

Now is not the time to give retirees a raise

The waiting has barely begun. No cost-of-living increase for Social Security for the second year in a row.

That's never happened, and it may leave senior voters in a snit next month, especially after they've been hyped by all kinds of people who'll tell them they "deserve" the raise, known as a COLA.

Huh? "When people aren't getting the COLAs, they certainly feel like they're falling farther and farther behind, particularly in this economy," David Certner, legislative policy director for the American Association of Retired Persons, told the Associated Press. "People rely on Social Security as a major portion of the income, and quite frankly, they have counted on the COLA over the years."

The cost-of-living escalator has been in the Social Security rules since Congress passed it in the 1970s. In that era, inflation was a real problem. Social Security retirees were being left behind by a hot-running economy.

So enter the cost of living adjustment, which gave seniors a "raise" every year, year after year — until last year, that is. After the uproar arose, Democrats proposed a \$250 supplemental payment to make up for the increase seniors didn't deserve. It was blocked by Democratic defectors, but that will only make

the uproar this year worse.

Since almost two-thirds of retirees depend mostly on their Social Security for income, this is no minor matter.

But out in the real world, few are getting raises this year. The real world is hard. Most people think they are just lucky to have a job.

Can they afford to pay more to finance a raise for retirees? Can the country afford to borrow more to finance a cost of living increase that's clearly not warranted?

The Democrats must think the answer is "yes." They've already introduced a bill to grant \$250 payments again this year. Those who haven't had a raise or who're unemployed might differ.

But the truth is, prices aren't going up. Seniors may have plenty of expenses, but no one has shown that they face any more inflation than the rest of us.

One thing for sure, the Social Security recipients won't be the ones paying for any increase. They paid taxes in their time, for sure, but they're past that now.

And given the facts, it'd be just plain wrong to tax everyone else to increase payments this year. Popular with one group of voters, for sure, but still wrong.

— Steve Haynes

They wait 'til the last minute

A good friend who knew we are going to Mexico called a few days ago and asked, "Are you all packed?"

Melba, Melba, Melba. Did you forget who you were talking to? We're leaving tomorrow and neither Jim nor I, neither one, has packed a thing.

It's midnight, and I'm waiting for a load of laundry to finish drying. I'm also debating whether or not to mix up a batch of banana bread to take on the road.

I'd hate to waste those two brown bananas sitting on the counter and the half quart of buttermilk in the fridge.

And the only reason I'm writing this column now is, it suddenly dawned on me that I won't be anywhere near a computer over the weekend. I'll still be in Juarez, Mexico, and won't even be able to make a phone call.

Jim has been working like a ma-



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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niac trying to get everything done before we leave. He finished siding the barn, unloaded several sheets of tin, mowed our yard and our rental property, finished a roof project and helped me pack all the clothes, blankets and medical supplies we are taking with us.

He has been a blur of activity. It was way after dark one night when I heard the distinctive sound of a metal fence post being driven into the ground.

He had promised a fenced-in area to our newest renter, and he wanted to keep his word.

There is still a lot of unrest in Mexico, and we appreciate that everyone is concerned for our safety. We are aware of the risks, but promise we won't do anything foolish. We'll stay with our group; we won't go out at night and we won't talk to strangers.

Sorry, I lied. You know we're going to talk to strangers. It's what we do. We can't help ourselves. But, you know what? We always meet the most interesting people.

— ob —

Oh, yeah. The banana bread turned out fine.

Candidate says watch debate

To the Editor:

Just a note to encourage everyone to participate in the coming election. Be sure to catch the debate between my opponent and me on Public Television at 9 p.m. Thursday Oct. 14.

The issue I would like to bring to the attention of voters in Decatur County is the effort to widen U.S. 83 into a four-lane road connecting Interstates 70 and 80. There is great need for such a route. The leadership in Nebraska, the governor and the congressional delegation all favor a road from North Platte, through McCook and south.

I know of no one in Kansas who has taken a public position on this matter. My opponent from St. Fran-

cis has not addressed the question. I would like the opportunity to work to bring the four-lane highway U.S. 83 south through Oberlin and on to the inter-state. If I'm elected, that will be a priority.

We need someone from Decatur County to push for replacing the three worn out bridges on U.S. 36 east of town and to support making that highway into a four-lane road, as it is in Missouri, to push for economic development here in this county.

Bob Strevey, Norcatur
Democratic candidate for the Legislature in District 120

Letter to the Editor



She's a hawk; he's an owl

Steve and I live in different time zones.

I don't mean that he lives on Mountain Time while I live on Central. It's more like he's an owl and I'm a hawk.

