

Kansas should change rules for young drivers

It’s far from certain that the Kansas Legislature will do anything to help end the carnage among teenage drivers in this state, but it should.

The Senate has passed one version of a bill restricting teen drivers and the House may pass another. There’s no guarantee, however, that even if a bill passes it will do much good.

For one thing, the Legislature isn’t prepared to deal with the fact that kids can get a learner’s permit at 14 and a restricted license at 15, allowing them to drive to work and school.

Those permits, along with farm permits issued to underage drivers, are widely abused today. Rural families supposedly need to have kids drive at 14 or 15 because otherwise it would be a “hardship” on the families.

When you see two teens in a wreck while headed to the same high school in separate cars, however, or three vehicles from one farm home headed to the same school, you have to ask where the hardship is.

Those kids could be safe on a school bus rather than driving to town and back — and around town after school.

There are some good ideas in the House version of the bill, or were at last reading. Teens between 16 and 17 would be able to drive, but with more restrictions than today. They’d get a license which would not allow them to drive between midnight and 5 a.m. or with more than three other teens in the car.

A rather silly provision would bar young

drivers from using a cell phone or text messaging device while driving. Apparently, at 17, they’ll be able to handle those.

The truth is, no one should be driving and using a hand-held phone. Certainly, no one should be texting while driving. Both should be illegal — for anyone. So should watching a television or video device, other than a navigation aid.

Yet the House apparently feels teens will buy into this “do as a say, not as I do,” approach. It’s just not enforceable.

Any change which would keep 14- and 15-year-olds off our highways and rural roads — and safe from the dangers of driving while inexperienced — should be welcome. We hope the Legislature passes a bill, but we’d really like to see it deal with the real issues.

One thing kids need to know is that if they mess up and have a wreck or a couple of tickets while on a restricted license, and especially if they’re in violation of age restrictions, then there won’t be a regular license waiting when they are 17.

Without some teeth, this bill won’t mean much. It’ll take tough enforcement to make it work.

That said, we urge the Legislature to get together on this issue and pass a bill we all can live with. Traffic accidents are the leading killer of young adults, after all.

Let’s keep some of our teenagers alive.

— Steve Haynes

Junk is a sure sign of spring

You know how I know it’s spring?

Oh, sure, there’s the usual robin sightings, daffodils blooming and trees budding. But, the one sure-fire clue is the citywide spring cleanups in area towns.

Most require homeowners to place unwanted items by the front curb for easy pickup by city crews. An unwritten policy says if it’s by the curb, it is “up for grabs” and help yourself.

To two scrounge hounds like Jim and me, it’s like a smorgasbord. We drove the streets of one town looking for the “good stuff.” We were not disappointed. We found some good doors, a nice carpet remnant and an office chair with a base that



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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looks like it is interchangeable with a broken one we have.

After our first “find,” Jim said, “Well, now that we’ve totally embarrassed ourselves, I guess we might as well make a haul of it.”

“You load and I’ll drive,” I replied.

We cruised up one street and down another, eyes peeled for any-

thing usable. Of course, what we consider usable, someone else has deemed trash. One of my mom’s favorite sayings was, “One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.” Perhaps that’s a mentality she acquired while living through the Great Depression.

It’s true, though.

It’s only when you need something that you can see the value of it. It need not be brand new to be usable. I just find it hard to believe what some people throw away.

That is a fair warning to anyone thinking they might find something usable in our trash. By the time we’re done with something, it is completely used up or worn out. It really is trash.

From the Bible

My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.

He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be moved.

Psalms 62:5-6



Graves a danger for Ol’ Roy?

I hope Roy Williams doesn’t have any property left in Kansas.

For like the other Great Traitor, whatever he left behind when he heeded the call of his homeland might be at risk.

As in grave danger.

The Great Traitor, Robert E. Lee, had been one of the bright lights of the U.S. Army: West Point graduate, Mexican War hero, keen military mind.

It was Lee who commanded U.S. troops sent to capture the abolitionist John Brown and secure the arsenal at Harper’s Ferry.

Lee was offered command of the Union army after succession.

Forced to choose, his loyalty lay with his homeland in Virginia, and Lee reluctantly went home to take up a cause he had little sympathy for.

Lee left behind the army and the Constitution he loved to serve his home state.

In Lawrence, a Yankee town where they remember well the Civil War, that makes him a lot like Roy Williams, who came to Kansas as a young assistant basketball coach, a disciple of Dean Smith at North Carolina.

The Emporia-born Smith send Williams to redeem his alma mater and uphold her basketball tradition. Trained by Smith, one of the great basketball coaches of all time, Wil-

liams grew and prospered in 15



Along the Sappa

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years at Kansas. He became one of the greatest coaches at a school where the first coach invented the game.

The first time North Carolina asked him, Ol’ Roy said no. Eventually, he did as Dean Smith had done and sent one of his best assistants to take charge of the Tarheels.

Only Matt Doherty was no Roy Williams and certainly no Dean Smith, and when he stumbled, and the homeland called again, desperate, General Roy did what any true son of the South would do.

