

New governor will act just as he always has

Even before he takes office next week, new Gov. Sam Brownback is getting a lot of advice from groups and papers that didn't support him.

The gist of all this is that to succeed, what the incoming governor has to do is drop his longstanding beliefs and become "more like them," that is, the liberals and so-called moderate Republicans who held sway in Topeka for so long.

Remember, Sen. Brownback won election by a huge majority, 2-1 over his Democratic opponent, state Sen. Tom Holland. He won the Republican primary with 82 percent of the vote after other prominent candidates backed out of the race, recognizing that they had little chance to win.

So in a very real sense, the people have spoken.

Now, what does that mean?

First, we think, it means what it says. People liked the governor-elect's message of smaller government, a stronger economy and a better state. They bought into his "Road Map for Kansas" plan.

In short, the people of Kansas apparently wanted Sam Brownback to be their governor, and that includes most Republicans, a whole lot of independents and, yes, even a bunch of Democrats.

Second, Mr. Brownback is what he is: a principled conservative. He's never pretended to be anything else, not when he ran for Congress, not when he ran for the Senate, not when he ran for President.

He's a guy who believes in smaller government, a more efficient bureaucracy, a leader state and a less intrusive approach. He's signed laws making abortions harder to get and requiring voters to show a photo ID at the polls.

Not all of us will agree with him, but he'll

be the one with the pen.

The new governor also is smart and successful politician. He's won all his recent races, emerged from his battles mostly unscathed, his popularity intact. He promised to step down from the Senate after two full terms (and after serving out the final two years of Sen. Bob Dole's last term), and he's done so.

Not many in American politics have built their popularity and strength by giving up one powerful office to take one with more perceived risk. Sam Brownback has done so. People seem to like him.

It may also be that being governor is a more certain path to the presidency. Between John Kennedy and Barack Obama, no senator has been elected president. Lots of governors have. Maybe people prefer executive experience.

But a presidential race will have to wait. Today, Mr. Brownback faces a state budget deficit for the coming fiscal year approaching \$500 million. How he'll balance the budget without a tax increase remains to be seen. His term will be judged, in large part, by the answer to that question.

Meantime, he's been getting a lot of advice from once-unfriendly places, including the editorial page of the Kansas City Star (which endorsed his opponent, by the way). The gist of the advice is that the governor-elect needs to become more liberal and buy into more taxes, more spending.

Anyone who believes that is going to happen needs to go back and read the election results again. Sam Brownback is about to be governor because he's Sam Brownback, and because people apparently like him just the way he is.

It's going to be an interesting four years.
— Steve Haynes

Old couch still giving comfort

I stole my husband's couch Sunday afternoon. I felt so sneaky.

It's not that there's anything written down, or even spoken, but we've just come to accept that the upstairs couch is mine and the downstairs one belongs to Steve.

We try to take the chance on Saturdays and Sundays to grab a nap. One hour on the couch can do wonders for your outlook and makes even a working weekend special.

We're lucky to have two couches.

When we only had one, Steve had to take his nap in the bed. Not that there's anything wrong with napping in a bed; it's just that they're too soft and comfortable.

You take a nap in a bed, and an hour can turn into three real easy. And a three-hour nap means you wake up groggy and can't get to sleep that night. It's generally not a good idea.

A couch, however, is perfect for naps. A good couch is long enough and soft enough that when you lie down on it, it's a welcoming friend. Top yourself with a soft throw and grab a pillow and you're good for about an hour.

After an hour, though, the couch starts to turn against you. Where it was soft and welcoming just a short



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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time ago, it starts to develop lumps, bumps and hard spots. It knows that you need to get up — and it makes sure you do.

Steve's couch is an antique. It belonged to his grandmother and his mother remembered it being recovered when she was in high school. Since his mother was in high school before the War, that couch has been around a few decades.

It gives a great nap. My couch is actually a studio and makes out into a bed, which we seldom use. But the couch is popular for naps and as a folding table.

That's why I usually have to move clothes before taking my nap: Socks, underwear and jeans go onto a chair or the floor while I inhabit the couch for a blissful hour.

The upstairs couch is a little harder than the one downstairs, and it's in the same room as the police radio, which gives broadcasts from

fire, police, road crews, emergency medical services, trains and a few ham radio operators. Sometimes, the upstairs isn't the quietest place on the planet.

So after the snowstorm, the road crews were out, Steve was out of town and I took over the downstairs couch for some quiet nap time.

I was doing pretty well, too, until the phone rang.

It was Steve. How did he know?

From the Bible

Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess it.
Deuteronomy 11, 8



Father fondly remembered

It doesn't seem right that the weather was so bad on the day of Jim's dad's funeral, but it was. We had it all: snow, wind and cold.

The good news is, it was a wonderful celebration of his long life. Jim conducted the service in accordance with Dad's wishes that a family member say the last words and sing his favorite songs.

At the end, Jim opened the floor to anyone who wanted to share memories of his father. Most of the grandchildren spoke, offering remembrances of their grandpa revolving around him and his dog, old tractors or their mischievous antics at his home. A common thread mentioned was the example of Christian manhood he set. What a testimony!

So, when you think no one is paying attention, remember it's the way you live your life that makes an impression on people. Your children, grandchildren, friends and family are all watching.

Ever notice how children will sometimes misinterpret a word to mean something entirely different?

I had invited a friend to share Christmas dinner with us. She was far from her family and would have spent the day alone.

She came early to help get the "Oloped" potatoes. Jim calls them "scalped" potatoes, but that's not what I'm referring to.

