

Are tea-party hopefuls nuts, or next big thing?

Commentators decry the success of the “tea party” movement across the country, predicting that it will mean defeat for the Republican Party in some races this fall and doom for the country if the movement ever succeeds.

Tea-party candidates are portrayed as right-wing zealots unfit for office. The people drawing the portraits are, however, mostly liberals in both parties who’re on the losing side of this argument. Of course they think these people are dangerous.

They may be right about some of the candidates. Dr. Rand Paul, who won the GOP Senate primary in Kentucky, came across as an undisciplined thinker. (He’s the son of Texas Rep. Ron Paul, a long-time libertarian who ran for the Republican presidential nomination, but the father has a more sober image.)

Most of these candidates have in common a decided bias against the “tax and spend” philosophy so prevalent among both parties in Washington today. Most exhibit a refreshing lack of social-conservative baggage: abortion, religion, prayer, immigration and other “hot button” issues don’t mean as much to them, though we suppose you could find tea partiers who talk about every issue.

But the genesis of the movement is in its name, taken from the historic Boston Tea Party, a colonial anti-tax movement.

Tea partiers and tea-party candidates worry more about big, growing government in Washington and the statehouse than they do anything else. They rail at the burden of heavy taxation and big spending. And they see high taxes and big spending not as fiscal policy or a tool for re-election, but as just plain wrong.

Of course, the spenders see this as dangerous. They love spending and fear restraint.

Perhaps it is simplistic to think you could just go to Washington and vote against high

taxes and big deficits. Maybe even tea-party candidates will want to spend money to get re-elected, once they’ve seen the mountaintop.

But for now, several of these “outsider” candidates are riding high: Sharron Angle in Nevada, Christine O’Donnell in Delaware, Joe Miller from Salina in Alaska, Christine O’Donnell in Delaware, Ron Johnson in Wisconsin, Ken Buck in Colorado.

Many are inexperienced, say things they shouldn’t, making themselves easy targets for party regulars, who are only too happy to torpedo them. But if they are a danger to anyone, it’s the leadership-bound regular Republicans, especially the incumbents.

In Alaska, Sen. Lisa Murkowski — after losing to Mr. Miller in the primary — promised to run as a write-in candidate next month, perhaps giving the Democrats an edge. It comes down to that: hang on, undercut the winner, let the Democrats win, rather than lose control.

How those who won the primaries will fare in the fall against Democrats remains to be seen. Undoubtedly, they’ll be smeared as wackos who would ruin the republic.

But with the level of spending today, with the threat of higher taxes and more deficits, with the culture of incumbents buying their way to lifetime seats, what’s left to ruin?

Some of the tea party candidates doubtless deserve to lose. Some won’t. Their popularity already has pushed the rest of their party to the right. Come January, it’ll be interesting to see who’s organizing the House — and who’s sworn in for the Senate.

The country does not need any more nut cases and wackos in Washington; enough of those already. But we do need more people who value liberty and Constitutional restraint, honesty and integrity over re-election at all costs. — *Steve Haynes*

Tiny zucchini makes her liar

“I’ve been lying to people,” she shouted.

Huh? I should have known. I was speculating on what felonies she’s been accusing me of when she waved me over to the garden.

“Look,” she said, smiling. “This is not a yellow squash.”

In fact, I had noticed that plant when I was picking squash earlier in the day. Its leaves were a little darker, a little rougher, than the surrounding yellow squash.

It’s been an unusual harvest this year: Usually, the yellow squash dies off and the zucchini just grows and grows, producing mounds of long, green fruit.

Usually, we plant two or three hills of each type and the bugs get a couple of them. Usually, they get the yellow squash.

Not this year. Cynthia mixed up the seeds and planned rows of plants all mixed together. Squash plants came up everywhere, and for a while, we harvested both types.

We like that because having both means you can make more colorful dishes. They taste about the same, the texture is similar, but the colors help dress up the plate.

At first, the two seemed about equally productive. We picked several small, firm zucchini and



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

some cute little crook-necked yellows. Cynthia sliced them and made saute and melange and stir fry. Life was good.

Then the zucchini started to die off. Production all but ceased. She had to borrow zucchini to make her annual summer quota of bread for the sons-in-law. They both love her zucchini bread; it’s one of the recipes she uses to cement her status as a good, if slightly daffy, mother-in-law.

They got green squash in their zucchini bread. Green squash and real sugar. Not me. I got yellow squash and fake sweetener. The bread was great, so I’m not complaining, but you do notice the yellow “zucchini” in the loaf. It tastes the same; it just looks wrong.

But imagine the embarrassment for a veteran gardener, 40 years’ experience, in having to beg for zucchini. Most people have to leave the stuff in unlocked cars.

And now she’ll have to admit that she wasn’t exactly telling the truth. Her zucchini plants, it seems, did not all die. One or more apparently were only on hiatus. They’re back now.

In the cool of September, they’re blooming and first one, then another little zucchini clings to a flower. When we got back from a trip to Omaha, the first one was ready to pick. Under another rogue plant, she found a dark green war club. Still another plant had a baby zucchini.

My, you have to watch those things.

So, just when we’d settled down to borrowed zucchini, yellow rind in the squash bread and monochrome mixtures, we’ve got to learn to deal with green squash again.

It shouldn’t be too bad.

One little plant can’t produce too much squash. Can it?



Vaunted recipe not very good

Yes, Jim got “Chocoflaned” last Monday but, I was the one with egg on my face.

