

## School board was right to question lawsuit bid

The Oberlin School Board made the right choice, in our opinion, when it questioned the wisdom of joining in a new round of lawsuits by Kansas school districts against the Legislature.

While the last court battle did result in forcing the Legislature to give schools more money, it did so only at a cost of millions in taxpayers' money. It brought about a corruption of the government process where the courts wound up telling the Legislature how much to spend.

And as we all learned in high-school civics classes, that's not the way it's supposed to work. Several school board members said as much at their meeting last week.

In any event, the victory by a group of "medium-sized" districts was short-lived. Faced with a rapid decline in state tax revenue in the national recession, the governor and Legislature have been cutting programs in all departments and parts of state government. Schools were protected from most cuts, but wound up losing almost \$90 million.

There is another problem.

A new lawsuit might result in an order to give schools more money, but the state is broke. Where would the cash come from?

The Legislature would have little alternative but to raise taxes. And with thousands of Kansans out of work, and most of us hurting after two years of economic distress, who can

afford more taxes?

The attitude among some school administrators seems to be, "Why should we care? We want the money."

No one doubts that Kansas schools could use more. But anyone with any sense could see that right now, the state doesn't have any.

The spectacle of school districts, basically are units of state government, using state tax money to sue the state is unseemly. It's wrong.

It's our money they're using, basically, to sue us and force a tax increase on all Kansas citizens.

This year, apparently, the group behind the lawsuits, which calls itself "Schools for Fair Funding," wants every Kansas school district to join in a new lawsuit. If anyone really benefits from this, it won't be taxpayers or, in the long run, students and teachers.

It'll be the sharp lawyers who are promoting the idea of another suit. They stand to make millions, and with that kind of fee in sight, they'll be able to pay the new, higher tax rates.

The rest of us won't be so lucky.

It's nice to see, though, that Oberlin board members not only see the problems here, but care about the impact of a lawsuit on taxpayers and our system of state government. We urge them to stay clear of this mess.

— Steve Haynes



## Mouse loses battle with cat

The intruder entered the dark house quietly. There was good stuff to be had in here.

He slipped along the wall as silently as possible. But not quiet enough.

The guard sensed something was wrong and left her post to patrol the perimeter. She had been brought in especially for this task: to keep intruders from getting the good stuff.

She struck. There was a short scuffle and it was all over. The intruder was dead. The guard returned to her post.

It was about 4 a.m. when Molly Monster licked Steve's nose and purred. That was about the only part of him she could get at, since it gets cold in Colorado at night in a house with no heat.

She purred. She licked. She got kicked off the bed, so she curled up in her usual spot and went back to sleep. After all, she's a cat. That's what she does.

We found the dead mouse on the floor in the morning.

"Good cat, good cat," we both said.

Molly was no longer interested. She had done her duty. She had protected her domain from intrud-



## Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
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ers. She was ready for breakfast and then, perhaps, a nap. After all, she's a cat.

That left me to get rid of the deceased, and carefully, because it was a deer mouse, the kind that are supposed to spread the deadly hantavirus. A hantamouse, if you will. No ordinary domestic mouse.

This is the second time in three years that a cat has presented us with a mouse during our fall trip to Colorado. It's one of the reasons they come along.

The first time we were protected against the horror of mousehood, it was April Alice who left us a trophy in the middle of the night.

April is our best traveling cat. She doesn't particularly like the 10- to 11-hour journey cooped up in a cat carrier, but she endures it stoically.

Molly complains for the first couple of hours. The first few trips,

it was loud, demanding cries. These days, it's just soft complaints. After awhile, however, she just goes to sleep. After all, she's a cat.

I always wait until the last minute to put the cat in the carrier, since the trip is so long and they won't eat, drink or relieve themselves during the journey. Believe me, I've tried to provide these amenities. I've just ended up with a mess or a cat under a car — or one memorable time, a wrecked train. Don't ask.

This year, April got a good look at the stuff I had piled in the kitchen to take with me and promptly disappeared. Molly, on the other hand was purring and rubbing my ankles.

Guess who got a trip to Colorado, where she spent most of her time finding sunny spots to sleep? After all, she's a cat. And a fair mouser at that.

## Fishing, a great way to relax

The rise is a little slower, the strike a little softer than just a few weeks ago.

Sometimes, the fish just misses the fly, and you have to cast it back into the hole for another pass.

It's October. The water is low and clear. And cold.

Instead of fishing at daybreak or dusk, you have to go right after lunch, when the river warms up enough to get the trout going.

Still, they're not moving that fast. It takes even more patience to work a fly in October.

But then, with a flash of orange and green, a nice little brookie takes your lure.

Nothing fancy. No dancing on the water or leaping into the air as in summer. Just a gentle strike, and you let the fish run a hair. Then set the hook.

October weather can be spectacular in the mountains. With elk season just a couple of days away, it can be the best fishing weather of the year. Or sometimes the worst.

