

We need to save the rest of our scenic, rural areas

Two things that happened in the past week will have a big impact on the Flint grasslands region of Kansas and Oklahoma, and those of us around the state should applaud.

First, Gov. Sam Brownback announced an agreement with energy companies that no more wind farms will be built or expanded in the Heart of the Flint Hills area.

The idea of wind farms in the scenic Flint Hills has been controversial from the start. The governor announced an agreement among the state, Flint Hills ranchers, preservationists, wind developers, power companies and government officials to expand an area of the tallgrass prairie to be free from new commercial wind farms.

While the pact exempts current wind farms with commercial contracts, it prohibits further development in the hills, the last large remnant of the tallgrass prairie that once covered much of the Midwest.

The move upset some local officials and wind promoters, who wanted to see more wind turbines added to existing farms, but it will not prevent new or beefed up transmission lines to move wind energy to urban areas.

Brownback noted that of 400,000 acres of tallgrass prairie, only about 4 percent remains, most of that in the Flint Hills. He said the area should be preserved for ranching and tourism, not energy development that would mar the vistas.

County officials and landowners in some counties have complained, especially in Cowley County, site of an existing wind farm. They cited property rights and landowners' rights to develop their land in opposition to the pact.

That said, we feel the governor did the right thing to protect this precious resource.

Then this week, Sen. Jerry Moran announced along with Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma that they have introduced a bill to exempt Flint Hills ranchers from regulation by the federal Environmental Protection Agency when they burn off grass and other waste each spring.

The burning is considered a key to the health of the region's pastures, which have changed little since the days when buffalo roamed. However, a concentrated schedule of burning pushed by state and federal regulators has been blamed for high pollution readings in Wichita and Kansas City.

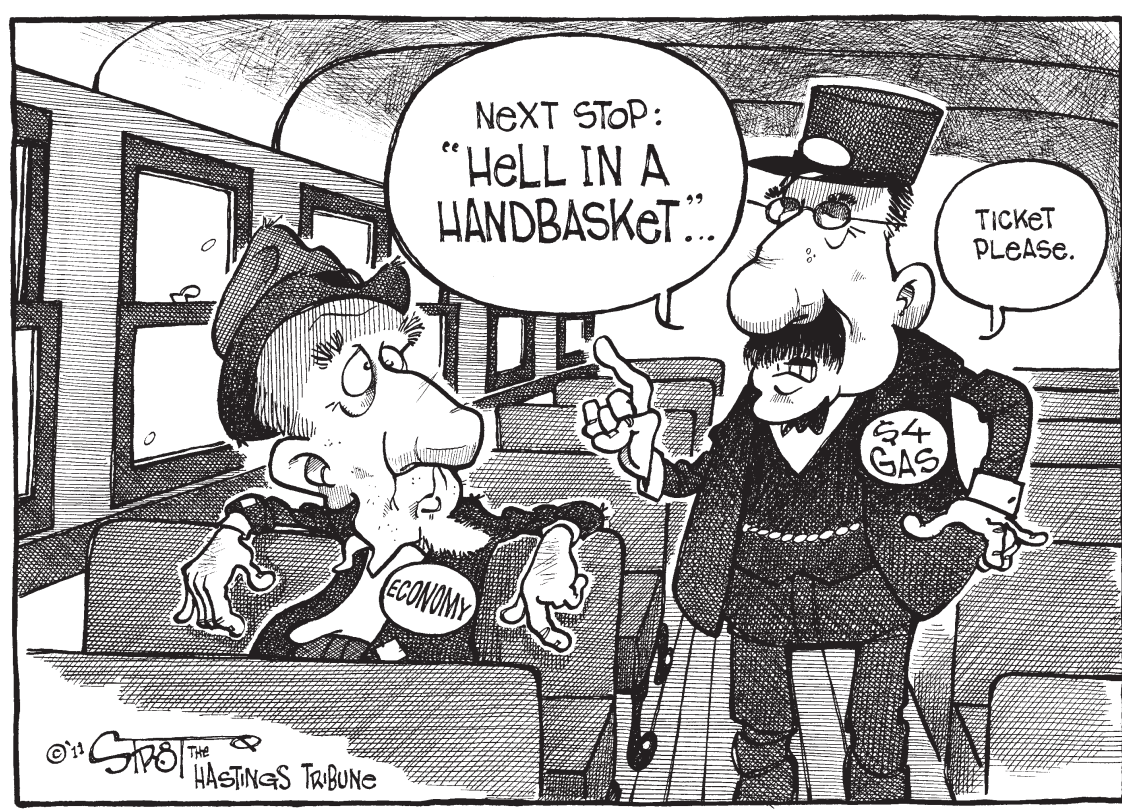
Sen. Moran's bill would exempt the ranchers from federal regulation, essentially taking the federal agency and the state Department of Health and Environment out of the equation. The agencies have been pushing a complicated schedule for burning which has not eliminated urban complaints.

