

## Text messages now banned while driving

Some days, you have to wonder what those people in Topeka are thinking about when they write our laws.

Starting on Thursday, for instance, Kansas will have a law banning people from sending or reading text messages while driving. However, police can't write any tickets until Jan. 1. Only warnings.

If texting, or cell phone use in general, was really that much of a problem, how can we afford to wait half a year?

The truth is, only about 6,000 accidents a year are attributed to "distracted" drivers from all causes, including phones and texting, in the entire country. The number of injuries is minimal. But sending texts sure seems dangerous, so we have a law against it.

That's bad? Look at the list of exemptions: The law excludes police officers and other emergency services workers. You'd think that if texting was dangerous, the last people you'd want doing it are people driving emergency vehicles. Go figure.

Ordinary citizens can send and receive texts when stopped off the roadway, when receiving emergency or traffic and weather alerts, to report crimes, or to prevent "imminent injury" or property damage.

This is a "feel-good" law. Emotionally, everyone agrees that texting while driving must be bad, though there's no actual evidence. So, pass a law against it, but hey, it's no big deal.

In the same bill, at the last moment, the state Legislature stuck a provision banning anything from covering all or part of a license plate, either a clear cover that interferes with readability or something opaque.

All or part ... that must include those obnoxious dealer brackets that cover up the state and other information. We've always said, "there outta be a law...." But still, not exactly a public emergency.

The worst thing about that provision is, apparently, it was added at the last minute in a House-Senate conference committee. It was never given a committee hearing, never opened up for public comment, just rammed through both houses when everyone wanted to go home.

That's a poor way to make public policy. Surely some groups — the auto dealers who hand out those plate holders come to mind — would have objected at an open hearing.

Laws should be made out in full view, with plenty of time for comment and advice. Not late at night, at the end of a session, when the people who might care are not listening, maybe even not present.

But that's what passes for good government in most states, even in the U.S. Congress.

But we digress. If you think some of the traffic laws are silly and riddled with exemptions, there's the "statewide smoking ban" that allows smoking in state-owned casinos.

Hey, if it's bad, it's bad.

That law will be tied up in court for some time, by the way, since owners of a handful of bars and bingo parlors think it's unfair to exempt the state and not them. They sued, and who could blame them?

But nobody said laws have to make sense.

— Steve Haynes



## Green has turned to amber

I won the bet. Last week I told Jim, "By Friday, I bet there will be someone in the area who is cutting wheat."

Sure 'nuff, there have been reports of several farmers doing test cuts and some are into full-blown harvest. For two weeks, we have been watching wheat fields along the highway practically "turn" before our eyes. Every day, the fields would lose more of their green cast and turn more golden. This week, the fields truly reflect the "amber waves of grain".

— ob —

My granddaughter, Taylor, 11, left Tuesday morning for a two-week educational trip to Canada. She was one of 40 youngsters in the Dallas area nominated and chosen to go on this expedition.

This has been in the works for almost a year and I'm still not sure if I'm ready for her to take off for that long and to be that far away. Taylor, of course, is rearin' to go. If she weren't such a mature 11 year old, I might be even more nervous. I know it's not up to me, but I'm excited and scared for her, all at the same time.

Perhaps her parents don't realize it yet, but this is the first step on her journey away from them and to who



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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knows where.

— ob —

Our young friends, Jenn and Sean, drove in from Colorado to pick up another antique car they bought a few months ago. They have been our best customers and have become friends in the process.

They came early Monday morning and we all sat down to eat my version of breakfast burritos: Some sausage, some finely diced potatoes and onions and, finally, scrambled eggs poured over everything and served on a fried corn tortilla.

Sean must have a cast-iron stomach, because he put more jalapeños on his burrito than I've ever seen anyone in Mexico do. As Jim would say, "That'll put hair on your chest."

I might say that would burn it off.

