing is right, we have more than enough flowers for the cemeteries and some left over for us.

Memorial Day is celebrated Sunday in some towns, Monday in others. Either day, it's a "big deal" in this part of the country and Jim and I are of the same mind — only real flowers on the graves of our loved ones. We don't do fancy arrangements, but I think our homegrown bouquets are just as beautiful.

He's always been real good about helping me, too. He gets the jars and makes sure there is sand in the bottom. A fresh sheet of tin foil dresses the jars up a little. He loads a bucket of water into the trunk while I am cutting flowers.

We go to the Lyle Cemetery first. That's where my parents, little sister, grandparents and an aunt are buried.

Then we stop at another little country cemetery where Jim has some family.

Finally we get to the Oberlin Cemetery, where both our grandparents and great-grandparents, Jim's son, various aunts and uncles and a sister-in-law are all buried.

Decorating graves is a good time



## Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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for reflection. Your fond memories of loved ones gone before are what keep bringing you back year after year.

The tradition, however, is dying off with the older generation.

Will there be anyone to decorate our graves when we're gone?

Alumni Banquet and Memorial Day fall on the same weekend this week, which reminds me, I haven't sent our reservations in yet. Better get that in the mail this morning or we'll have to wait and see who doesn't show up and sit in their seats.

That means I could be seated with the Class of '32 and Jim might have to sit with the Class of '92. Good way to meet new people, at least.

Jim and I are on the "walking wounded" list. He fell off a ladder more than a week ago and I threw my back out last Thursday.

He can hardly walk and I can hardly sit. What a pair. He said, "I didn't mean THIS when I asked you to grow old with me."

Me neither. I might not have said, "Yes."

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## She gives up on basement cat

Pretty Thing is back in Norton, living at the pound.

Our experiment in taming her failed miserably and I ended up trapping her and taking her back to Sherry, the animal control officer in Norton. Sherry guaranteed me that she would find a new home for her.

Pretty Thing was a beautiful little part Siamese kitten I brought home a couple of months ago. She was a little wild, but Sherry and I thought that she was tame enough to go home with me.

We were both wrong.

Pretty Thing didn't even have a name for the first month. She hid in the basement and we never saw her. Finally, I moved the cat food upstairs. If she wanted to eat, she had to come upstairs.

She did but her visits were hit and run. She hid under the desk until she was sure we were a long way away and wouldn't come near.

We could see her and talk to her, saying soothing things like, "Hi pretty thing, want some supper?"

After a couple of weeks, I decided that that was her name. She was officially Pretty Thing, but we still couldn't get near her.

I thought we were making progress until one day I started down



## Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
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the stairs and Steve was in the kitchen. Soon Pretty Thing realized that I was blocking her avenue of escape. She went berserk. She run into the kitchen, bounced off a chair and headed for the basement stairs where I was. When she saw me, she made a U-turn in midair and headed back up the stairs, where she spotted Steve. She careened off a leg of the desk and headed back downstairs. Seeing me again, she hit the wall and headed back up, finally making her escape into the dining room. All these figure-8 maneuvers took about five seconds.

Pretty Thing wasn't going to become a house cat, at least not our house cat.

I brought in the small animal trap Sherry had lent me in case I couldn't tame her. I set it up in the kitchen and put the food bowl inside. I left it there for most of a week so all the

cats had to go into the trap to eat.

They didn't like it, but they all four got used to it.

Then one night, we caught Molly Monster, April Alice and Jezebel and tossed them outside, took the food bowl out of the trap and left some inside.

We set the trap. It didn't take 15 minutes and we heard the door slam. Pretty Thing was in the box. The next day, I took her back.

Sherry says she has a farmer who wants a good cat.

Pretty Thing is a good cat and she should be happy on a farm where there are no kitchens and no traps.

Steve is right.

I need to let the cats come to me and not go looking for them. They always seem to find me when the time is right.

## Ex-teacher questions board choice

To the Editor:

As a former resident of Decatur County and a former employee of the Oberlin School District, I was disappointed to read that the board of education and the search committee once again passed over Duane Dorshorst's application for the superintendent's position.

Mr. Dorshorst is an excellent and experienced educator. He has served the school district for many years, first as a teacher and coach and then as principal at Oberlin Elementary. My children both had Mr. Dorshorst as a teacher. I had the privilege of working with Mr. Dorshorst during my years as a special education paraprofessional and a teacher for the district.

Mr. Dorshorst deserved the professional courtesy of an interview and a chance to share his vision and

## Letter to the Editor

his ideas for the district. While I realize the trend seems to be to look outside the district for a candidate, perhaps the best candidate could be found right there in Oberlin. Who better knows the district, the educators, and the community than one who has devoted his career to working for the betterment of education

in Decatur County?

I hope the board and search committee will reconsider and give Mr. Dorshorst a chance to interview for the position of superintendent.

Mary C. Anderson, teacher  
St. Michael's Parish Day School  
Tucson, Ariz.

## From the Bible

I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

Psalm 119: 125