

## Incoming governor moves with speed of light

Many Kansans were not prepared for the speed with which our new governor negotiated a compromise allowing one coal-fired power plant to be built near Holcomb in return for concessions to improve the environmental impact of the plant.

The diligence with which Gov. Mark Parkinson moved on the issue contrasted starkly with the two-year standoff engendered by his predecessor, Kathleen Sebelius, who left a record of conflict with the Republican-dominated Legislature. Her seat barely had time to cool as she flew off to be sworn in as secretary of Health and Human Service, and the deal was done.

The agreement was all the more surprising, considering the fact that Gov. Parkinson had served in the Legislature as a Republican not that long ago. Still, many GOP leaders had predicted he would actually be easier for them to deal with than Mrs. Sebelius, a lifelong Democrat.

The former governor, who's now more concerned with Swine Flu than power plants for the time being, had vetoed three bills meant to allow construction of the power plant. Her secretary of health rejected an air quality permit for the plant on the grounds that it would produce carbon dioxide pollution, and she stood squarely against any compromise that would have allowed it to be built.

It took just a matter of days for the new governor to show a different style. Maybe he is more effective because he has promised not to run for a full term, or maybe his experience as a lawyer and legislator taught him the art of compromise.

In any event, he and plant backers seem to have come to an agreement that is good for all concerned. The plant will be built, assuming everything goes as planned; western Kansas will get badly needed jobs; and rural electric customers in Kansas, Colorado and Texas will have the power they need.

Under the agreement, the owner, Sunflower Electric Power Corp. of Hays, said it will install "unprecedented" carbon mitigation to counter the plant's emissions. The plant,

the second on Sunflower's Holcomb site, is expected to create up to 1,500 construction jobs and nearly 200 permanent jobs.

"We're bringing people together to create hundreds of jobs, increase our renewable energy production and ensure a comprehensive energy plan for our state," Parkinson said in a statement. "Prior to this agreement, the Legislature was at an impasse on energy issues. With this agreement, we can start to move forward."

The agreement hinges on the Legislature passing a Comprehensive Energy Package proposed by Parkinson and Sebelius in January. Sunflower said that the company and its partners — Tristate Generation and Transmission Association of Colorado, Golden Spread Electric Cooperative of Texas and Midwest Energy of Hays, all consumer-owned cooperatives — will install, operate or purchase Kansas wind resources equal to 20 percent of the new plant's output, or 179 megawatts.

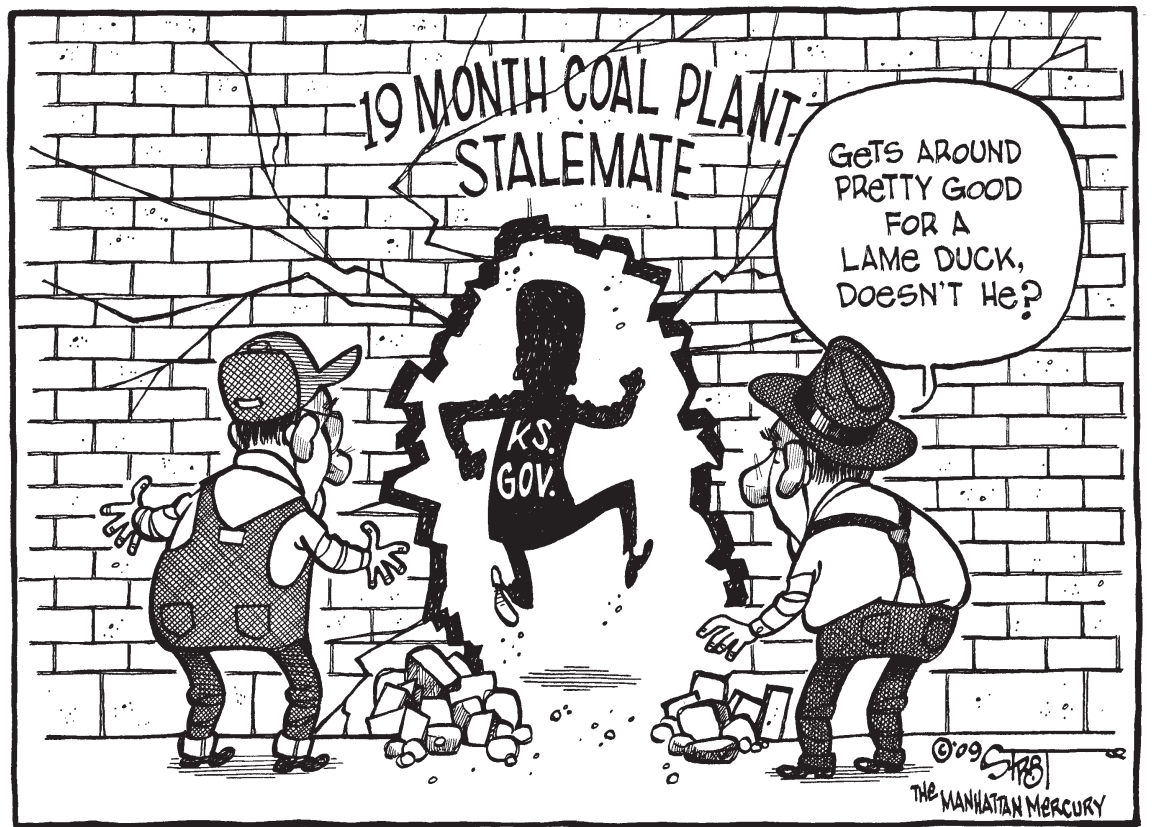
Sunflower also promised to add renewable energy to its portfolio five years sooner than planned, use "biomass" for 10 percent of the plant's fuel if possible, build two transmission lines to move coal and wind power to electricity-hungry Colorado and stop using two older plants.