One of my many faults is that I can become single-minded. When I get an idea in my head, nothing will satisfy me until I have achieved my goal. It might be the way I want my flower bed to look, it might be the exact shade of color I want in the dining room drapes or, it might be making a certain recipe. Right now!

That was my frame of mind when I decided to make Chocoflan. Never mind that I didn’t have a bundt pan. I knew my friend Jody did. A quick phone call and I had a bundt pan in my hands, secured with a promise to share the finished product with the lender.

Oh, the cake, topped with a layer of flan, turned out beautifully. It looked perfect. It was a deep, rich color and the flan was set perfectly, with the Mexican caramel “tajeta” dripping down the sides.

But, that is where reality took over and the idealistic dream ended. It simply did not taste good. It wasn’t bad, just not the chocolate delight I had imagined. Jim dutifully ate a piece, as did I, son James tried it and agreed with his dad: I shouldn’t make it again. Poor Jody accepted a plate of four slices along with the return of her bundt pan. I didn’t wait around for her to sample it, and now she probably doesn’t know how to tell me what her assessment was. It’s OK, Jody. I didn’t like it either.



Out Back

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

—ob—

Jim has lived with my single-mindedness for 16 years. He knows that I would rather do without something than settle for something I don’t want.

Take our floor covering, for instance. Or rather, our lack of floor covering. I have it in my head that I want hardwood floors in the library, office, dining room and kitchen. The rooms are contiguous, and I want the uniformity. I don’t want vinyl; I don’t want indoor/outdoor carpeting; I want hardwood. I also don’t want debt, so I’ll live with painted floors and throw rugs until we can pay for the floors I want.

—ob—

Speaking of debt, it’s the one thing that can get a young family (or an old one, for that matter) into trouble quicker than anything. I subscribe to the Dave Ramsey (a Christian financial counselor) school of thought. Get out of debt as fast as you can and then live within your means. It’s a concept most people have trouble adapting to their lives.

His plan is simple: Take “baby

steps” to get out of debt. List your debts from smallest to largest. (Forget about which debt has the highest interest rate.) Then, attack the smallest debt with every spare dime you can throw at it, while at the same time paying the minimum on all your other debts. As soon as the smallest bill is paid, roll what you had been paying on it into the next smallest debt and attack it. And so on, and so on.

The logic behind this method is that you need small successes to continue. Most families could be debt free in a couple of years with this method.

The bottom line is, we all waste money on some things and just plain spend it foolishly on others. I know it irks me to hear people complain about not having any money as they puff on a cigarette. I’m at the point where I would rather be a saver than a spender.

My mother thought the world’s financial woes could be fixed if we all gave up soda pop. She may have been right.

Feds expand role in education

The Constitution of the United States makes no mention of public education, but the 10th Amendment gives the states those rights not specifically mentioned in the Constitution.

It wasn’t until the 20th century that the federal government started “programs” to bolster public education. The government first stepped in after World War II with Impact Aid to help areas that had government installations (such as Army bases) near them with the increase of school children.

The Cold War brought about the first law that affected all schools. In 1958, Congress enacted the National Defense Education Act in response to the Soviets launching Sputnik.

The Civil Rights movements of the 1960s and ’70s brought about numerous laws that affected public education. In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Act created the first comprehensive set of laws intended to help schools in urban and rural areas of the country.

This act is still the federal law covering public schools in our country. President George W. Bush was the first president to put a new name to the law with his No Child Left Behind Act.

Not only was he the first president to put a new name to the law — he was the first to put punitive consequences in the law for schools who did not meet federally approved standards. Each state was still responsible for setting those standards; however, the Department of Education was charged with approving them.

Although each state had approved standards, those varied widely in their rigor and accountability. The “ESEA,” or No Child Left Behind, was scheduled for revision last year. With the upcoming election, Congress chose to delay the revisions — and the act has still not been changed today.

The coming of the Obama administration has brought a new level of federal intervention into public education, however. Even without the passing of a new law, the federal government has pumped billions of dollars into public schools in a host of new programs. What the revised



Red Devils Diary

By Duane Dorshorst
ddorshorst@usd294.org

law will be like when it is finally finished — optimistic estimates are late 2011 or 2012 — is anybody’s guess, but we are fairly sure that “Common Core Standards” will be a part of it.

What started as a project of the National Governor’s Conference has grown into a federal initiative that will become the basis of what is taught in every state. Kansas is one of the few states that has not approved these Common Core Standards; however, that approval is expected to come in the October meeting of the state Board of Education.

Common Core Standards are not necessarily a bad thing. The standards, as written, match fairly well to what we teach now in Kansas and in our schools. So far, standards are written for math and language arts, with science to be finished by the end of the year. The “unwritten” next step is a national assessment, or test, that probably will replace the state assessments we currently give students.

The whole premise behind this movement is that all states will have a rigorous curriculum, and that students who move from state to state will have the education they need to

advance to the next level.

The future of Kansas education, and what our children will be taught, will be determined by the federal government now. Whether that is good or bad remains to be seen. I will try to keep you updated on what is happening at the state, federal and local level in my monthly columns.

Duane Dorshorst is superintendent of the Oberlin School District and principal of Oberlin Elementary School. He is a graduate of Chadron State College in Nebraska.

From the Bible

As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

Psalms 42: 1 - 2



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

E-mail: oberlin.herald@nwkansas.com

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- Kimberly Davis managing editor
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