

Sappa Park is once again top priority within city

It ought to be clear by now that Sappa Park is one of the city's top priorities.

The old state lake has come to the forefront time and time again over the last couple of years.

It was the top issue mentioned in community meetings leading up to formation of the Decatur Tomorrow strategic planning effort. It has devoted attention from members of the city's Sappa Park committee and the Sunflower Chapter of Pheasants Forever, a strong group of local sportsmen.

People have responded to the once-idle park ever since the Fest-of-All committee tried to promote a tourism event at the site. The festival didn't establish itself, but the park remained in people's hearts even after the event faded away.

With all the attention, more people are using the park, both locals and visitors. Oberlin teens use the "disc golf" course, naturally, but it's not uncommon to see travelers stop for a game.

These people carry their own bags of custom-make golf discs. It's a little scary, kind of like watching a stranger walk into the pool hall and start to assemble his personal cue.

Hunters stalk deer and pheasant. Walkers hike the many trails cut and maintained by volunteers. Visitors stop by to look at the park.

On weekends especially, the road is popular with those hoping to see a deer or turkey. There's a steady stream of cars from town and elsewhere, including a lot of people too elderly to get out and walk the trails. The park appeals to them, too.

Now, the city says it'll assign a part-time caretaker to help keep the park in shape for

increased use. That's a great idea.

It's a shame Sappa Park came to be nearly forgotten. A shame a long-forgotten council and city administration let the water rights for the lake go. A shame the lake can't be refilled tomorrow.

But the park still is one of Oberlin's finest assets, one that tugs at people's hearts, and one that's a lot less expensive than some projects the city faces. The park needs a few dollars here and a few thousand there, but not a few million, not unless someone can find water rights to buy.

The biggest problem with the park is that, popular as it's become, there's almost too many people interested in its upkeep. The four main groups with a stake — the city, park committee, Decatur Tomorrow park group and Pheasants Forever — have sometimes conflicting goals and it can be hard to get them all together to agree on what needs to be done.

That shouldn't be a major problem if everyone looks at the situation with goodwill and a cooperative spirit, but just the diverse number of interests creates the potential for conflict.

And progress is made when the groups pull together, not necessarily working on the same thing, but sharing a set of common goals and aspirations.

It's clear that the people of Oberlin value this park and want it not just taken care of, but improved. A lot has been done the last couple of years, and everyone involved needs to work together to see that the progress continues.

That's what people want to see.

— Steve Haynes

Hundreds help one of our own

I'm not easily impressed. But what always manages to impress me is the kindness and generosity of people.

This weekend hundreds of folks turned out to help one of our own.

About six weeks ago, a young man in this little farming community lost his right hand in a power-takeoff accident. His life changed, dramatically, in the blink of an eye.

Ron is not a man to wallow in self-pity and was immediately grateful that he was born left-handed.

Even though he's recovering and already back to work and figuring out new ways to do old jobs, his friends wanted to do something tangible to help. The word went out and it was decided to have a hog roast benefit.

The hog and all the trimmin's were donated, Carl, Scott and Doug fired up the cooker, and local ladies fixed cakes, pies and salads.

I've been to lots of benefits, but I have never seen so many people show up for one in my life. The lunchroom at the old school building was packed. You couldn't have fallen down, it was so full.

Almost 500 people came to show Ron their support. His sister asked him if he knew everybody there. He looked around the room and surmised, "Well, yes, I think I know just about everybody."

Ron is one of those guys who has never met a stranger. And he was always one of the first in line to help



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
cplotts@nwkansan.com

someone else. So you might say, he had "paid it forward."

As hard as it is to accept help, sometimes we just have to let people help us and do nothing more than say, "Thank you."

Remember, a gift can't be a gift, unless there is someone to accept it.

-ob-

My old car has been giving me trouble lately. One of my friends said, "If you ever get stuck you can just call AAA."

"No way," I said. "If I ever get stuck I call Jim."

One night last week I had to make that call. The car totally "died" on the way home.

I tried to coast off the roadway but lost momentum and was stuck, still halfway on the road.

Thank goodness I was at the crest of a hill and could get a cell phone signal. Jim said he would be right there.

It was pitch black and I could see approaching headlights. I still had enough battery left to run brake and signal lights (the hazard switch had broken off years ago), so when a

vehicle was coming from either the front or behind, I would push the brakes and operate the signals.

It was still scary, hoping they could tell I was at a standstill on the road.

But I couldn't abandon the vehicle, either. Without hazard lights someone would have surely hit it. In just a few minutes my knight in shining armor arrived.

Okay, so it was Jim in overalls, but I couldn't have been more glad to see him if he had been Sir Lancelot himself.

