

City ought to preserve scarce supply of water

While we understand some of the problems facing Decatur Speedway volunteers, it seems most unwise for Oberlin to supply scarce water from the city system to wet down the race track this summer.

The City Council voted to allow volunteers to take some of the water they need for the track from city hydrants this spring, with a review set for June. At least one council member fears the heavy use — as much as 100,000 gallons in two days — would deplete water pressure on “the Hill” west of Antelope Avenue and threaten the city’s supply.

City Foreman Dan Castle agreed that using the hydrant at the fairground to fill tankers might do just that. When water use hits 700,000 gallons per day, the city goes on rationing, and council members pointed out, pouring 50,000 a day on the track could bring

that on quickly.

The spring use amounts to a trial. If there is any indication that people near the fairground have lower pressure, then the trial should stop. When the city goes to water rationing this summer, it’d be criminal to continue wetting down the track with treated water.

The volunteers have been hauling water from a well south of town which is too high in nitrates for the city to use. While it’s more work, and more expensive, for the race group, that’s the best supply for the track. That water is no good for drinking and can’t be put into the city system.

But using scarce water for packing dirt? Even if water restrictions haven’t started, it could be draining the city’s wells of water we’ll need in summer.

This is *not* a good idea. — Steve Haynes

Voter ID? Do we need it?

The recurring plan to make Kansas voters show photo identification at the polls seems like a solution in search of a problem.

Kansas has no record of vote fraud. Since only registered voters are allowed in our elections, there’s not much chance illegal aliens, or even legal aliens, will be voting.

Republicans, who are pushing this bill as a party-line vote, apparently think Democrats are less likely to carry a driver’s license.

Why that will give one party an advantage we can’t figure. In fact, we can’t figure out why we need this bill at all.

We have enough red tape and bureaucracy today without making election clerks slow down to check ID. If a voter is known to them, they should just give him or her a ballot and send the voter off to a booth?

If a judge has any reason to suspect a voter isn’t who he says he is, the judge should be allowed to ask for identification. And the voter

ought to be happy to produce it.

Unless fraud becomes a problem, why make voting more difficult? Why insult us with the need to remember our identification and, perhaps, keep some people from voting?

You’d think Kansas Republicans have more important fish to fry, like finding a program to base their platform on, or finding candidates for governor and senator in the coming 2010 elections. Gov. Kathleen Sebelius will leave Cedar Crest and likely seek a ticket to Washington, if she’s not vice president by then.

The prospect of the likable, if liberal, governor replacing Sen. Sam Brownback and the turnout former GOP chairman Mark Parkinson taking her place in Topeka ought to be enough to scare the wits out of Republicans.

They should quit wasting time on bogus issues like voter ID and get down to business. This bill deserves an early death.

— Steve Haynes

Chicken ate her homework?

I’ve used lots of excuses for being late to work — all legit, of course. But, this is the first time I’ve ever used, “I’m going to be late, I have four chicken to dress.”

That’s right, we’re still putting chickens in the freezer. Jim took care of six Saturday and the other four Sunday night. By “took care of,” you know what I mean, right? He plucks and cleans; I cut up and freeze.

My mother would shake her head in disapproval if she knew I don’t save the backs and neck. She always said they were her favorite pieces. I think she said that because they were the pieces that were left after everyone else had their pick.

My thought is my time is worth something, and it’s not worth it to mess with necks and backs. I just boil them, pick off the meat and use it for chicken salad or sandwiches. I’m not wasting it, but I’m not wasting my time, either, whether it’s the time to cut it up or the time to fry it.

Anyway, the cut-up birds are in the freezer and the “scrawny” pieces are in the roaster slow cooking till the meat falls off the bone.



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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-ob-

Another sure sign spring is coming, besides yard sales, is all the lawn care commercials on television. I saw one product this morning that claimed to kill dandelions and crabgrass but to not harm the lawn. My fear is if I killed all the dandelions and crabgrass, I wouldn’t have any lawn at all.

-ob-

I want to introduce you to some new characters: My cousin, Barb; her husband, Art; and their “baby,” Valentino.

Valentino is a 120 pound chocolate Lab who, they say, is the most perfect dog in the world. When I asked Barb to send me some pictures, they sent photos of Valentino.

This threesome will soon arrive to

set up housekeeping in a little town not far from us. They have found a cute house and are excited about life out here in “God’s Country.”

It’s going to fun to have family this close. We’re already planning a special Fourth of July celebration.

From the Bible

Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.

Psalms 41:1,2



Priest rocks along with kids

Mike Scully might just be the quintessential Irish priest.

Balding, grey fringe of hair, jutting jaw and ruddy complexion, a twinkle in his eye: give him a green hat and put a pipe in his mouth, heck, he could pass for a leprechaun.

A big leprechaun, for sure, but as mischievous as any on record.

And while you might think a 68-year-old Catholic priest would be the least likely person around to spend his time listening to rock and rap music, you don’t know Father Scully.

He says he started listening to the top 20 songs on the radio more than 25 years ago and found, not sin and iniquity, but inspiration for the teens and college students in his flock.

