

Obama takes office amidst high expectations

You don't have to be a liberal or even a Democrat to be proud of your country this week.

Our new president embodies everything that this nation stands for: hard work, independence, human rights for all.

Go ahead and disagree with his policies if you like. This newspaper has and probably will again. No president is perfect.

Barack Obama takes office amidst a euphoric time of high expectations and good will.

He faced crises foreign and domestic as he stepped up to take the oath. It was most of a year before Sept. 11 befell George W. Bush.

The new president does not face the worst of times: Terrorism is less of a threat today than it was eight years ago, the nation's two wars seem mostly won and the economy, while down, is nowhere near a depression.

That doesn't mean the country does not face tough choices. All the billions for bailouts meant to keep big corporations afloat will have to be paid for by someone. So will social programs and the continuing wars.

Soon, the threat will be inflation, not stagnation. But you'd imagine we can deal with that.

President Obama brings an aura of leadership and likability to office that his predecessors lacked. His engaging personality lights up the room when he arrives, and he's able to project that on stage or on television.

Whether he can translate that to true leadership, we'll find out. It won't be easy. John Kennedy found that out; his programs mostly stalled in Congress until after his death. It was

only years later that the world really appreciated how he had faced down the Russians over Cuba.

Still, Mr. Obama has fulfilled the dream that sparked our bloody Civil War, (nearly half a million dead), the long years of reconstruction and segregation, the civil rights movement and the dawn of American acceptance for human diversity.

It may be ironic that he grew up largely outside what we think of as the "black experience" in America, but there is no doubt that his skin color and heritage represent a true shift in this nation. We will not go back to the way things were before.

That does not mean that the battle for human rights is over or that Dr. Martin Luther King's dream has been realized. Many battles will be fought in the days and years ahead. Many people would like to take our rights — not just those of minorities, but of all Americans — in the name of security, progress or peace.

But it does mean that those soldiers who gave the ultimate sacrifice in a string of battles from Charleston Harbor to Normandy and beyond, did not die in vain.

The American dream is alive and well. After 230 years, the foresight of the Founding Fathers, particularly in the Bill of Rights, never seemed greater. The promise of the future never seemed brighter.

We wish Mr. Obama good luck and God-speed. The arena has a way of tarnishing even the brightest star, but we can only hope — all of us — that he lives up to his promise.

— Steve Haynes

Semi-surprise party lots of fun

We managed to pull off a "semi" surprise birthday party for my brother, Bob. He knew an after-church reception had been planned. What he didn't know was his Kansas brothers and sister would be there. Our sister Kathryn, who lives in New York, couldn't make it, but she sent her love. It was so much fun to see each other.

It was our first time together since our brother Don's funeral. When we lined the "boys" up for their traditional group picture, there was a big gap where Don should have been.

Bob's two daughters, Sharon and Jennifer (Ginger), drove in from Chicago. We came to realize that we had not seen them since our mother's funeral 11 years ago. That's too long.

That prompted a discussion about a family reunion. We're looking ahead to a date in 2010 so everyone can plan vacations in advance. We already have the venue in mind. Now, we just need to decide if we'll do our own cooking or let the staff do it for us.

I'm voting for a split: we'll do breakfast and lunch, let the staff do dinner. Dick's wife Donna is the ringleader and I'll be her No. 1 assistant.

The possible numbers are staggering. Six remaining Kelley Kids; five spouses/friends; 26 grandchildren; countless great-grandchildren; and innumerable great-great-grandchildren.

I don't want to wait for another



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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funeral to see everyone again.

— ob —

My sister-in-law Donna Kelley's step-mom, Eva, fell Friday morning and broke her hip. She was taken by ambulance to Hays for surgery Saturday morning. That was postponed until Sunday morning and Donna got a call that Eva had suffered a heart attack after the surgery.

Eva has been Donna's "other Mom" for many years and I've joined their family for lots of Thanksgiving or Christmas dinners. She always made me feel welcome.

While family was gathered in the waiting room, I learned something about Eva I never knew: She is deathly afraid of water.

Her son Dennis said when he was a boy his dad wanted to take him fishing. Eva said, "He can go fishing — just don't let him get close to the water." We all had a good laugh.

