

Commissioners right to pare back tax increase

Hurrah for the Decatur County commissioners.

They deserve credit for paring down the budget and holding a planned tax increase to about 3.6 percent next year, but we believe they need to look at things from the viewpoint of taxpayers who likely cannot boost their own income.

Taxes on homes and buildings in this county have, in some cases at least, more than doubled in the last 20 years. In that time, overall prices in the U.S. have risen only 65 percent.

We understand the pressure on county officials to spend more, especially on programs that federal and state governments push on them, such as homeland security initiatives, emergency preparedness and the like. But we're not sure taxpayers want, need or can afford everything the county wants or is told to do.

It may seem a small thing to increase taxes "just a little," but commissioners need to consider that many, maybe most, of those they serve cannot do the same.

People can't "raise taxes" to generate more income. In this economy, the boss would just laugh at them. For many, including teachers and most health workers, and many at small businesses, there have been no increases in the past few years.

Many businesses are still hurting from the recession. Unemployment remains high and the county's population continues to plummet. A business can raise prices, of course, but that does not mean customers will pay. Many can and will go elsewhere.

Time was when our commissioners were more conservative when it came to spending and tax increases. That's been less so in recent

years. When the county had a windfall from oil revenues, it spent much of the money. Now, when assessments are going the other way, commissioners feel they need to raise taxes.

Particularly in a bind are businesses and homeowners. The share of county government they pay for has increased in recent years as the state's complicated system for assessing farmland lags years behind reality. Farm-land values are through the roof even while taxes on ag land fall behind, leaving the county with less valuation.

The decision commissioners make goes beyond whether people can afford a "small" increase in taxes. The question is whether the cost of government — city, county, school, state, federal — should continue to increase, year after year, while the pool of taxpayers continues to shrink.

The level of local government we can afford may not match the level we are used to; we understand that.

It's not a matter of whether county employees need or deserve a raise. We know they deserve one, the same as many others do. It's not whether the county needs new computers or new equipment. The question is whether taxpayers have received any kind of increase where they can afford to pay more.

What we know is that many taxpayers have no way to match any kind of tax increase in these times. And if people are not tired of higher taxes, they ought to be.

Commissioners will hold a public hearing on this budget at 10 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 6, at the courthouse. They may vote after that.

The time, in the middle of the work day, may be inconvenient, but anyone who cares could and should attend. — *Steve Haynes*

Jam job calling from kitchen

Imagine a creepy, eerie voice saying, "Car-o-lyn. Ca-ro-lyn. Ca-ro-lyn-n-n."

That's not your imagination. That's the big box of peaches in my kitchen calling my name. They're saying, "It's time to make jam. It's time to make jam."

I was tempted not to order peaches this year. After all, I still have frozen peaches in the deep freeze from last year. But then I thought of the disappointed look on my granddaughter Alexandria's face if she did not find at least one jar of peach jam in her Christmas box.

Alexandria is a tall, smart, blonde, beautiful 16-year-old who reacts like she's 6 when she gets her jar of jam. I don't even mess around with the little eight-ounce jars anymore. It all gets put up in pints. It's quicker that way.

Then, every time we visit, I am handed a bag filled with something that sounds like glass clinking together. It is. It's all the empty jam jars going home for a refill.

-ob-

Speaking of Alexandria, her mother just sent us pictures of Alex and her little sister Ani on their first day of school. Alex is a high school junior, but this was Ani's first day of school. She looked so sweet in her little outfit with her blonde hair shining in the sun. Wish I could be a fly on the wall in that classroom.

School was OK for Ani today;



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
cplotts65@gmail.com

we'll see if she wants to go back tomorrow.

I remember my oldest daughter Halley's first day of kindergarten. She looked so cute in a little white dress with a zipper up the front and matching white shorts underneath. The dress had red trim and I had a red barrette in her hair. It was the last time I ever got her to wear a dress to school. Oh, well.

Her father took off work so the whole family could walk the four blocks with her to school. As we got closer and closer to the building, we could hear crying and pleas of, "Mommy. Don't leave me. Mommy. Mommy."

Our independent daughter looked at us with horror in her eyes and said, "You're not going in with me, are you?" She could handle anything as long as it didn't involve kissing her parents good-bye in front of the other kids.

-ob-

School beginning all over the country officially marks the begin-

ning of fall—even if the temperatures still linger around three digits.

No matter how many times you tell them, kids don't always look both ways before crossing the street. Make sure you are looking out for them when you're driving.