He resigned his commission and bolted for home.

There, he fulfilled his destiny and snagged the national championship which had evaded him in Lawrence. Which may prove Ol’ Roy is an ever better general than Robert E. Lee.

But maybe not. We’ll see on Saturday.

Back to that property in Lawrence.

I hope Roy sold it. All of it.

General Lee had property near Washington, a mansion and estate

across the Potomac River that had come down through his wife’s family, the descendants of George Washington’s wife Martha.

During the war, feeling was high about the Great Traitor. He was despised in the North as he was revered in the South, but his wife’s estate had been left to the North.

Out of spite, they began burying bodies of the Union dead in her lawn. She never did recover the family land, and it took her years just to get the antique furniture — some of it handed down from George.

The bodies of those Union soldiers are still there. We know that place today as Arlington National Cemetery.

I’m not sure what the students in Lawrence might do to Ol’ Roy’s house, if he hasn’t sold it by now.

I don’t think they’d plant any bodies there.

But you never know.

If I were him, I wouldn’t advertise it for sale this week, just to be safe.

To save earth, she trashes car

My car is full of trash, and it really needs to be cleaned out.

Not junk, mind you — although I’ve got a bit of that, too.

This is trash, waste products, garbage.

It started out innocently enough. I’m in the news business. We get a lot of newspapers — a half dozen weeklies and at least three seven-day dailies. Some are pretty small, but some, like the Sunday edition of the Denver Post, are whoppers.

I hate to add all those papers to our landfill and I knew that there were ways of recycling them, so I started putting them in brown paper grocery sacks.

At first there was nowhere to send them here, but I learned I could send them to our press department in Goodland, where they would go into a huge newspaper recycling bin.

Eventually, Oberlin got a little recycling trailer. I started taking my papers down and emptying the bags into the proper slot.

I noticed that you could also recycle catalogs and magazines. I had been taking my magazines to the library for their free pile, but there were a lot of catalogs coming in the mail, advertising everything from men’s shirts to riverboat cruises in Russia.

I put a little pink Victoria’s Secret bag behind a plant to catch all those tips, trips and assorted slick circulars. It takes longer to fill than my brown paper newspaper bags, but I



Open Season

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still have to empty it about twice a month, more during the Christmas season.

With newspapers and magazines under my belt, I started reading the labels on the sides of the recycling trailer and even took a peek at what was in the bins so I would know what No. 1 plastic or chipboard looked like.

I found that I could recycle my milk cartons, cereal boxes, toilet paper cores and salsa jars. I just had to clean them out and have a spot to store them until it was time to go to the recycling center.

At first, I tried keeping things in the garage in separate plastic crates. While this was a great idea, it didn’t work as well as I had hoped during the winter.

My next idea was to just put another brown paper bag next to the trash can for recyclables. This has worked well; I fill about a bag every three days.

The latest addition to the recyclable family in Oberlin is tin cans. Those go in the bag, too, now.

Last week we made chili. I washed

out and threw away the plastic and Styrofoam hamburger containers but rinsed and put in the recycling bag the cans from the tomato juice, paste and sauce. That plus the four plastic containers that held strawberries and cherry tomatoes (they were on sale), an empty milk carton, glass pickle jar, plastic Coke bottle, empty Bisquick box, an empty plastic mayonnaise jar and half a dozen metal and plastic lids pretty much filled up a paper sack.

When I get to the trailer, I just go round and round to the proper bin and dump each item in. It’s easier than trying to keep it all separated.

When a sack of newspapers, magazines or trash is full, I put it in the trunk of my car to await a trip to the recycle trailer. It’s been a couple of weeks since I made that trip and my trunk is getting real trashy — but my garage looks good.

I guess I’m not going very far in that car until I detrash my trunk, but that’s a small sacrifice in this day and age.

Tour helps form view on policies

To the Editor:

Each year since being elected to Congress, I have traveled to each of the 69 counties of the 1st District to hear what is on the minds of Kansans and receive my marching orders to take back to Washington. On March 27, I completed my 2008 “Big First” Listening Tour.

While the issues Kansans talk to me about change from year to year, one thing remains the same: folks want to see good things happen in their communities and their country. In Washington, I will work to see that Kansans are well served through legislation like the Farm Bill and by working to improve laws like No Child Left Behind.

Letter to the Editor

As we enter the spring and summer months, I am especially concerned with energy prices. We must work in Congress to repeal policies that raise the price of gas and regulations that discourage the development of new fuel sources.

I will be giving a series of speeches in the House of Representatives in the coming weeks about what I heard and learned from Kansans during my tour. I want to make sure rural voices and Kansas common sense are part of the debate on the

issues facing our nation.

If there were topics that were not discussed or you were unable to attend, please contact me and share your thoughts through my Web site at www.jerrymoran.house.gov/.

It is an honor serving in Congress on behalf of Kansans. Please let me know how I can do a better job working for you.

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran
Hays

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