These ranchers have been burning their pastures to preserve the land for more than a century, long before Wichita and Kansas City were big enough to have pollution problem. The season lasts only a few weeks in the spring, and the smoke dissipates. It should be a non-issue.

We say Sen. Moran is right; the ranchers should be free to continue traditional practices.

While neither of these moves will much affect northwest Kansas directly, they represent a strong push to preserve a rural way of life and a scenic area important to the whole state.

Both deserve our praise. — Steve Haynes



Medicine's just not her forte

Now I know why I'm not a nurse.

Some people are natural-born caregivers and some aren't. I fall into the latter category.

Not that I can't empathize. I just don't get all "mooshy" over every little thing.

My kids will tell you they knew better than to complain unless they were bleeding, vomiting and/or burning up with fever. I figured if they felt well enough to want to watch television or play games, they were well enough to go to school.

Of course, that kind of attitude has consequences. My children are grown now and, they still don't complain. That's why my oldest daughter waited until she had an 11 1/2-pound tumor before she sought medical care. She had to have emergency gall-bladder surgery because she had learned to tolerate the pain.

Complaining is one thing, being aware of your physical well-being is completely different. It's something I'm trying to work on.

My matter-of-fact attitude probably comes from my mother. She could have been an emergency-room nurse. After being married to a farmer and raising five boys and a girl, she had about seen it all by the time I came along.

I remember the day I broke my right arm in a bicycle accident. We didn't know it was broken at the time so, she wrapped it, tightly, with Ace bandage, made a sling out of a dishtowel and made me stay inside. The next morning she called a nurse who lived nearby, asking her "take a look" at it.

The nurse surmised both bones, right above the wrist, were broken and marveled at how I had been able to tolerate the pain through



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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the night. There hadn't been any pain. Mom had wrapped it so well, it didn't swell.

Then there was the time my youngest brother, Jim, had a crotch hook embedded in his elbow. Our grandmother was living with us and had been sitting in my dad's easy-chair, working on a doily. She left her crocheting in the chair about the same time Jim came into the house playing with a puppy that had just crawled out from under the front porch. He plopped down in the chair, oblivious to the danger lurking there.

When he got up to take the pup back outside, Mom stopped him at the kitchen door. Jim was completely unaware, but she had spotted the crotch hook protruding outside his shirt, dangling from his elbow.

Knowing this was beyond her level of expertise, a trip to the hospital was inevitable. She was never prone to too much sympathy, I remember her saying, "Oh, Jim. And, that was one of your good shirts!"

So, if my husband, who is recuperating from a table-saw accident, thinks I'm not giving him enough sympathy, his concern could be justified. But even he would have to admit he's not been the easiest patient.

I am trying to trust his judgement. If he feels like working, he's going to work so, I might as well get used to it.

We had a follow-up visit with the surgeon last week and actually saw Jim's thumb for the first time since the surgery. Granted, it's still swollen, but it looks really good and is healing nicely.

Jim says it itches, which is a good sign. The index finger is doing so well the doctor said the dressing could come off. In two weeks, the pin comes out of the thumb and then we'll talk about therapy.

A side note to all this: a "flutter" in Jim's heart was detected before the hand surgery. So, this week he's having a heart catheterization. All precautionary, but it's really made us appreciate the good health we've had up to this point.

Was it Mark Twain or Will Rogers who said, "If I'd known I was going to live this long, I would a taken better care of myself?"

Editor's Note: That quote has been attributed to a lot of people, but not to either Mr. Twain or Mr. Rogers. Most sources attribute the original to James Hubert "Eubie" Blake (Feb. 7, 1887 – Feb. 12, 1983), an American composer, lyricist, and pianist of ragtime, jazz and popular music. In 1921, Blake and long-time collaborator Noble Sissle penned the Broadway musical "Shuffle Along," one of the first to be written and directed by African Americans.

Mayor wants to talk to people

This is my first attempt at writing a column, so please bear with me.

I appreciate the opportunity that Steve and Cynthia Haynes and Kimberly Davis at *The Oberlin Herald* have given me to use this format to communicate my thoughts and to pass on information about your city. I plan to write a column at least once a month, space permitting.

First and foremost I would like to thank the members of the City Council, as well as the mayor, who have stepped down. Ray Ward has been on the council for nine years, Rhonda May for five, Richard Kimble (who passed away this year) for one year and last but not least, Mayor Joe Stanley who sat on the council for four years, then served as mayor for four years.

Sitting on the City Council, and as I am finding out, serving as mayor, is not an easy task. At times it is gut wrenching, at others very rewarding, but seldom is it easy. Please help me in thanking these folks for their service and dedication to the City of Oberlin.

I would also like to thank the five

Mayor's Minutes

people who have shown interest in the two open positions on the council. I have made a decision on who I will appoint, and with the council's approval hope to do so at the meeting Thursday. This was not an easy decision to make, as each and every one of them had much to offer. Thank you all.

