

## Obama inauguration marks end of many eras

President Obama will have plenty to think about after he takes office in January.

His inauguration will be a momentous and historic occasion, marking the first time a member of any "minority" group has become president.

In many ways, it marks the end of not one era, but many: slavery, segregation, civil rights, the fading of race as a major issue in American society.

But as the celebration dies down, the new president will have to turn to face his problems, and they are legion.

The world's economy is in as perilous a condition as it has been since Franklin Roosevelt took office in 1932.

After dealing with crises in credit, banking and finance, the government turned around to find the U.S. auto industry dying at its doorstep.

Should the new president save General Motors? Is it a keystone of the system, or just a dinosaur that should be allowed to perish?

If GM goes, will Ford or Chrysler or any of the thousands of parts makers who depend on Detroit make it, or will the entire industry go down the tubes, leaving us at the mercy of foreign brands?

These are not questions to ask lightly. The cost of error will be high. To let the entire auto industry collapse might threaten the very foundation of the U.S. economy. But at the same time, the government is running out of money to save any skin but its own.

Congress is debating \$25 billion for Detroit, but GM alone may need more.

Nor is it just the U.S. economy the new president will have to worry about. Japan

has slipped into recession already, somewhat ahead of the U.S. China, India and the rest of Asia may not be far behind. So might Europe.

The world is suffering. Predictions that the economy will recover in 2009 or 2010 seem wan in the light of GM's problems, and Japan's.

Then President Obama will have to reconcile his promises with the reality on the ground in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

He may well be able to start bringing more troops home from Iraq. Experts say the war there is all but over. Afghanistan is another matter. Afghanistan is a sinkhole for foreign troops. Just ask the Russians.

Our early success there belies the fact that we have not eliminated the Taliban or run al Qaida to the ground. They are resurgent, resupplying and resting in Pakistan to continue their attacks on NATO forces.

Yet it may not be a simple matter of shifting forces from the Mideast to Afghanistan. As we did in Iraq, we may need to rethink the entire plan in the mountainous Asian nation. Just moving troops will take months.

There are many books to read about this war-torn land, but watch sometime — if you can find it — the screen adaptation of Kipling's "The Man Who Would Be King." Then rent "Charlie Wilson's War."

For President Obama, the celebrations will last a few days. The trials will begin soon after.

Envy not the new president. We'll soon see how well he lives up to the comparisons to Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy and Martin Luther King.

— Steve Haynes



## A few tips to avoid new scams

Someone handed the office manager a sheet of paper on how to avoid e-mail hoaxes and scams. They wanted us to publish it.

That's not the sort of thing we publish. We do local news — school board, sports teams, harvest, festivals, clubs, babies, you name it. We cover our towns, not the world.

But, I do get a lot of e-mails and have had to change my address twice in the last few years in the hopes of escaping some of them. So, I wasn't adverse to looking over the page and passing on a few tips, especially since the cats have been unaccountably well behaved this week.

I hope everyone remembers the one big sign of a fraud — be it e-mail, or Moses Pray (Ryan O'Neal) selling Bibles to widows in the movie Paper Moon: If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. People don't give you money, and if they ask for money, run, do not walk away.

Here are seven telltale signs of a scam:

- You don't know the person who sent you the message or you don't recognize the address.
- You are promised something with little or no effort on your part.
- You are asked to give money or personal information, such as Social Security or bank account number.
- The request has a close time line.
- You must do something right now.
- The sender wants to remain



### Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
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anonymous or have the information remain confidential.

• The sender offers to send you proof of their legitimacy. What they would send is fake.

• Look at the e-mail address. Do they say they're from the government but have a .com address?

Don't even open up an e-mail from someone you don't know. You wouldn't open your door to a stranger. (Well, maybe you would out here in northwest Kansas, but not if you lived in a city.)

You've put yourself on a no-call list. You've requested that the post office not send you junk mail. You don't bring garbage into your home and dump it. So why would you allow just any stranger into your home via the Internet.

If you start to get too much "spam," you can change your address. It's not a perfect solution, but you can send your friends and business associates the new address and be (relatively) spam free for a while, or you can continue to wade through hundreds of requests for money, offers of loans and pitches

for everything from hot chicks from Russia to male and/or female enhancements.

If you do change your address, remember not to sign up for "hot" offers, sign up for "free" vacations or visit shaky-sounding websites. These will get your address, sell it to spammers and then — you'll have to change it again.

Your choice.

### From the Bible

And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.  
Revelation 22:12-14

## Paddling right through week

Looks can be deceiving. On the surface, we are like that duck on the pond. Everything is calm and serene, but underneath, we are paddling like crazy. That's the way last week was.

The first day of the week was Sunday, and as usual, it was filled with praise and worship. For the last few months, Jim has been preaching at the little country church that had been my congregation as a child. Services start at 9 a.m., and if he doesn't get too long-winded, we can still make services at our home church, 25 miles away, by 10:40. Out by noon, we grabbed a quick bite before we went to the state prison for chapel services at 1:30 p.m. We got home about 4 p.m., totally spent, and collapsed in the recliners for the remainder of the evening.

Most of Monday morning was spent writing this column. It takes you about two minutes to read it. . . and me two hours to write it. Then, like homemakers across America, I spent the rest of the day trying to recover from the mess we made over the weekend.

Tuesday was cold and rainy, keeping Jim home from work. We played house all day, cooking and doing odd jobs.

