

Kansans doing quite well with 'old' license plates

Kansas has somehow survived the state's failure to make everyone switch to the new, if dull, light blue license plates.

In fact, drivers with the 2002-issued "capital dome" tags are still getting along just fine. These tags, made of aluminum and covered with reflective sheeting, are nowhere near worn out. They could last another decade, maybe two.

The Department of Revenue had planned to replace all tags between 2007 and 2009, with the blue "Ad Astra" tags. The rationale was that people who get by without paying for new tags would have to do so once the white tags were outlawed.

Then came the budget crunch. The state just couldn't afford to issue new tags for everyone. So it didn't.

And the world has not come to an end. Aside from the fact that the "capital dome" tag, with its hints of yellow wheat and blue sky above, is one of the most attractive our state has ever issued, these tags really should be good for 30-40 years.

It would be an environmental sin to replace them just because some bureaucrat figures that it would make it easier for the cops to spot scofflaws.

If they wanted to do something to push enforcement, why not make those tiny expiration stickers just a tad bigger? Too easy, we guess.

Anyway, the "dome" tags soldier on. In fact, the last couple of tag designs before that could still be in service. They're pretty much indestructible unless you use them to stop a trailer hitch.

The real question is, why not just let people keep tags as long as they're legible? That might just save the state more money than it could make from improved enforcement.

California has left its tags in use for decades at a time. So have some other states. There's no magic in changing the design every couple of years, not at the cost of making all new plates.

The way the budget is today, Kansas has plenty of priorities beyond new license tags.

-Steve Haynes

PS: Let us add a prayer to the Revenue Department to do a slight edit on the new "In God We Trust" tags designed by a Colby couple.

While attractive, these tags are simply unreadable due to the use of outline type on the state and slogan. They look great on paper, but on a car, you can't read them.

The state should be able to fill in the type without creating a whole new master for this tag.

Then, you could read the message — and sales of these tags would take off. It probably won't happen until the lettering is changed, however. No use paying extra for a slogan no one can read.

Looking down the Road...

KANSANS MARK THE STATE'S 150TH BIRTHDAY...



BUT ABANDON A 151ST CELEBRATION BECAUSE IT'S HARD ENOUGH JUST TO SAY SESQUICENTENNIAL.

THE LEGISLATURE'S G.O.P. MAJORITY PASSES AN IMMIGRATION LAW...



TO ADDRESS THOSE PESKY DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATORS.

KANSAS 2011 THE MANHATTAN MERCURY

STATE LAW FINING DRIVERS CAUGHT TEXTING HAS IMMEDIATE IMPACT...



ON THE CONTENT OF FINED DRIVERS' TEXT MESSAGES.

THE WESTBORO BAPTIST CHURCH GOES INTO HIDING...



AFTER THEIR CARS ARE VANDALIZED WITH ANTI-ISLAMIC BUMPER STICKERS.

Neighbors tussle over tree

My husband and Pastor C are fighting over Christmas trees.

Well, that's not totally true. They both had their eye on a neighbor's tree, though, and when she put it out on the curb, they both planned to grab it.

Steve was faster. He ran the half block to the neighbor's house and nabbed the tree, dragging it back over to our back-porch area.

Pastor C, who lives up the alley from us, was driving by, noted the tree sitting against the back of our house and stopped by to talk about it.

She said that she hadn't put up a tree this year and really missed having one. She had noted the neighbor's tree on the curb and had planned to recycle it.

Pastor C said she wanted to put the tree up with bird food in it and use it until spring as a kind of fancy bird feeder. She said she hadn't counted on anyone else wanting a used Christmas tree.

Steve planned to take the tree out to the new lake at Sappa Park



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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and sink it for fish habitat. He had already talked to some other people with real trees who were also planning to recycle their dead Douglas firs, Scotch pines and spruce trees into the bottom of the lake for fish family apartments.

So, I checked with Steve. The fish would be fine, it seemed to me, if they didn't get a new apartment until spring. The birds, on the other hand, would be needing help long before that.