I will have an office at The Gateway in the next couple of weeks, in the former Gateway manager's office on the first floor. My plans are to be there on Tuesday mornings from 8 a.m. to noon and Thursday afternoons from noon to 5 p.m. I can also be reached by telephone at the city office, 475-2217, or if it is a emergency, on my cell phone, 470-7322.

I intend to hold a couple of community meetings in the near future to hopefully get a clear picture of what the citizens of Oberlin would like to see in the future. We are

facing a challenging time, as are most smaller cities, but I believe if we work together, we can achieve things that will set us apart.

It will not be easy, and I am sure there will be some hurt feelings, but if I did not think we could do it, I would have not taken this on.

I would also like to invite everyone to the council meetings. We meet the first and third Thursdays of the month. It is a great way to find out what is going on in the city, and at times quite entertaining.

We are coming up on budget time, and I would love to have you be involved. This is a wonderful way to see where your tax dollars are going.

In closing, I would like to thank you all who supported me and promise you all that I will do my best to do what is best for the whole City of Oberlin.

Bill Riedel, mayor

Write

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Oberlin, Kan., 67749, or by e-mail to oberlinherald@nwkansas.com.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area.

From the Bible

And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face.
Hosea 7: 2

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Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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The big jet's problems should have been a sign for us, I guess. Not a good one.

The Airbus had spent the night in Augusta, Ga., normally the home of tiny, cramped "regional jets" that ply air commuter routes for lines called "Connection" or "Express."

By big, I mean a 320 model, about the size of a Boeing 737. Not a big airliner by today's standards, but it looked pretty big in Augusta.

One of the ground-crew guys said starting about a week before, the Airbus was Delta's last flight out of Atlanta to Augusta at night and first flight back in the morning. Many days, it's full, he said, so who knows. Delta has tried bigger planes in Augusta before.

"But this one has problems," he added, nodding at the gate. "Should have been gone 10 minutes ago."

Indeed, ground crew members were commiserating with the pilots as we talked.

I wandered over to the other gate, where our U.S. Airways Express ("Operated by Air Wisconsin") flight was about to board. Only the gate crew didn't seem to be in much of a hurry. Finally, they let us out on the ramp and we gate-checked our "carry-on" bags. No way we were cramming those oversized "rollies" into the tiny overhead bins of that little jet.

Time came to leave - 7:10 a.m. - and time passed. Nothing happened. Finally, the pilot came on the intercom. Charlotte had heavy ground fog, he said, and so with the possibility of circling while it cleared, they took on more fuel. Only the crew overfilled the plane, and now it was too heavy.

"Weight is an issue," he said dryly. "I'm not sure why they over-fueled it, but we had to call another fuel truck to take some off. They say that might take half an hour. But then we might have to wait for Charlotte to clear up before they let us take off."

Anyway, we taxied out on to the ramp. Delta was ahead of us, so I presumed that Atlanta wasn't doing much better than Charlotte. We parked behind the Airbus.

The airlines, it seems have taken to heart the new federal regulations - and fines - for holding people on the ramp forever against their will.

Sara Jane, our cabin attendant, began serving coffee and juice to the passengers. One asked to be let off so he could either walk to Charlotte, only about 165 miles away, or take another airline, whichever was faster.

In fact, we calculated later, we could have driven faster. But we didn't have a car, and our daughter Felicia, who had gotten up at 5:45 a.m. and put on slippers to drive us to the airport, wasn't likely to take us to Charlotte.

A few minutes later, the pilot announced that he was going back to the terminal to let the guy off who wanted to walk. The woman ahead of us said brightly that she'd like to get off, too. Sara Jane had to explain that she wouldn't be able to get back on if she did.

Anyway, the pilot said by the time

we'd finished that, Charlotte ought to be able to take us. At the gate, an agent came on and noted that many of us were going to miss our connections. And we'd thought an hour and a half was plenty of time for breakfast and a stroll in Charlotte.

The agent said he'd start rebooking us on later flights. We left about 2 hours, 20 minutes down, and when we got to North Carolina, the computer in fact showed us with seats on a 11:50 a.m. flight to Denver, rather than 9:23. I'd say that agent did a great job, rebooking 50 or so of us that morning - at the same time people from 20-30 flights into Charlotte had to be reconnected.

(We've had worse days flying. The time we hit a blizzard in Denver comes to mind. We got the last plane out that day, but our luggage spent the weekend in the Bahamas while we went to Park City, Utah.)

By the time we hit Denver this time still two hours down, we went about our business, bought fried chicken, apples and bread for a picnic on the plains and hit the road for home.

I sure hope those Delta people got to Atlanta OK.

Honor Roll

Welcome and thanks to these recent subscribers of *The Oberlin Herald*:

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tura; Fred Wilkening, Roseville. Kansas: Robyn Mendiola, Leavenworth; Warren Weibert, Manhattan; Bob Jones, Jennings; Raymond Yahne, Dodge City; Jerry Coleman, Marysville; M. J. Ritter, Norton; Joy Johnson, Norcatour; Alan Shuler, Salina.