From the Bible

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

— *Matthew 16: 15-18*

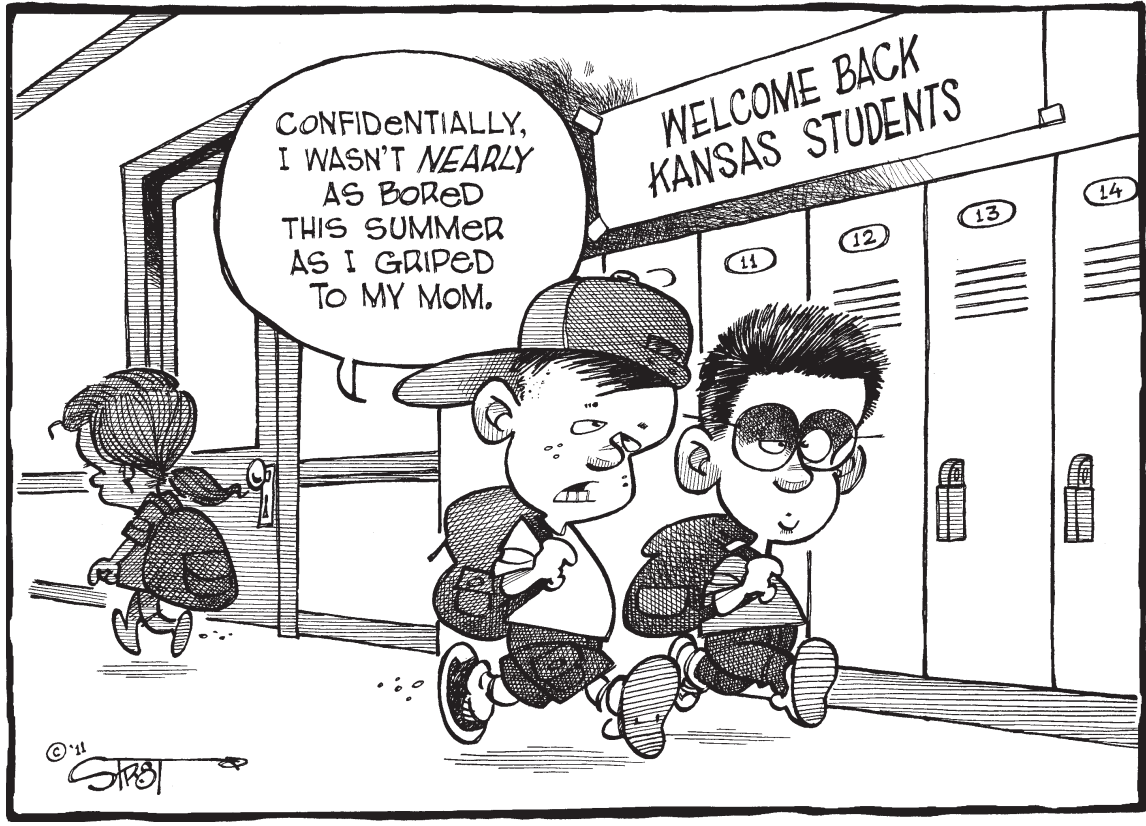


Photo exhibit lures her south

The traveling bug got us again, and we decided to check out a photography show in Santa Fe, N.M., a retrospective winnowed from 10 years worth of exhibitions.

The gallery sent us a brochure about a month ago on their latest show of mostly black-and-white prints. It looked interesting, we hadn't been to Santa Fe in several years and we were in Colorado already, so we decided to head south.

The show was all it promised to be and more. We were mesmerized by pictures from the World War II years □ Hitler greeting Mussolini for the first time, a soldier wading ashore on D-Day and the famous photo from *Life* magazine of a sailor kissing a nurse in Times Square on V-J Day.

Then there were the 1960s and '70s. We remembered those. There were the famous shot of John F. Kennedy Jr. saluting his father's casket and the one of Jack Ruby killing Lee Harvey Oswald. Dr. Martin Luther King was featured in several, being arrested, speaking, the day of his death.

There were photos of Woodstock and protests and one poignant one of the Brown sisters walking to their segregated school along the railroad tracks in Topeka.

Steve and I especially liked that one. He had worked for the Santa Fe Railway, switching trains on those same rails 15 years later. It's still a little hard to think that one of the



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
c.haynes@nwkansas.com

biggest victories of the Civil Rights movement was won in abolitionist Kansas: the Brown versus the Board of Education ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court that outlawed segregated schools.

Further on were color photos from the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The pictures — three generations worth of memories — were hanging there. The gallery owner said he and his wife put the show together to celebrate the shop's 10th birthday. It took about a year to gather the prints, many of which were for sale for more than you'd believe.

The show was wonderful, and we loved the art, but left with our pocketbooks intact.

Santa Fe is always a busy place, especially down by the square, where Indians sell their wares on blankets in front of the old Palace of the Governors.

This week, however, the place was a zoo. There were people everywhere.