Having been a high school teacher in Hays and a pastor in Lawrence, he found plenty of common ground in the music the kids he dealt with were listening to.

Known as an inspirational speaker as well as a musicologist, Father Scully has a radio show on a Hays station from 10 a.m. to noon on Sundays that’s popular with teens and college students. He spoke to students at Decatur Community High, and to the Oberlin Rotary Club, last Tuesday.

Sometimes, he said, he has to get the kids to slow down and listen to the words. Most people are so caught up in the music, he said, that they don’t really listen to the lyrics.

And in rock and rap, he said, there’s often plenty to listen to — and not what many adults might expect.

He brags that he’s got every top 20 song since 1980 running around in his head.



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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“Can you imagine what that does to your brain,” he says with a sly smile.

Inspiration from rock? Eighty percent of popular songs are about love, he notes.

“I say every love song has a message you can learn from,” he said, adding that people, especially teens, have trouble talking to each other about love.

A couple of his favorites are “Paralyzer” by the group Finger Eleven, and “Never Too Late” by Three Days Grace. You can look them up on the Internet.

“Listen to the music and listen to the message,” he said, adding that a lot of adults criticize teen music without really listening.

The best message from a song? someone asks.

“Something to Believe In” by the heavy-metal, death’s-head group Poison in 1985.

“You’d never believe it from Poison,” he said. “A very difficult song.”

Father Scully came to Oberlin at the request of students who’d heard him at a Rotary Youth Leadership camp. He went over the five principles of leadership he gave them, part of a talk that impressed the kids so much they wanted all their schoolmates to hear it.

They are:

- Study your behavior and ask why.
- Develop the ability to talk and to listen.
- Never stop learning.
- Develop the ability to love.
- Choose a significant guide.

“And for me, that’s God through Christ Jesus,” he adds, “and I’d be glad to talk about that. It’s not important what you choose, but you must make it something that’s important in your life.”

And of course, all that can be related to music.

A priest with a sense of humor who studies rock music and relates to teens. It took me a few minutes to recall the first time I’d met him.

We’d gone to church in Lawrence, where Father Scully served after leaving Thomas More Prep in Hays. He was talking about people who left Mass right after communion, ducked out and sped off for home.

Many, he complained, parked right under the street-side stained glass windows at St. John the Evangelist and gunned their engines as they left.

“If you have to leave early,” he grumbled, that twinkle in his eye, “at least park somewhere else.”

Oh, yeah, I remembered Mike Scully.

Most people do.

Dakota plains a lot like home

South Dakota is not all carved mountains and motorcycles, we discovered last week.

As part of Steve’s duties as National Newspaper Association president, we are visiting as many state’s press conventions as we can. Last week was South Dakota’s turn.

We headed north on U.S. 83 and found ourselves in Pierre, the capital city. It was nightfall and we weren’t expected in Aberdeen until late the next day.

The central and southern parts of South Dakota are dominated by the Missouri River. West of there, it’s hundreds of miles of prairie all the way to the Badlands and the Black Hills.

Pierre, with a population of about 14,000, is one of the smallest capital cities in the country. It seems less a seat of government than a medium-size county seat with lots of official-looking buildings.

Since we had extra time, we visited the Capitol, a stately structure on a hill overlooking both the town and the river. From the back door, you could see open prairie. Try that in Topeka or Denver.

Inside, the Capitol was eerily quiet. The Legislature had gone home. In fact, by state law, the South Dakota Legislature meets for only two months. Then everyone goes back to their regular jobs.

The building is open 365 days a year, with nothing to keep visi-



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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tors from enjoying the spaces: No guards, no guides, no metal detector. You just walk in.

At the door there is a little rack with booklets about the building and grounds. Take one and go look around.

So we did.

Later, we took a walk on an island park in the middle of town on the Missouri. The dirt trails were a little muddy and there was snow on the north side of everything. A giant cottonwood had fallen across one trail, and we had to go around it. The trunk came chest-high on us.

Then it was time to head on to our goal — Aberdeen.

We had planned to continue on up U.S. 83 to U.S. 12 and then turn east to Aberdeen, but a blinking light on the gas gauge changed our plans. The next town to the north was about 40 miles, but Gettysburg — slogan: “Where the battle wasn’t” — offered gas only five miles to the east.

With a full tank, we left for Aberdeen, dodging pheasants along

the way. South Dakota has a zillion pheasants and a short hunting season, we found out.

In Aberdeen, we met Gov. Mike Rounds, who signed a cookbook for me. We also met a lot of old friends and made a bunch of new ones.

Those of us from western Kansas could feel at home looking out over the endless rolling prairie now covered with wheat and corn stubble. The people are friendly and helpful — just like back home.

South Dakota does have a pimple on its nose, however. Tacky little casinos everywhere — like dog dropping on a favorite trail. Everywhere we looked, there were ugly combinations — fancy restaurant, bar and casino, fast food and casino, dress shop and casino, insurance agency and casino, real estate office and casino — I guess on that one you could lose your home almost before you sign the contract.

Needless to say, I didn’t drop any money in the casinos. Raising children and running a business is more than enough gambling for me.

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