— ob —

Before I left to go to Bob's party, I baked Jim a three-layer German chocolate cake. It was from a mix, so don't give me too much credit. Anyway, I called him late Saturday night and asked what he had eaten

for supper. Cake and a glass of milk was his answer.

Sunday afternoon as we were leaving McPherson, I called him again to see how he was doing. He told me he had eaten cake for breakfast. He said it had also been his late night snack the night before, too.

"I don't care if I don't see another piece of cake for quite awhile," he added.

I guess that means I'll have to cook a real meal tonight. Tacos it is.

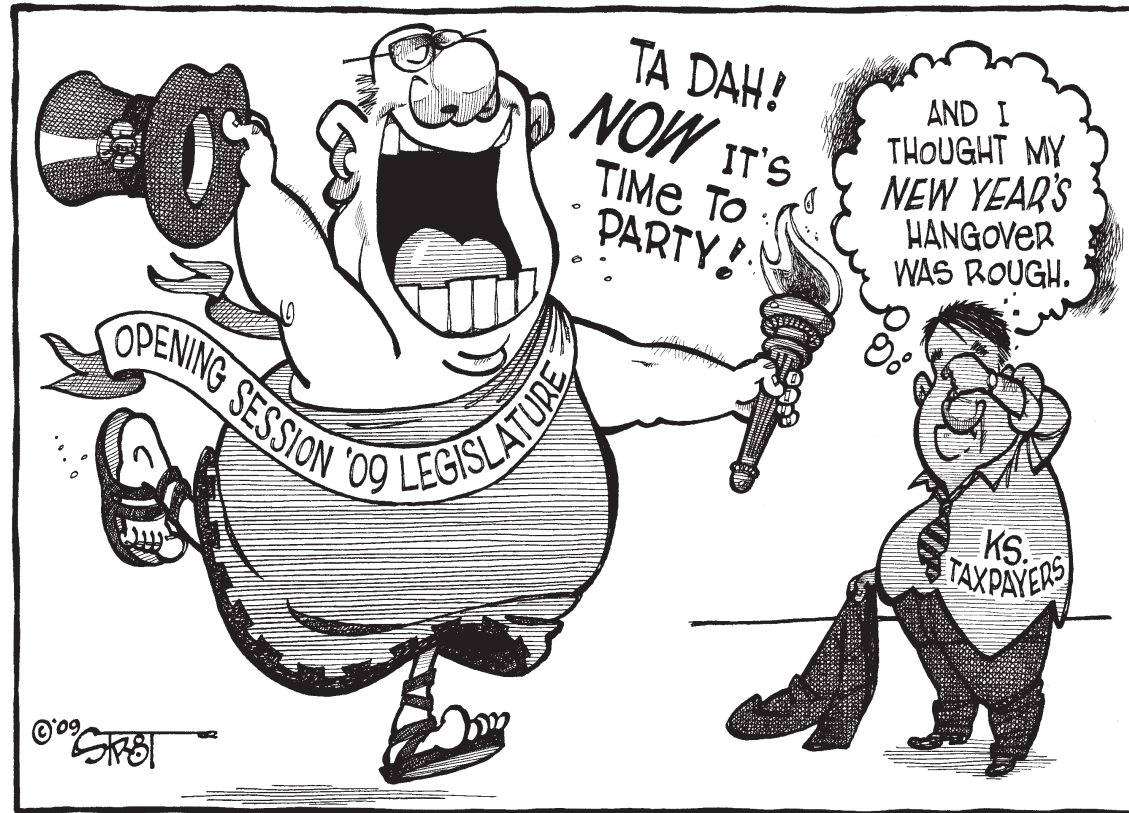
From the Bible

Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily.

Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plentiful in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

Psalms 86:3-5



Healing socks brighten day

"You should sew eyes on them," Sherry said.

Vicky just giggled at my sock-covered hands.

Hey guys, this is serious medicine. I'm taking care of my winter-chapped, wind-burned, sore fingers.

OK, they're right. My hands, covered with a pair of Steve's tan socks, do look a little like sock puppets without any adornment.

I knew I had to do something when I got the crack in my finger and I couldn't get it healed. I put bandages on it, but they'd get wet and I'd toss them and pretty soon I'd notice a bloody fingerprint on something. The crack was bleeding again.

I'm sort of a slow learner. It took more than a week before I decided that just covering up the wounds and putting on hand lotions were not going to work.

