

Passport system in a mess no thanks to government

The current mess with passports is a great example of government planning, which is pretty much an oxymoron anyway.

The Homeland Security people decided that to increase border security, Americans would have to have a passport to return from neighboring countries, including Mexico, Canada and the Caribbean islands, at least by air.

U.S. immigration officials have never required a passport for simple cross-border visits, but in this age, there's an insane desire for security people to control every movement.

This may sound like a good idea, but it has little to do with fighting terrorism and a lot to do with police power to watch and control all of us as citizens. Police agencies have wanted this for a long time, but Congress resisted. The Sept. 11 attacks gave them the chance to get what they wanted.

As usual in Washington, if something sounds like a "really good idea," it can fly through with little thought to the consequences. That's how we got the present mess with passports.

The security guys said it was a good idea. Terrorists might be infiltrating through Mexico or Canada, they claim, though there's not much evidence of that. The only terrorists we know of coming through Canada got caught.

And on the Mexican border, there's no telling who might be coming in, but really, it's unlikely terrorists could pass themselves off as Latino illegals.

There are ways for terrorists to get into this country, but most of them involve sneaking in through regular channels, on regular flights, right under the noses of the authorities. Customs and Immigration officers usually are too busy checking ordinary people to see the real terrorists. They spend their time harassing

Arab visitors and other friends of America. But regardless of whether the passport deal was a good idea, it's created a mess. No one asked if the State Department could issue a passport to every American planning to travel this year.

Passports that used to take a month to get now take three. The "expedited" service that used to take a week — at a cost of \$60 — now takes three or more. People with tickets and hotel reservations find themselves stranded. Even pleas to congressmen can't speed up the process.

Even after the initial crunch, no provision has been made to beef up the passport offices for increased business. In fact, State has had to hold employees who planned to retire to keep the pipeline flowing at all.

We're obsessed with identification in this country, but the real benefits of beefed-up ID aren't for terrorism control. They're just for control. Terrorists find ways around such things. Ordinary people just have to put up with the new rules.

Supposedly foolproof "Real IDs," passports, computer tracking, in the end, a terrorist who's well trained and sophisticated, as the dangerous ones are, will find a way. It takes good police work and good intelligence to find those guys and block them.

Meantime, the new rules have cost billions and inconvenienced millions for no real purpose. It's a sham, an expensive charade, and a real nuisance. Not a benefit to our security.

The smart thing would be to eliminate the passport requirement — it only applies to airline flights, not to land crossings, anyway — and go back to the old system. That's not likely to happen, because it's too sensible and the security hounds are in the driver's seat.

— Steve Haynes



Cats disagreeable after late start

We were late getting out of Oberlin last Tuesday. Usually we leave about 1 p.m., right after our Rotary meeting.

However, Sen. Pat Roberts was making a sweep through northwest Kansas and he was slated to be in Oberlin from 2:45 to 3:45 p.m. We've been to see Sen. Roberts at his office in Washington and, when he's in town, it seemed like a good idea to take time for him.

Besides, Kim figured she could talk me into writing the story — which she did and I did.

So it was about 4:30 p.m. when we finally pulled out of our driveway with Annie the dog in her kennel in the back and April Alice and Molly Monster, the cats, on the back seat in their carriers.

The trip to Creede, in southern Colorado, takes about nine hours without too many stops. With giving the dog breaks and grabbing supper, we were in Walsenburg about 11 p.m. when we both decided we were too tired to keep going and that we should stop for the night.

Walsenburg isn't a great town for motels, and the most likely choice — a best Western — was full. We checked into the one up the road. It had been new in the 50s and, al-



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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though some work had been done, it showed its age.

The couple running the motel was from Oklahoma and didn't have any idea what they had gotten themselves into. I checked in and took the key — a real room key with a yellow diamond-shaped plastic tag — to Room 112.

Room 112 was clean but smelled strongly of deodorizer. I turned off the air conditioner and opened the window.

Steve fed, watered and walked the dog while I lugged the cats inside and set up their litter box and food and water bowls.

I hit the very hard bed while the cats prowled the room and Steve roamed for a while. Before going to bed, he turned the air conditioner back on and closed the window since the outside temperature was

above 80 degrees.

I don't know if it was the air conditioner, the strange place, the air freshener or just plain cat cussedness, but the felines would not settle.

Not only did they roam, they voiced their discontent until I was ready to shove them back in the carriers and leave them in the truck with the dog.

The motel wasn't very full and there was no one on either side of us, so we weren't tossed out for causing a nuisance, but neither Steve nor I got much sleep.

In the morning, we recreated the cats and headed out over the last mountain.

The cats slept all the way to Creede.

Next time we get a late start, I'm taking sleeping pills — for all four of us.

Granddaughter savvy dresser

Monday was granddaughter Taylor's first day of school this year. She is a third grader and quite grown up, now.

Her PaPa and I talked to her for a few minutes before she had to leave for school. I, of course, asked her what she was wearing to school. She told me that girls can't wear spaghetti-strap dresses or tops, so she wore hers with a white shirt underneath.