— ob —

Jenn and Sean were ready to leave

when Jim said he would like to show them some old horse-drawn machinery. Jenn's ears perked up and she said, "Horse-drawn? You bet." She's a horse-crazy girl married to a veterinarian/farrier who would give her the moon if he could.

Jim and Sean are still discussing buying and selling other vehicles. Maybe even tractors. Sure hope they strike a deal so we can see those kids one more time. They've invited us to their spread, so we might just have to make a little road trip.

### From the Bible

Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the LORD. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD. *Jeremiah 23:24 (NIV)*

## Storm wasn't so little after all

I don't know if the new pond and wetlands out at Sappa Park will pass muster with the city, the state water engineer, the environmentalists or with Pheasants Forever, which has put so much into the project.

It looks pretty good to me, but I'm no expert.

What I do know is that it passed muster with Annie, our water-crazy Brittany spaniel.

We were out walking at the lake the other night, and when we got to the pond, she jumped right in, swam around, got out and shook herself off.

So I figure it passed the first inspection. It's Brittany-approved. But then, Annie would jump in a hog wallow if it was damp.

The pond was full last week, and it looked pretty at sunset.

Dave Bose probably didn't think so. He's the dirt contractor on the job, and he still has several feet of earth to move from the more shallow south side of the wetlands. Whenever it dries out.

The water in the main part by the outlet looked plenty deep, ready for fish stocking, though it may be awhile before anyone gets around to that. Insect life and frogs already seem to have settled in.

The berm trail is severed right now until Mr. Bose gets some dirt on top of a tube which will connect the two parts of the pond. You'd get wet and muddy if you tried to



### Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
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cross today.

Most of the other trails were high and dry despite the rains last week and this, showing the wisdom of raising them out of the flood plain near the pond.

The water is receding, and in a week or two — barring another deluge — Mr. Bose ought to be able to get to the dirt again. He'll need at least a couple of weeks to finish, but the pond and wetlands should be ready to go by fall.

The water backs up beyond the shelterhouse to the south, and quite a ways up the creek to the west. The deep channel, shaded by trees here and there, should provide some good fishing holes as time goes by. It also might attract some wood ducks.

The area around the dam will see the most fishing activity. Rick Pauls with Pheasants Forever says he wants to sink some trees in the deep parts to provide "structure" to shelter fish. It'll make a nice addition to the park's recreation portfolio.

The pond project seems to be

working out nicely. Raising the trails provided a good use for dirt removed from the pond and wetlands. And whoever figured out how to use the original outlet tower to limit the water level by cutting holes in the concrete, that was elegant engineering.

The park itself continues to draw more users. We hadn't been out for a couple of weeks, so we did a couple of tours over the weekend. The only drawback was that with all the rain, the ticks seem to be hanging on into the summer and the trail mowing is behind in places.

I had to pick four off of me the other night, though Cynthia had not a one. And I wondered why she was letting me lead the way.



## Wetlands are Annie approved

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### Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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### Photo Policy

The Oberlin Herald wants to emphasize photos of people doing things in the community. If you know of an event or news happening that we should attend, please call 475-2206.

Please be sure to allow a couple of days' notice so we can arrange to be there.

Space in the paper is limited and so is the time of our staff, so we may not be able to get to every event, but we will try.

Because space is so limited, we cannot run team or group photos, any pictures of people lined up or of people passing checks, certificates and the like. (We will always try to make room for a story about any of these events, however.)

We do run wedding and engagement pictures and "mug" shots with stories and obituaries, when they are provided to us. Please remember that we need a clear, sharp picture. Dark or fuzzy prints

will not work.

We cannot return photos unless you submit a self-addressed, stamped envelope with clear instructions for return. Other photos submitted may be picked up at our office within two weeks. After that, they will be disposed of.

Laser proofs of photos which have run in The Herald are available, first come, first served.

### Write

The Oberlin Herald encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

Mail letters to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan., 67749, or by e-mail to oberlinherald@nwkansas.com.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yours from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form

and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses which do not pertain to a public issue.