Steve agreed and within the hour, Pastor C had liberated the tree from our back porch back yard with the promise to return it in the spring.

That's going to be one well-used Christmas tree.

This all happened a week ago.

On Sunday, just before the snow started falling in earnest, Steve and I removed our lovely pinon pine, that was still in excellent shape, from our front room to the area near the back porch reserved for used Christmas trees and other large recyclable items.

I'm just wondering if it will stay there until we can get out to the lake or if it will move up the alley to serve another covey of birds. You never know our neighborhood.

Even finished firs provide fresh forests for our feathered and finned friends.

(Now say that really fast three times!)

He's gone into citrus business

I harvested the lemon crop yesterday.

It wasn't much. Just one. Let's just say I haven't been invited to join the Sunkist co-op yet.

But I'm willing to bet it was in the top 10 yields in Kansas. And I have four more on the branches, one a quarter inch across, the others about half an inch. It'll take them most of the year to mature — if they make it.

And I have to say, this one may be my proudest achievement yet as lemon grower. The crop was big enough, and hung around long enough before it ripened, to have a name, though I never quite got around to giving it one.

It measured nearly 4 inches, by far the largest fruit I've harvested from my tree. There have been years I've had two or three lemons, but never have I raised one this big.

I picked it for New Year's and made lemonade, one from each half. Cynthia agreed, it was the best lemonade of the year, but then usually we use frozen juice.

There's just no comparison between the juice from these lemons and store-bought fruit or frozen, reconstituted juice. Regular lemon juice is pale. The juice from these home-grown lemons has a light golden color, even richer than the skin. The flavor is strong, though being lemon juice, mostly it's just sour.

I always hate to cut one of the lemons, but you can't just keep them. After six to eight months, though,



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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the lemon in the kitchen has become almost part of the family. And the juice is gone so quickly.

I've been growing lemons for the better part of 15 years now. My tree I found in a pile of little, rooted cuttings on sale one summer at Dillon's. Who knows how many trees out of that truckload survive today?

Mine is thriving right now, though it has had its ups and downs. It grew wildly the first couple of years. It's outgrown several pots, and I had to cut it back to keep it a house plant.

It lives in the kitchen, by the door, where it gets lots of sun, in the winter, and outside on the back deck in the summer. Like any crop, sometimes it's at the mercy of the weather.

It loves the afternoon sun, but you have to keep it watered. As soon as the pot dries out, and not a couple of days later, it wants a gallon. Can't keep it wet, or the roots will rot. Can't let it dry out, or the leaves suffer.

A couple of years ago, it got caught in a sudden hailstorm. We were out of town. The hail ruined the roof, broke our siding and stripped leaves off the lemon tree. It lost three of a record five-lemon crop.

The leaves were just coming back that fall when a 50 mph north wind stripped the tender new shoots off. For the better part of a year, that tree looked mostly bare. But last summer, it made a good recovery, aided by the fact that I finally got the upper hand on the sap-sucking bugs that like to infest it.

Like any other crop, the lemons have a long road to navigate before harvest. I enjoy helping them along, watching to see how the story will turn out — and the occasional lemonade.

And it gives me something to do while the garden is quiet and my wheat patch is dormant. (The wheat looks pretty good, by the way, despite the dry weather. But that, as they say, is another story.)

From the Bible

O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things; his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory. The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.

Psalms: 98 1-2

She's learning family's way

Our new daughter-in-law, Charlotte, is still getting used to Jim's "corny" sense of humor. He asked her if she knew why pinto beans had spots, why lima beans were big and flat or why northern beans were white.

When Charlotte said she didn't, Jim delivered the punch-line, "Well, then, you don't know beans."

All that was missing was the rimshot, ba-da-boom-ba. Poor Charlotte.

Nothing I could do to help her. She will have to develop her own coping skills for how to deal with her father-in-law.

Thank goodness she is so good natured. One of Jim's biggest pleasures in life is to make people laugh. And even though I've heard most of his jokes and stories a dozen times, I try to laugh anew each time.

I think there is a clause in the marriage contract that binds wives to always laugh at their husband's jokes.