Taylor said her teacher, Miss Webb, was her favorite teacher in the whole school. I envy Miss Webb. Nine and ten-year-olds say the darndest things. If I were a teacher, I could have material for this column for years to come.

—ob—

Saturday we got to be part of a beautiful outdoor wedding. A young couple in our little town came to Jim a few months ago and asked him to marry them. As a preacher, that is one of his most favorite things to do.

The day dawned cloudy and ominous following a day of rain on Friday. It made me nervous, but, miraculously, the clouds cleared, the sun shone through and everything went off without a hitch.

Brandy and Matt are a pair of hard-working young people who are both country kids and wanted their



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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wedding to reflect their style. No "foo-foo" bridesmaids dresses they would never wear again, for this wedding. Instead, her attendants wore black jeans, blue and white plaid western shirts and they all had their hair neatly French-braided. The men wore black jeans, white shirts and black leather vests.

The bride's gown was simple, but stunning. It was a strapless satin dress with a wide blue inset in the train and blue banding around the bodice.

A horse-drawn carriage transported the couple to the reception hosted by her family in the old high school gym. Of course, roasted hog was the main course complimented by all the "fixin's". We thought we had a grand time and wish the newlyweds the very best.

—ob—

One of my co-workers told me a young man from our church's con-

gregation had been in our office recently. She said they had made fun of my messy desk. When I asked him to defend himself, he had a very diplomatic come back. He said, "I wasn't making fun. I just said that it looked like a real newspaper person's desk."

Good answer. Besides my theory is: "A clean desk is the sign of a sick mind." From the looks of my desk, I am very healthy, mentally.

From the Bible

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Hebrews 9:28

It's not over until it's all over

We finally got to another Rockies game Friday, just our second of the year. We stayed to the bitter end, which turned out to be a real good idea.

The first game we went to, the Rockies played the hapless Kansas City Royals — and lost.

This time, they faced the hapless Washington Nationals, who had beat them three out of four games in D.C. The Rocks were reeling from losing three out of four to hapless Pittsburgh, suffering a complete meltdown in the pitching staff, but we figured things had to get better.

But for eight innings, it seemed like we were in for another disappointment. Washington had their ace, Shawn Hill, pitching. We had Jeff Francis, our ace, as it were. He's a good young pitcher, but had been struggling along with the rest of the staff.

For eight innings, the Rocks staggered along. Francis pitched well, but a couple of errors in the seventh helped two more runs come in, and there were those two home runs.

Our friends, Bob and Harrison, made their excuses and ducked out in the eighth. It was 5-1 Nats after the top of the ninth, and even a three-up-and-three-down inning by former closer Brian Fuentes



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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couldn't clear the gloom.

Troy Tulowitzki, the fierce young Rockies shortstop who just might be the National League Rookie of the Year, stepped up to the plate and smacked the first pitch into the outfield for a single. Left fielder Matt Holiday followed, swatting the first pitch over the wall to make the score 5-3.

A single by first baseman Todd Helton, a double by right fielder Brad Hawpe, a single by catcher Yorvit Torrealba (what a name) and a couple of outs left the game tied and everything up to second baseman Kazuo Matsui, who has to talk to reporters through an interpreter but sure can play the game. He came up with runners on second and third, two outs and maybe the whole season on the line.

With all 25,000 of us — those who hadn't left, anyway — standing, Matsui hit the third pitch to the

Nationals' second baseman, who couldn't quite find the handle. By the time he had the ball, Hawpe had scored, the swift Matsui was safe at first and the game was over without a throw.

I've seen better games, but never a better ending.

I've seen comebacks, but nothing quite like that.

It was, in fact, the statisticians said, the best comeback ever for the Rocks in the final inning.

I had to call Harrison, who had caught a street car home. (I'd have called Bob, but he's impossible. If he has his cell phone with him, it's never on).

"I know, I know," he said. "I just got my radio back on. I heard people cheering on the train."

Some days, it seems, it pays to be another. I don't know if we'll get to another game, but it'd be hard to top that one.

Great editorial on livestock building

To the Editor:

Kimberly Davis was right on the money with her editorial on the livestock building.

It started with someone seeing a need, someone or someones, in this case, who were willing to step up with possibilities on how to accomplish the goal, and all those helpers

Letters to the Editor

who helped it happen.

What will Oberlin's next project be? A new swimming pool? The need is there.

Who is the someone or someones who will lead us to completion? Helpers are numerous.

Norma Anderson
Oberlin

Services appreciate money from city

To Editor:

Northwest Kansas Domestic and Sexual Violence Services has received a budget commitment from the City of Oberlin in the amount of \$1,200.

This money, which will be used to provide direct services to victims of domestic and sexual violence in Kansas, is greatly appreciated.

It is a fortunate community indeed whose government officials

recognize the needs of all of its citizens.

Jennifer Follis, advocate
Northwest Kansas Domestic and Sexual Violence Services
Hays

Honor Roll

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