-ob-

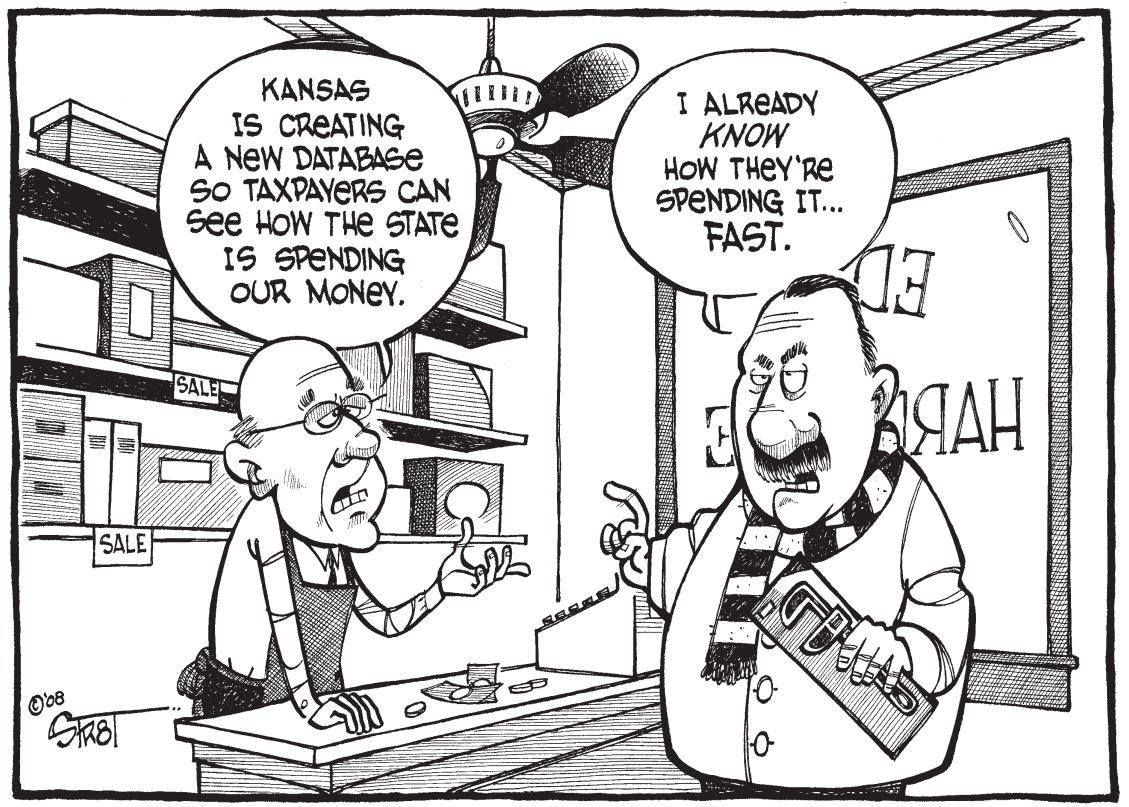
A mother went into her son's room saying, "Time to wake up and get ready for church."

Her son said, "I'm not going to church today."

Mom said, "Give me two good reasons why you don't want to go to church."

Her son quickly replied, "One, they don't like me, and two, I don't like them."

His mother answered him, "Well, I've got two good reasons why you have to go. One, you're 59 years old and two, you're the preacher."



An alligator in the dryer?

I opened the clothes dryer and there it was, staring at me with its beady little reptilian eyes, jaws agape, green snout glistening.

I stepped back right onto the cat's tail. The cat squalled, and then I really jumped.

She'd done it again. She'd got me by surprise, even though I'd known the two-foot plastic alligator would be hiding somewhere in my house.

Steve and Barb, the cleaning lady, have been hiding alligator for weeks now. But, it seems, I'm the one who always finds the little monster.

We call him the Crocodilian because we can't decide if he's really an alligator or a crocodile. I'm guessing alligator, but how would I know? I'm no specialist in reptiles that eat people and/or poodles.

Since this is the U.S. and alligators are an indigenous species — hey, I didn't say they were indigenous to Kansas — I'm going with the "local" beast.

He's the Crocodilian, because when I checked the city ordinances way back when we moved here to see what kind of tags, shots and so forth I needed for the dogs, cats and rabbit, I found that you can't keep poisonous snakes, hippopotami or crocodilians in town. (It was only later we learned about chickens and miniature horses.)

Darn, I was so hoping to keep hippopotami in my back yard, too.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
c.haynes@nwkansan.com

Anyway, a couple of months ago, Barb started hiding the alligator in odd places around the house.

How do I know it's Barb and not the cats just dragging a new toy around?