Have you ever seen changing of the guard on power poles at dawn and dusk?

Each evening, the hawks quit their posts and the owls take over. It's sort of like the night shift coming on as the day shift goes home.

We always enjoy this peek into the avian world when walking in the park. We almost never see it in the morning. Steve doesn't do mornings, and while I get up a lot earlier than he does, I don't do early morning walks.

Now, I like to get up in the morning, not the middle of the night like some of my friends.

I feel that 8 a.m. is a great time to get up. I can handle 7 a.m. or even 6:30 if needed, however, earlier than that is getting into middle-of-the-night stuff as far as I'm concerned.

I have two friends who regularly get up at 4:30 to 5 a.m. In fact, my grandmother used to get up at 5 a.m. and go out and work in her flowers. But then my grandmother lived in Arkansas in a non-air-conditioned house. Going out early in the morning allowed her to get her yard work done when it was cool and then take a nice nap in the heat of the day.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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I'm all for the nap. I'm just not for the 5 a.m.

The only time Steve has seen 5 a.m. is when he's not been to bed the night before. His ideal time to get up is somewhere between 10 and 11 a.m.

He's a real night owl, but then, he worked for a morning newspaper for 10 years. He went to work at 4 p.m. and got off at midnight.

When I hit the hay at 11 p.m., he's just getting his second wind. He's ready to watch television, listen to the radio, read, work on his computer, go for a walk — or go dancing.

It's sometimes a strain for us to get things done. We end up not seeing each other in the morning and having supper at 9:30 p.m. As soon as the dishes get done and the dog gets walked, I go to bed, and he goes to work on those things I got done in the morning.

It works for us most of the time. When it doesn't, one of us loses sleep and gets very cranky. That

makes the other one make sure that on the weekend, he gets to sleep in and I get to go to bed early.

And we both take a nap. Some things are popular in any time zone.

From the Bible

Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their net brake.

St. Luke 5: 4 - 6

Garden is getting a little thin

The garden, which looked so lush in July, is starting to look a little bare. There's overgrown broccoli at one end, a couple of cabbages, the tiny lettuce patch, and then at the other end, squash. Lots of squash.

Gone are the corn and the last of the ever-bearing beans. We haven't eaten broccoli in months, but we thinned the plants and the cabbage is heading out now.

Around the corner, the "south side" garden is green and overgrown, but not for long. The first frost of fall has to be right around the corner.

Next week, we'll pick the rest of the fruit and call it good for the year. That'll leave the lettuce until it gets good and cold. Fall lettuce is a luxury, though.

It'll be all we have left, it and the produce stashed in the basement and the refrigerator, and the green tomatoes left covered on counters to ripen.

We'll pull the vines and cover the garden plots with mulch to be turned under in the spring. Leaves and grass clippings will help build the soil and feed the next year's crop.

People sometimes ask us how we have time to have a garden. It's a fair question. Many days we put in 10 to 12 hours at one office or another. And then Cynthia has her pharmacy work.

The best answer I can give is we've learned to be efficient. We put



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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in a couple of hours on the yard and garden every Sunday, plus an odd moment or two on weekdays.

That time has to cover mowing, fertilizing and caring for the lawn as well as the garden. Mowing is my lot: I produce the mulch and Cynthia spreads it. We both pick and seek produce, but she does most of the weeding.

We keep weeding to a minimum by using a lot of mulch. The less surface area sees the sun, the fewer weeds that grow, the less weeding you have to do.

So if we have a secret, that's it: mulch.

Mulching has other benefits. It keeps leaves and grass out of the landfill.

It helps the garden retain water, so we have to put less on it. And it provides a constant supply of organic matter to add to the soil.

When we started gardening here nearly 20 years ago, the ground was hard and worms and grubs were few. Now the soil is loose and easy to turn over. It's full of life.

I've read of experts who say grass clippings are not so good for vegetable plants, but we've never seen any evidence of that. It's wise to let tender young shoots get a good start before mulching them, because the decay process can get a little hot. But other than that, we've seen only benefits.

Some years, a crop will be better than others. Most years, we have plenty for ourselves and a bunch of produce to give away. Even the most serious gardeners complain about a down year for one crop or another, so I think we do pretty well for a couple of part-timers.

The question we'd ask is, how could we not garden?

No fresh tomatoes? No green beans? No zucchini or squash?

No spaghetti squash on the dog-pen fence? No fresh sweet corn? No little carrots or fresh spinach? Baby lettuce or sweet peppers?

None of this stuff is that hard to raise, but life would sure be dull without it.

We make the time.

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