I remembered an old pharmacist's trick. Slather your hands with petroleum jelly and put an old pair of cotton gloves or socks on before you go to bed.

Do this for several days, and your hands will be nice and soft — and hopefully — healed.

So, I dug around until I found the jar of petroleum jelly I had gotten



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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a year or so ago to medicate one of the cats.

That's an old veterinarian's trick. You put some petroleum jelly on the end of a cotton swab and touch the pill, which then sticks to the petroleum jelly.

You pry open the cat's mouth and shove the pill down as far as you can. Hopefully, you live through the experience and the pill gets far enough down that it stays.

I tried this a couple of times. The cat won, so I pried her jaws open and shoved the dang pill down her throat with my finger. She swallowed, and the bites healed in a couple of weeks.

Anyway, after getting the petroleum jelly, I rummaged around in Steve's sock drawer for the oldest, crummiest socks he had. I should have gone down to the laundry and picked up a couple of mismatches, but that's hindsight. What I got

was a somewhat worn pair of tan fuzzies.

The only problem was it was 8:30 a.m. and I was going to Concordia to see my mother. Since it takes three hours to get there, I figured, I might as well give my hands their first application of "medicine" while I was driving. After all, who would know or care.

I forgot about the stop in Norton. That's where I got tripped up. I couldn't take off the socks since my hands were as slippery and messy as greased pigs.

The girls got a good laugh out of the deal and it wasn't such a bad thing for me either. I named my hands Righty and Lefty and had a nice conversation with them over the next 2 1/2 hours.

Well, maybe not a conversation. They didn't say much, but they nodded in all the right places and were wonderful listeners.

Lemon crop one of a kind

I feel the need to report on my winter harvest.

OK, so I want to brag a little. As far as I know, my "cropping enterprise," as the feds would call it, is the only one in the county. That's a problem, too.

I'd apply for a subsidy, but I don't think there's a quota or a market order for lemons in Decatur County. Or in Kansas for that matter.

I harvested a record crop of four lemons this winter. Technically, though, one of them is still in the field because I haven't picked it yet.

And I'm happy to report that the summer crop is coming on just fine. While usually not as big as the winter crop, it projects out to four or five lemons this spring — if all the ones that set hang on to harvest.

All this happens out by the kitchen door, where the lemon tree occupies a space by the glass in the winter and lives on the porch all summer.

The winter crop, which sets on in late spring or early summer, should be the big one. Bees come pollinate some of the blossoms. There are hundreds of blooms in the spring, and the scent can be overpowering.

In the winter, there aren't as many blossoms, and I have to pollinate them with my paint brush. While Cynthia claims I make little buzzing sounds while I do the job, that's not true. At least, I don't think so.



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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The winter crop could have been a bin-buster if it hadn't been for the big hailstorm in June. That knocked three green lemons right off the tree, a 43 percent loss.

And there's no crop insurance for lemons, either. (Not that expenses are high. Besides pollination, I have to irrigate the "field." That's about it.)

One of the four survivors had a nasty bruise, but it lived to maturity and made a fine lemonade. The other two that have come in out of the field met a similar fate. These were big, firm four-inch lemons, the kind you pay extra for at the grocery, and had lots of juice.

Despite the losses, this is by far the best crop in quantity and quality we've had in four years of lemon-raising. It all started when I saw the scrawny little plant on sale at a store in Colby. Years ago in Kansas City, I'd grown limes. While the tree eventually died, I got a taste for citrus culture.

And something of a green thumb.

I've learned not to apply much fertilizer. To water, but only when the soil starts to get dry. To be patient and wait until the crop is right — that can take six to nine months from the bloom — and not to feel too bad when some of the babies get knocked off or fall to the floor.

Except when attacked by giant hailstones, a lemon that's going to grow is strongly attached to the tree and won't get bumped off by a careless guest — or batted away by one of the cats. They're pretty hardy.

That means that this month's babies won't be ready to pick until late summer or early fall, I guess. The tree may bloom again by then. It's productive for its size. It's already replaced most of the leaves that got torn up by the hail.

It's not likely that I'll be selling lemons on the street any time soon, though. With a crop of maybe four, that's only lemonade for Cynthia and I three or four times.

But if you ask right, I'd let you look at them. I am kind of a proud papa.

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