Wednesday was club day. It was also our annual Thanksgiving dinner/guest night, and we planned an evening meal. I made two apple



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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pies, one butterscotch pie, four dozen crescent rolls and a new recipe for Crock-Pot creamed corn. Since we were taking guests, I had to clean out the van enough for them to get in.

We were all bundled in the van, merrily on our way to dinner, when a deer jumped in front of us. Jim hit the brakes and avoided a collision, but we did have one fatality: the Crock-Pot full of creamed corn.

Good friends Darrell and Kathy called us late Thursday afternoon to see if we would be home. Darrell had used our little cement mixer to do a job at his place, and they wanted to return it. They had already eaten, but we spent the evening talking and laughing. Spontaneous visits are the best.

Jim got home from work early Friday afternoon so we could be at the prison by 5:30 p.m. for the two Bible-study classes he teaches. That has become our "date night," and we stopped in for a pizza on the way home.

Saturday morning, we deposited

Jim's check and went to the store. How do we go in just for bread and milk and manage to drop \$100 on "stuff"? Does anyone else do that?

We had been invited to a dinner party that night to celebrate a friend's birthday, and I had volunteered to bake his favorite cake, a carrot cake. We were late getting back from the store and I only had about one hour to make and bake the cake. It came out of the oven with about five minutes to spare.

Thankfully, the hostess and the birthday boy don't stand on a lot of formality, so I took the frosting in a container and frosted the cake after we ate. I just remembered something — I forgot the candles.

That's our life. Some mundane days, some jam-packed days. But now, we've come full circle and it's time to start the cycle all over again.

I pray you will have a good week, too.

## Coaching tradition hard to give up

Larry Gabel says he's as much a part of the tradition as anyone, but finally had to admit it may be time to pull the plug on the venerable Northwest Kansas League.

Mr. Gabel, a long-time coach and principal in St. Francis, and now activities director and acting principal at Colby High School, told the Colby Rotary Club it seems likely that within two years, Colby and Goodland will have left the league for a new alliance of larger schools.

"I have been coaching in northwest Kansas for 35 years," he said. "Tradition is hard to give up."

With the population shrinking in nearly every county but Thomas, he said, school enrollment has been dropping in most districts for years. Colby High has managed to hold onto its Class 4A rating, but Goodland High dropped to 3A. Other county-seat schools — including Oberlin, Atwood and St. Francis — were once in the 3A ranks but have dropped to Class 2A.

This year, Quinter High moved to eight-man football, and other smaller schools — he mentioned Hoxie and Atwood, even St. Francis — may be forced to follow suit. In the end, he said, it may not so much be a matter of Colby and Goodland leaving the league as of the league leaving Colby and Goodland.

Mr. Gabel said he expects the new league to be formed in meetings after the first of the year. It might include Goodland, Colby, Scott City, Lakin, Ulysses, Hugoton and maybe Norton or Thomas More



### Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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Prep of Hays, all Class 3A or 4A schools.

He said he expects the 2A schools big enough to stay in 11-man football to join with schools their size in a league of their own.

The change may be costly in that it more than doubles the distance for a single round trip to each opponent, he said, but schools might make up for that by scheduling more games on a single day. They're not sure how the change would affect middle school or junior high competition, he added, because administrators are wary of taking younger teams someplace as far away as Ulysses at midweek.

The only change that would make everyone happy, he noted, would be a population surge across the area, but that doesn't seem likely. Because football schedules are set for two years at a time, he added, changes won't come until the fall of 2010. And Colby High would still try to schedule area towns as nonleague games to keep up traditional rivalries.

The idea of splitting up the Northwest Kansas League is not new; it's been discussed for several years

as enrollments have declined. Mr. Gabel said some schools here had discussed a possible merger with the Mid-Continent League to the east, but that group wanted to look eastward, not to the west.

One advantage to playing schools of similar size, he said, besides the more even competition, would be the ability to have league contests in "minor" sports such as tennis, golf, softball and baseball, which most smaller schools don't offer.

Sheila Frahm, a guest at the Rotary meeting, speculated that a north-south sports alliance might help forge new bonds between northwest Kansas and the southwest.

Someone suggested that if smaller districts close, as a couple already have in the region, the county-seat schools might gain a little ground. Colby Superintendent Terrel Harrison said, however, that Colby, like many area districts, still has some bigger classes in high school, indicating a few more years of enrollment loss unless something happens.

No one jumped up to say that was likely.

## Team, coaches to be commended

To the Editor:

I would like to commend the Decatur Community High School football team and coaching staff. This group of boys gave 110 percent every game. The team and coaching staff never gave up and continued to play and coach with a lot of heart and determination to the end of every game, whether they were winning or losing.

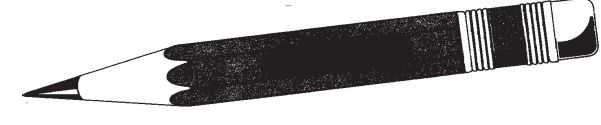
There were bumps along the way, as you would expect with high school kids, but everyone overcame their bump and continued to play

### Letter to the Editor

hard and to the best of their ability. Even though the record doesn't show it, this team proved they are winners by never giving up and playing hard-hitting football.

Good luck to the future teams and coaching staff. Thanks for the season.

Patty Stapp  
Oberlin



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