Well, the first week I found it in the dish-towel drawer right after Barb had been there. Now even if the cats could somehow have gotten a two-foot plastic alligator up into the drawer and closed it, they certainly wouldn't put it in the vegetable drawer of the refrigerator, which is where I found it the second week.

It was quite a surprise to reach for a head of lettuce and grab a snoutful of plastic alligator teeth. Luckily for the cat, she wasn't behind me that time.

The next week, I found the alligator in the sheet drawer. Then in the bathtub. Then under the planter on wheels that houses our giant mother-in-law's tongue plant.

My response was anemic. I put him on top of the radio next to the stove in plain view or on the

kitchen table, which was mostly in plain view if you looked around the piles of papers which inhabit that surface.

Steve decided that this just wouldn't do, so he got into the act and hid the little monster in the linen drawer. Barb retaliated by putting it in the dryer. Steve came back with the washing machine, then found a nine-inch plastic alligator to hide under the cushion of his desk chair in the kitchen.

The big alligator showed up in the downstairs bathtub and the little one in the pocket of my robe, which normally hangs on the back of the upstairs bathroom door.

Yesterday, I opened the microwave and there was the Crocodilian. I'm still looking for his nine-inch sidekick, which makes opening every drawer and going around every corner an adventure at our place.

Where will we find the reptiles next? You never know. You never know.

No need to break resolution

Geez. Where'd the time go?

New Year's has come and gone, and I still haven't had time to make any resolutions.

That may not be a bad thing, because it saves me the trouble of breaking them.

But it seems sort of nontraditional.

I should resolve to lose some weight, but I should do that every year. And with all the meetings and conventions I have to go to over the next nine months, there'll be a lot of temptations.

It's hard to lose weight when you're traveling. It's not that the food is so good — often it's better at home — but it's so there, and there's always a lot of it. At home, portion control is easier. And there's less to drink.

I could resolve to cut out midnight snacks, and that would help with No. 1. But some nights just seem to demand one. My dietician even recommended late-evening snacks. Small ones after a really skimpy dinner.

Or at least, that's my excuse.

The best way to lose weight, Cynthia says, is to cut everything in half. Breakfast. Lunch. Dinner. Even snacks.

She saves the rest if she's at a restaurant. Our fridge is full of leftovers someone may have for lunch next week.

At home, there's just portion control. And believe me, it works. She lost 40 pounds and I lost 30.

Only I think our half has been growing. At least our butts haven't been, but no weight has been lost of late.

So, get out the knife. That's a resolution.



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
s.haynes@nwkansan.com

I should resolve to travel more, but this year, that's not a problem. I have to go plenty of places. There won't be much time for those places we want to go.

What I'd like to do is slow down and enjoy travel more. Poke my way down the overgrown old highway. Stop to look at the town museum or depot. Go five miles off the road to see a historic site. Take six hours to get to Denver if I feel like it.

But that's not going to happen this year. This year, it'll be straight to the airport, straight to the meeting, straight home, where my bed will be waiting. I hope.

I really need to resolve to walk more, even when there's no time. And there's often no time when you're on the road. Someplace alone, where you don't know the best trails or the safest parts of the city.

We've been walking for exercise for more than 23 years now. When we're home and the weather is halfway decent, it's no problem. When we're on the road, it's hard to make time.

When we're home, the dog looks longingly at us whenever we go out. It's hard to ignore those big brown eyes. She's been the best thing ever to happen to our exercise plan.

So maybe I should resolve to remember her when I'm on the

road. That might get me out on the sidewalk.

I'd resolve to read more books, but I'm not sure where I'd find the time. Maybe on airplanes. Since I got the portable computer, though, I seem to work whenever I'm on the road. The other day, I wrote four editorials and two columns on the way to Kearney and Concordia.

Not while driving, I might add. Without Cynthia's help, it wouldn't be possible. But all this work does cut into my reading time. Such a shame.

Maybe I should resolve to make my resolutions sooner next year. It'd mean giving up my holiday procrastination time, but hey, every resolution requires a little sacrifice.

And then by the middle of January, I'd be well on my way to breaking some of those resolutions so valiantly made on the first.

That'd be progress.

From the Bible

That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the Lord thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth.

Deuteronomy 23: 23

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

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

E-mail: oberlinherald@nwkansan.com

Nor'West Newspapers

STAFF

- Steve Haynes editor
- Kimberly Davis managing editor
- Mary Lou Olson society editor
- Judy Jordan proofreader
- Carolyn Kelley-Plotts columnist
- Cynthia Haynes business manager
- David Bergling advertising manager
- Pat Cozad want ads/circulation
- Karla Jones advertising production
- Joan Betts historian
- Jim Merriott sports reporter
- Sarah Marcuson production

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

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

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.)