-ob-



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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After hitting a deer and totaling our red van, we are driving a new vehicle. Well, new to us.

I am still trying to learn the new set of bells and whistles. Speed controls are on the steering wheel instead of the signal lever on the steering column. I can't tell you how many times I have activated the window-washing feature when what I really wanted to do was set the cruise control.

Jim finally figured out how to change tracks on the CD player, we're trying to remember that the "unlock" button has to be pushed in order to open the side doors and the headlights don't automatically

turn on and off.

My, old habits die hard.

-ob-

Snow, of course, is the big news. And, we have a lot of it to talk about, with more coming. Since we're so thoroughly modern, we sent a picture of the snow, via cell phone text message, to one of our daughters in San Antonio. She always hated winters in western Kansas and was not the least bit sympathetic to our plight.

According to Jennifer, the only way she will enjoy snow is to see a picture of it. Guess she won't be joining us on any ski trips.

Pastor had license to marry couples

To the Editor:

I was reading in a book my great aunt Emma Meyer had written about her father, Peter W. Thoren, about his being pastor. One young couple during that time was concerned about Pastor Peter marrying them. After seeing his license, they were happy to let him marry them.

I was excited to learn that Pastor Peter W. Thoren was a licensed pastor. In those days, that must have been how they became pastors. It was from the Swedish Free Mission of Colorado USA. Peter's license read,

"In nominee Jesus, Amen.

Letter to the Editor

"This is to certify, that the bearer, Rev. P.W. Thoren, is by us known, duty called, and recognized, as a "licensed minister of the Gospel of Christ," entitled to officiate as such among us and where ever he may be called to Labor as missionary, evangelist and Pastor. Believing him to possess for such office the necessary qualifications according of the New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ, this license was dated

in Denver, Colorado, and sealed by a Edward Thorell, Chairman and Director of the Swedish Evangelical Free Mission of Colorado."

These licenses were renewed for a year at a time. Mr. Thoren was pastor years ago of what is now the Lund Covenant Church.

I wish I would have known Pastor Thoren, as he was a special great-grandfather of mine.

Elsie L. Wolters, Oberlin

Why do people vote the way they do?

To the Editor:

This is in response to your editorial about change after the elections in November.

What surprises me is that we have seen a very large number of voters taking positions contrary to their own best interest, including their own children.

For instance, while most Americans have no chance of earning or inheriting significant wealth, 68 percent want the estate tax eliminated and believe that should be one of the top priorities of the current Congress, while it affects only 0.2 percent of the population.

Another disturbing viewpoint is that the current increase in wealth inequality is good and worth maintaining by preserving a privileged

person, like myself, his tax cuts. In the 1950s, a decade of which many American conservatives feel a sense of nostalgia, the marginal tax rate for the the wealthy was over 90 percent. In fact, prior to the 1980s, it never dipped below 70 percent, at a time when every middle class working man had a good-paying job.

However, what frightens me the most is the threat to repeal all health-care reforms made without substituting anything in its place, such as the public option or a single-payer healthcare system.

We need to ask ourselves how can this be, since we are the only G-20 country where primary healthcare is a "for-profit" industry, plus the only country where pharmaceutical companies push their drugs through

costly advertising.

Even conservatives around the world are scratching their heads over "Americans don't want affordable healthcare?"

If you are also perplexed with why would we should choose to roll back the last two years and return to the decade that caused the worst recession in living memory, I suggest reading the book by a former CIGNA insider, Wendall Potter, titled "Deadly Spin."

This book explains how corporate public relations is killing healthcare and deceiving Americans.

Lyle Black
Beverly Hills, Calif.

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243

Published each Wednesday by Haynes Publishing Co., 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Periodicals postage paid at Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Steve and Cynthia Haynes, publishers
Kimberly Davis, assistant publisher

Official newspaper of Oberlin, Jennings, Norcat, Dresden and Decatur County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association, Nebraska Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year, \$38 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$42 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$48 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$50-\$250 (in U.S. dollars only) extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243.

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

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