This time, it's the best. Highs 50 to 60, sunny, not much wind.

Perfect for casting a fly on the big river, or up the side canyons above town.

But the big browns on the river will be spent from spawning, their flesh soggy and unappealing. Better to stick to the creeks, where the brook trout dominate.

The brookies are not too big — 10 inches is about tops — but they're feisty and even this late in the year, pretty hungry. Most rise on the first drift through a hole and at least make a stab at the fly.

Some just can't connect. They strike, they nibble, they rise, then



## Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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they settle down in the hole and just watch the fly. In the clear water, you can see them fan their fins to hold station. Nothing gonna happen here.

But the next cast, the next hole: bam!

You can't worry about much when you're casting a fly. You have to pick your spot, then hit it. If the fish is going to strike, usually it happens right ... about ... now. A hungry trout won't wait to see if somebody else is going to eat it's supper.

Then it's a matter of timing. Set the hook too soon, the fish will get off. Worse yet, you'll nick its mouth and it'll go hide. If you're lucky, you can make another pass and the trout will come back for another try.

You have to watch the fly, be ready to react. When you get the timing down, you catch some fish. Gently remove the hook. Release the trout for another day.

There's time to admire the deep blue fall sky, the rocks and the trees on the canyon rim high above. The old mines clinging to the cliffs, where miners rode ore buckets to work at the start of a shift and back down at the end of the day.

Time to admire the day, but you have to watch your footing and keep your balance. In cold water, you

don't want to fall. There's a lot to think about, but no time for worry. The cares of the world just seem to fade away.

You don't even have to be catching fish. Just working the river on a day like this is like therapy.

Too soon, the sun starts to slip behind the rim. It may be only 3:30, but the shadows come early at the bottom of the canyon. The water will cool off, and the fish will stop biting.

Besides, you can't see much in the shadows. It's more guesswork than aim. Time to go home with a few nice ones for dinner. Out in the valley, there's plenty of time to sit in the sun and admire the day some more. And then to clean the fish.

This is the way to live. Anyone who doesn't fish has too much stress in his, or her, life.



## Losing is always hard on us

Life is full of disappointments.

My 10-year old granddaughter, Taylor, just experienced her first real one. She was not elected president of her school's student body.

Her mother called to let me know. I asked if I should talk to Taylor.

"Maybe not right now," said Kara.

So I waited until Sunday afternoon to make the call. Taylor answered and I told her I was sorry to hear she didn't win.

"Oh Grandma," she said, "It wouldn't be so bad if the boy who won even had a clue what he was doing. He won because he told a couple of jokes."

Yes, Taylor. Welcome to the wonderful world of politics.

— ob —

Love is always a good topic for discussion. I told an elderly widow friend that I was trying to play matchmaker between two divorced people we both know.

"Don't even bother," she advised me. "He's like me... still in love with the person he married."

"That's too bad," I said. "It must be hard to still love someone who doesn't love you anymore. At least when your spouse dies, it's over."

Then I thought back to my own divorce. At the time, I wished he would have just died. At least I would have gotten some respect and the insurance. A divorce is the



## Out Back

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death of a marriage — there's just no burial. And, you still have to deal with each other whether you want to or not.

Wow! That was a quick trip from love to hate. Unfortunately, it's a fine line between the two. Another sad truth is that there is no hate like the hate between two people who used to love each other.

— ob —

I know it must be getting close to the time we leave for Mexico because orders for Mexican vanilla and sombreros are coming in. It's time to shake the sand out of our sleeping bags and locate the sun-block. Even though this is the cool time of year in Juarez, the sun can still scorch your skin. And I plan to come back as lily-white as I went down.

The family we've been assigned to includes a father and his three children; two daughters and a son. He earns about \$65 a week and they live in a one-room house made of cinder block.

He and his family are just now starting to believe they might really get a new home. It won't be real to them until our team unloads at the site to begin building. Our team is small this year, so it might take us four days instead of the normal three to finish. But the family will have a warm, safe home to call their own before we leave. That's a promise.

## From the Bible

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

2 Corinthians 4:8-10

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## Kansas senator against 'tax-trade'

To the Editor:

The latest "cap-and-tax" proposal introduced by my Senate colleagues from Massachusetts and California might sound pretty good on the coasts, but to those of us who live and work in Kansas and across the Midwest, this bill would raise the price of gasoline, diesel, fertilizer, natural gas and coal.

If this bill were to pass, Kansas, and all Americans, including those in cities that depend on the food and fiber we grow, are likely to see an

## Letter to the Editor

increase in our utility bills, transportation costs and basic consumer goods in exchange for little to no reduction in carbon emissions.

It is not in the best interests of the United States to undertake mandatory carbon reductions until developing countries like China, India and Brazil agree to the same. As a

member of the Senate Agriculture and Senate Finance committees, I will continue to fight against such proposals that limit our ability to compete in a global marketplace, ration domestic energy and result in greater government bureaucracy.

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts  
Dodge City

## Write

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