

Horny toad makes swim more of an adventure

I'd never been swimming with a horny toad. Have you?
 Heck, I didn't even know a horny toad could swim.
 They're lizards, you know. Not amphibians like real toads.
 How did I get involved in this strange adventure? you ask.
 It was Cynthia's fault. If there's a reptile involved, you usually blame Cynthia.



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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We were out at my family's place at the lake. We decided to go swimming, and I'd gone down to the dock to check things out when I spotted the horny toad, or horned frog, as they call 'em in Fort Worth. He was hunting bugs out at the end of the dock. At least, I guess that's what he was doing.
 I called Cynthia down to see, because she really likes reptiles, most of them anyway.
 When it comes to scaly, slithering, creepies, Cynthia is not your usual girl.
 When we first met in college, she kept a snake in her apartment. Her roommates never were quite sure about this, but one of them had a collie that caused a lot more trouble.
 She used to "borrow" mice from the labs at KU to feed it, the snake, I mean, not the collie.
 Since we've been married, she's kept snakes now and then and often catches them just to play with. Harmless ones like bull snakes and garter snakes, anyway. Never a cobra or a rattler.
 Once, while touring a new ski area with the developer, she caught a garter snake and held it all during the

tour. The poor guy kept eyeing that snake, though he didn't say anything. He was pretty polite about it.
 When we were in South Dakota this year, most of the women wanted to go to the gold shops. Not Cynthia. She wanted to go to Reptile Gardens, where they have all sorts of snakes and alligators and other scabies on display.
 "We went there when I was a kid," she said. "I've been waiting to go back for years."
 I didn't hear any of the other women at the meeting volunteering to go with her.
 Back to the lake.
 By the time she got down to the dock, the little horny toad was hiding behind a big rock they use to hold cane poles down, just in case a fish bites on one overnight. I lifted the rock and she got to pet him, sort of.
 When confronted by something bigger than it is, a horny toad puffs itself up and makes itself as big and spiny as it can, hoping that whatever is about to eat it will be afraid of choking. Probably, that works most of the time except for dogs. A dog will eat about anything, trust me.
 Anyway, we got in the lake and

Digging into salad, scholarship



CHOOSING WHICH SALADS to have for supper was Marci Metcalf, who attended the monthly Decatur Business and Professional Women's meeting last Wednesday at Faith Lutheran Church. Miss Metcalf, Jessica Soderlund and Lakin Lahe won scholarships from the group.
 — Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

Gambling would boost town

By JIM MERRIOTT
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In 1990, the small mining towns of Blackhawk and Central City, in Gilpin County, Colo., legalized gambling, bringing new lifeblood to the economically depressed region.
 In the 17 years since, these two communities have developed not only jobs, but have pumped millions of dollars into the economic development of that county, allowed it to lower personal property taxes and raise property values to a record height.
 Millions of dollars have been pumped into an economically depressed mountain town roughly the size of Oberlin.
 With Dodge City recently passing a legalized gambling vote, the economic growth and the impact of job growth in Ford County will draw needed revenues from western Kansas counties that could very well be pumped into this area.
 Over the past week, I was able to spend time with Central City Finance Director/Treasurer Shannon Flowers and several casino owners, asking them questions on several issues concerning just what has hap-

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pened.
 Witnessing hundreds upon hundreds of retired people filter between the two towns, I came to realize as late as 2 a.m. in the morning, these two communities had no violence, no crime, no patrolling officers walking a beat.
 Amazingly, I found two sleepy towns with one patrol car in each community, which during the majority of my stay parked in the same locations.
 Each night, I tried to look for issues, but even late at night, with each casino having their own security officers, I could only find busloads of older people who wanted to play slot machines and card games.
 No gangs, no motorcycle-club bad guys, no hoodlums roaming the streets, but groups of people just like you and me, only out for a good meal at a reasonable price and a good time.
 At the three hotels in the community, employees were cordial, mak-

ing me feel as if I had never left home.
 Ms. Flowers bent over backwards trying to help me, and later she e-mailed me some economic facts provided by the county and the state of Colorado.
 Though business has changed hands over the years, remarkably, the locals have improved their quality of life.
 Now I want you to know, by no means am I a hardened gambler or drinker, and I realize that Decatur County residents are God-fearing good people, but unless the economic development committee of Oberlin takes a close look at casino gambling, Oberlin and Decatur County may just lose needed revenues that other counties around us just might take advantage of in the near future.
 Gambling could bring a lot of business into Oberlin and Decatur County.

County talks about addresses

Decatur County is one of the last in the state not to have a "911" addressing system, and although it drives the state and some mailers crazy, the county commissioners feel they have saved thousands of dollars in tax money.
 Despite that fact, the commissioners appeared to be about ready to give in last Tuesday.

County Roundup

- At their meeting last Tuesday, the Decatur County commissioners:
 - Discussed setting up a "911" addressing system for the county, assigning a house number for every location. Story at left.
 - Learned that the ambulance service now has the aid of a registered nurse from Colorado who can monitor intravenous transfusions during transports. Story to come.

"We may be the last county in the state to do this," Commissioner Ralph Unger said during a discussion of the addressing system at last week's commission meeting, "but we've saved money on signage for 25 years."
 County Attorney Steve Hirsch assured the commissioners that they weren't the last, although they are among just a few holdouts.
 Shippers and major mailers are pushing the system, he said.
 County Road Supervisor Tim Stallman said that United Parcel Service (UPS) wants to switch to the 911 system, which assigns a house number or street address to each location in the county, for delivering packages.
 The commissioners spent some time deciding what numbering/naming system they needed for former city streets in Traer, Clayton, Logan Township and Cedar Bluffs. They worried about streets in those

towns with duplicate names.
 Cedar Bluffs and Oberlin both have a Cedar Street, for instance, and Traer, Jennings and Oberlin each has a Kansas Avenue.
 County Assessor Alan Hale told the commissioners that he thought it would be all right to use street names if they haven't been vacated.
 He said that he saw no problem with having a different post office mailing and legal address such as HC1, Box 15 or Section 1, Township 2, Block 3.
 The biggest problem the commissioners see with the system is the cost of putting up signs.
 Mr. Hale asked how much signs would cost and Mr. Unger said it all depended on how good the signs are, how many the county puts up and how often they have to be replaced.
 Mr. Hale agreed that the maintenance cost on signs is high.
 "That's why we've put it off for

so many years," Mr. Unger said.
 Commissioner Stan McEvoy said the county could put the signs up a little at a time.
 Mr. Hale suggested that the county develop a plan and put up whatever signs the commissioners feel are necessary.
 Mr. Unger agreed that they should put signs on the highways first and then mark the major county roads.

Write

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

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