We had stumbled upon the annual Indian Market. The square and

every street for three or four blocks around it were covered with little white tents with Native Americans selling everything from modern to traditional artwork. While jewelry and pottery predominated, other crafts included textiles and painting.

A couple of stages were set up for shows, but I only saw a little of one of them.

I didn't have much time and, over the years, I've looked at and purchased a few nice pieces of both jewelry and pottery. I wanted to see something different, so I headed over to the area set aside mostly for Alaskan tribes.

I found a bracelet that I love. It's a small strip of hide about 1 1/2 inches wide with no adornment. It doesn't look like much, but it's pretty and soft and I like it. I'm also pretty sure it's made by a real Eskimo, since everyone at the show had to be certified as a native American craftsman.

It also was one of the least expensive pieces of Indian art I'm ever likely to find.

Service has a Pueblo twist

I should of known we were in for something a little different when I saw a bishop's mitre in the procession while we were on the way into church.

The archbishop doesn't show up for just any service, after all. And this one would be different.

Regular readers know Cynthia and I try to go to church wherever we are, and Saturday, that happened to be Santa Fe, N.M., where we went to see a photography exhibit. We saw the pictures, then discovered it was the week of the annual Indian Market downtown.

Cynthia wanted to go see what was going on, so we started walking around among blocks and blocks of tent-like booths put up in the streets around the downtown Plaza. Artists from native tribes across the continent were selling jewelry, paintings, pottery, you name it.

After circling the square, we wound up by the cathedral, the focal point of downtown Santa Fe. There the bells were tolling, loud and long. We figured it was a wedding, the end of a war or maybe just Saturday evening Mass. We looked at each other and decided if they were having church, we could go and free up some time in the morning before we



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

started back to Colorado.

So there was the archbishop, in full regalia. An usher explained that it was the annual Native American Mass, with participants from all the New Mexico Pueblo tribes. Everything from music to prayers would have a native theme, with songs, prayers and a dance by tribal representatives.

The old cathedral, a block off the plaza, was packed, as the market had just shut down. The audience seemed to be split among locals, visiting Native Americans and tourists like us. We were hardly dressed for church, but then neither were many of the others.

The archbishop announced a new evangelism initiative for the pueblos and talked about the church's links to the native community. The highlight of the service was a pre-

sentation of the Eagle Dance by one of the tribes, with two dancers and several drummers.

The whole thing took about an hour and 40 minutes, more than twice as long as a regular service, but then, how often do you get to see the Eagle Dance?

We've gone to church on a couple of continents, and it's always interesting. We've been to the cathedral in Hong Kong, in tiny churches in Central America and Mexico and to Latin Masses blessed by the bishop — and one that was not.

I'd have to say this had to be one of the most interesting services we've stumbled into anywhere. But, we did find it a little hard to sing the hymn done in Tiwa, the Pueblo language.

You just never know what you're getting into when you go to church on the road.

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

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

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

Phone: (785) 475-2206 Fax (785) 475-2800
E-mail: oberlin.herald@nwkansas.com

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

Nor'West Newspapers

STAFF

Steve Haynes editor
Kimberly Davis managing editor
Mary Lou Olson society editor
..... proofreader
Carolyn Kelley-Plotts columnist
Joan Betts historian
Cynthia Haynes business manager
Pat Cozad want ads/circulation
Tim Davis advertising representative
..... advertising makeup

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.



Why not tax the rich a little more?

To the Editor:

This is a comment on the editorial in the Aug. 3 edition of *The Oberlin Herald*, "Deficit 'compromise' just a drop in the bucket."

I have never heard of anyone talking about taking all the assets of billionaires, but maybe I've been misinformed. I am aware of a proposed bill by Rep. Jan Schakowsky called the Fairness in Taxation Act. This bill would increase the top federal marginal income tax rate from the current 35 percent to 45 percent for married couples earning more than \$1 million a year and to 49 percent for billionaires.

The Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy estimates that the proposed bill would raise \$78 billion (a year) if enacted in 2011. That's \$17 billion more than the House Republicans would achieve by cutting or eliminating valuable

Letter to the Editor

programs.
Let me join billionaire Warren Buffett in proposing to increase taxes on the rich. Wouldn't you agree that the growing income inequality and disappearing middle class are a bigger problem than the debt and the deficit?

Lyle E. Black
1440 Loma Vista Drive
Beverly Hills, Calif. 90210
(310) 550-6388

Editor's Note: No. Leaving aside any arguments over social engineering, spending more than the government takes in year after year has obvious consequences. The American people are tired of spiraling debt and deficits. And \$78

billion is still just a tiny drop in the bucket. — *Steve Haynes*

Write

The Oberlin Herald encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

Mail letters to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan., 67749, or by e-mail to oberlinherald@nwkansas.com.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

Nor do we publish form letters