Holcomb 2 will cost an estimated \$2.2 billion to build. Sunflower had estimated that construction of the previously planned two 700-megawatt plants would have cost \$3.8 billion. Holcomb 1 is a 360-megawatt coal-fired power plant.

While the fear of global warming from carbon emissions is real, Sunflower says it can capture or offset almost half the increase. Many arguments against the plant were spurious at best: opponents claimed that most of the power would be exported while pollution stayed in Kansas, for instance, but the same could be said of any product the state produces, from wheat to airplanes to cars.

This agreement is an impressive accomplishment and a fine way to start a new administration. Hats off to our new governor.

— Steve Haynes



## Cats, dogs dislike robot 1812

1812 buzzed, whirred, went around the corner and headed straight for Louie, the cat, who hissed and backed up.

The daily cleanup ritual was underway at eldest daughter's house, and her three cats and two dogs weren't any more approving of the process than they had been a week previously when 1812 first arrived.

Our son-in-law got a deal on a used Roomba, a saucer-shaped floor-cleaning robot. He brought it home.

Daughter is delighted. Now instead of having to get out the vacuum to deal with the tons of animal hair left all over her floors by her menagerie, she hits a button each morning and the little robot comes out from under an end table and spends about an hour going over her floors in a seemingly haphazard — but apparently effective — pattern.

The robot looks a little like a round laptop computer on wheels. It has a button on top you push to get it started. It then scuttles around the house, over entryways and rugs, vacuuming and brushing the floor. It goes into corners and under any piece of furniture where in can fit, making a quiet mechanical whirring sound. When it's done, it returns to its docking station, which is at an outlet under an end table, and settles



### Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
c.haynes@nwkansas.com

down to relax and recharge.

My daughter loves it.

I love it. I want one. I need one. I will have one.

My son-in-law named his little friend 1812 because that was the name of a robot in some movie or television show. A friend, who got one at the same time, named his Sonny, apparently the name of the machine in the movie "I Robot." (And iRobot is the name of the company that makes the Roomba.)

Son-in-law, a programmer, says he's going to teach 1812 the overture of the same name. I figure that the cannon fire could come when 1812 returns to his nook under the end table — or maybe to clear the animals out when he goes to work.

There are apparently hundreds of photos on the Internet of children, cats and kittens riding on or sleeping on working Roombas. However, in the Haynes-Wilets household in Georgia, no one is going to be getting a free ride. The dogs both

weigh close to 100 pounds and the cats — Louie, Sabine and Marcell — aren't having anything to do with the little interloper.

The other night we caught son-in-law using 1812 to clean out the back end of his Explorer.

"This is so going to be in my column," I said with a grin.

My column is sort of infamous among the children, especially the sons in law.

He just grinned. He knows he struck gold with this gift — his wife loves it, his mother and mother-in-law both want one and his sister's already gone out and bought a fancier model.

Now, mind you, Christmas and my birthday have already passed, but if a Roomba doesn't appear in my house by July, Steve's getting one for his birthday.

What! Blackmail? How can you say that? I wouldn't think of it.

## Group really might be angels

Now, don't tell my kids that I've done this, again, but, we stopped to help some travelers. You've heard the expression, haven't you, about when you help a stranger you might be "entertaining an angel"?