Kassiday said her mother always



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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called them "au gratin" potatoes, but her little brother called them "all rotten" potatoes. She went on to say that one year her brother asked if they needed to buy the potatoes early for Christmas dinner so they would have plenty of time to get rotten.

I about gagged at the thought of eating a rotten potato. As would anyone who has ever stuck their finger into a "ripe" potato, forgotten in the bottom of the spud bin. The smell alone would stop a clock, and no amount of butter, flour, salt, pepper, cheese or milk could make it palatable.

Last week could best be called "The Week of the Dog." Two sets of transplanted Colorado friends were set to be out of town over the holidays and asked if I could watch their dogs.

Not only do I like my friends, but I like their dogs as well. Feed them, water them, let them out. What could go wrong?

Our friend Wayne's dog, Dottie, was the perfect resident. But, my friend Babe's three dogs, Fiona, Mollie and Asa, were escape art-

ists. Two times, I was met at the front door with three wet noses. They had managed to open the gate intended to keep them in the vinyl-floored kitchen and out of the rest of the house. Not only was the gate opened, it was pulled off its hinges. I had to have Jim come down and re-attach it to the door jam with his screw gun. After that, additional security included double tying a dish towel around the latch.

Fiona and Mollie are full-sized boxers, but little Asa is a diminutive terrier of some kind. A midget, compared to his bigger pen mates.

When his owners left, Asa went on a hunger strike, refusing to eat his 3/4 cup ration of dog chow unless I fed him by hand. Do you know how long it takes to feed 3/4 cup of kibble, one kibble at a time. Asa and I spent a good deal of time together this past week.

When the water pipes froze at Babe's house, we barely averted a disaster. I couldn't find access to get under the house, but a phone call led me to a hidden trap door in a closet.

An hour after lowering a small heater into the crawl space, water

Let's all try to make us better

If I could make one New Year's resolution for the world, it would be this:

That everyone of us would spend the year, not trying to improve others, but to improve ourselves.

OK, I know that's not very realistic.

Critiquing someone else's life is so much easier than changing our own. The whole world is pretty much busy trying to figure out how to make the other guy live right.

I know I'm not very good at living my life. I'm overweight, I waste way too much time, some days I'm thoughtless, I drive too much, talk too much on my cell phone and I stay up too late. And I'm sure my wife could add a few things to that list.

It's not that I don't try to be a better person. I've downsized my cars over the years. When I was 28, I lost all my extra weight. Couple of years later, I decided to quit smoking.

You can guess what happened to my waistline after that, but I haven't had a cigarette in more than 30 years. And for more than 25 years, Cynthia and I have made an effort to get out and walk every day. Don't always make it, but we try. I'm not svelte, but I have lost about 12 pounds in the last year. And after "the holidays," I hope to lose another 12 this year. Maybe it will stick, but all that holiday food and cookies and candy, it's tough to get through this time of year without gaining anything.

None of that even begins to make me a saint, I know. I'm perfectly aware of my failings, and if I should forget, there's always someone



Along the Sappa

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around to remind me.

It's hard to change yourself. Really hard. Which, I suspect, is one reason why so many people — all of us, perhaps — put so much effort into schemes to change everyone else.

As a nation, we want to change other nations. We don't approve of their leaders, their lifestyles, their politics. Most are not as well off as we are, but our attempts to "improve" their state often come off as clumsy and self-centered.

Americans are not alone in this, by the way. It's a fine old tradition, going back to the British, the Spanish, the Romans. We pay little heed to the damage we do, whether it is in destroying huge parts of Iraq (and killing thousands) to change that country, or in destroying much of Mexico and Colombia to stop their gangs from sending drugs to our country.

In trying to improve our own land, we often do no better. Take the current movement to "improve" American schools. Time was when teachers, parents, principals and school boards got to decide their own priorities. The system worked well enough to produce the strongest economy in the world, and more Nobel prizes than any other

country has won.

Then, there is our war on drugs. It isn't working. It never has. It won't work. But Americans, listening to a century of drug-czar propaganda, believe we can pass laws to protect people from themselves.

And if what we're doing doesn't work, the answer always is, "do more of the same."

There is no end to the number of people who want to change us. Some conservatives want to regiment our lives and be sure we don't break any of their taboos. Some liberals want to tell us what to drive, what to produce, even what to eat.

Some day, maybe we'll see the folly of all this. Mandates seldom change behavior. Education can, but people have to care enough to want to change.

The focus on drunk driving has reduced the problem greatly, but harsher penalties fail to reach the problem drivers. Billions spent on drug enforcement only made the cartels unimaginably wealthy.

Will we ever figure this out?

I can't say. Right now, I need to go write an editorial and tell people what to think about the new governor.

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Organizer thanks Angel Tree givers

To the Editor:

With the Christmas season come baking, cards, concerts and programs, not to mention gifts to purchase, wrap and distribute.

All of that keeps each of us busy without adding anything else to "the list," but many of you did add to "the list" and took time to help children in need have an extra-special Christmas. Eighty-one children to be exact.

Yes, 81 children up to age 17 were

Letter to the Editor

given clothes, shoes or boots, toys or a little something extra, along with movie passes and bags of fruit all wrapped up ready to open on Christmas.

There may have been 81 children, but there were at least twice that many caring people who offered of their time, money or gifts to make the Oberlin Jaycees Angel Tree an-

other huge success. The list is large of those who contributed in some way or another, but the gratitude is equally as large.

We could not do this without all of the caring people who take part, and for that we are very grateful!

Abby Hissong, Oberlin
Angel Tree coordinator