Sunday, Jim and I spotted five bicyclists stopped at a highway intersection. On our return, the group had traveled less than a mile and we stopped to see if they were having trouble of some kind. Yes, there had been a flat tire, but it was fixed. We inquired as to their destination and the answer was, "Wherever the Lord leads us."

We were instantly drawn to these young people who, on first glance, might have appeared odd in their ultra-modest attire. The women all had long, unbraided hair and wore long skirts and long-sleeved blouses. The men, all bearded, wore tunic-like tops over long-sleeved shirts and trousers.

After a brief road-side conversation, we offered them a shady rest



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
quality-pro@webtv.net

stop at The Haven — the hospitality house we help operate for inmate's visiting families. They were appreciative and asked if the other members of their group, who were at different stages along the highway, could also take refuge in the cool backyard. It wasn't long before 21 road-weary souls had found rest, water and comfort.

They were curious about agriculture, intelligent, energetic and enthusiastic, and some spoke languages other than English. When we offered to have the group to spend the night, it was accepted with great anticipation. Not only of hot show-

ers, but of the kitchen with an oven where fresh whole-wheat bread could be baked.

We learned that they belonged to a Christian group that travels by bicycle to spread the Word and do service. When we left them, the women were locating cleaning supplies and the men were preparing to paint the exterior of the house, both badly needed projects.

Had we not stopped, we would have missed meeting these wonderful people. And, who knows, they really might be angels.

## Junk journalists gain ground

In our media-saturated world, nothing happens in a vacuum.

If a child falls sick of some new disease in Georgia, a CNN camera team will be there this afternoon. A reporter will be standing in front of the child's home or school or church by nightfall.

If some crazy person snaps and kills two or three co-workers, Fox News will have tape rolling in half an hour. An affiliate will have a news team in place down the street before the next newscast. Helicopter shots will show police crouched outside the building.

If a bomb goes off in a crowded market in Baghdad, a local crew — blonde-haired, white-skinned network reporters are no longer allowed out of the Green Zone — will be on the scene in half an hour, beaming images of the bodies straight to New York.

It's all a far cry from the days when five bells on the wire service machines alerted the telegraph editor of your local newspaper that something was happening.

Today, the pictures will go on the air as soon as a circuit can be cleared. Airborne reporters transmit police chases in progress; by nightfall, Nancy Grace will be showing pictures of the victims and talking about how to prosecute the shooter, kidnapper, funny uncle or whatever.

We have more media than we have news, and the problem is bound to get worse. All-news television, cable and radio channels, websites and the wire services compete for a limited amount of breaking stories. Once a juicy one turns up, they all sink their teeth in until it is chewed over and tasteless.

Then we have the spectacle of the same reporters trying to come up with a fresh lead hour after hour, week after week, until the case goes cold. Or a new clue revives it. Again and again.

The discovery of a newly mutated influenza strain emanating from pig farms in Mexico is only the latest bandwagon for the media to jump on, over report and then trample in the mud as the crews rush on to the next big story.

In a case like this, it makes no difference how likely the fears of officials are to become a reality. The fears themselves justify the media feeding frenzy.



### Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

There is a source, a story, a ready market for the reporting. And so off goes the herd.

The next decade may be marked with an increase of this kind of pack journalism as the big city newspapers either fold or contract and the network news operations struggle to remain relevant.

As the opening of New Media channels on phones and portable devices creates even more ways to distribute news, agencies will have to have something to feed into them. They will no longer be able to "scrape" their headlines out of the reporting of respected newspaper journalists, because no one will be paying them to report.

And what already appears to be a vast wasteland of media — cable, web, wireless, broadcast, print — will surely become more vast — and vastly more underfed.

We can only shudder to think what kind of reporting it will take to fill vast new wastelands with something to soak up the minutes and fill the pages.

Money is the real problem, though. As print publications lose

favor to the Internet, the websites lose their ready source of information. And as networks lose the ability to pay reporters and camera crews to do real news, the sources for legitimate reporting will become fewer and fewer.

While the Internet may be capable of killing the revenue sources most big news organizations depend on today — advertising, national and local — no one has yet to figure out how to finance reporting from pitifully small Internet ad revenues.

So expect more junk news, not less. More instant crisis, and less analysis of real problems. More fluff and less substance. And get used to it.

### From the Bible

How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.

Daniel 4:3

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170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243

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

E-mail: oberlin.herald@nwkansas.com

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