

Government right to sue over AT&T merger plan

Should the government allow AT&T to gobble up T-Mobile, the American cell-phone subsidiary of the German telecommunications giant Deutsche Telekom?

In a word, no. The American phone goliath claims it needs T-Mobile's towers and frequencies to shore up its system, which it says could otherwise start to collapse as it runs out of "spectrum," or frequencies, in major cities.

No one believes the proposed megamerger will have smooth sailing. It faces opposition from the U.S. Justice Department and many states. The Federal Communications Commission, state regulators and other agencies will have a say.

So far, AT&T seems to be the only one behind the buyout. The telecom began life as Southwestern Bell as part of the old AT&T empire, then was SBC Corp. after the monopoly broke up. It finally bought the shell of its old parent and adopted the famous name. Along the way, SBC bought up Southern Bell, Alltel and other companies, becoming one of the biggest players in the phone and Internet business.

Today's AT&T may be as little loved as "Ma Bell" was in her day, a corporate giant without the soft veneer of the big old phone company. No one is lining up to support claims that the firm's cell phone system might strangle without T-Mobile's frequencies.

The deal would increase AT&T's share of the wireless market from 32 percent to 43 percent, reducing the number of nationwide carriers from four to three, including another former

"Baby Bell," Verizon, and Sprint, which grew from an independent phone company, Kansas City based United Telecom.

But T-Mobile is the last remaining low-cost national carrier. Eliminating the German firm from the market would likely have a major impact on wireless prices for everyone, experts say.

The guiding principle should be avoiding a situation where any business is so concentrated that its members are "too big to fail." Our economy can't stand any more such corporate giants.

And with 43 percent of the national cell phone market, AT&T would approach that status.

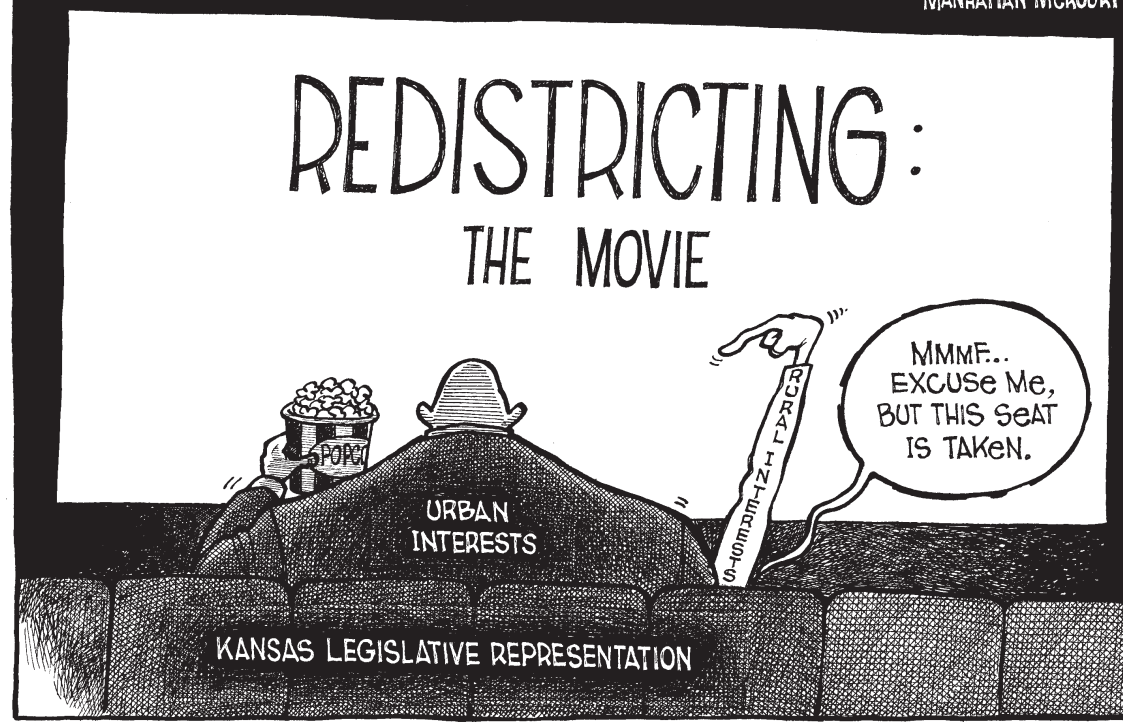
The Obama administration sued to block the merger in the first real test of its new antitrust policy. This newspaper has long stood for a more aggressive stance on antitrust, fearing the results of even more megamerger among firms in any industry.

Look where having bigger and bigger banks got us. Look at the bankrupt major airlines, which continue to merge. Look at the bankrupt automakers. The list goes on and on.

Government's role in business should be limited, but preventing monopoly domination of an industry certainly is a valid goal, both to protect the market and to protect us from big failures.

Word is the AT&T merger is in trouble. We hope that's true, for the sake of the economy and the sake of the consumer. Bigger is most often *not* better.

— Steve Haynes



Cat in trouble runs up a bill

I always swore I would never spend a fortune on a sick animal.

But what do you do when your cat is convulsing on your lap and nothing you've done has helped? And you know she can be saved if she gets the right care, right away.

We were on our way to Lawrence and Emporia to see our son and Steve's family, and to spend a couple of days on the lake. We decided to take both Annie the dog — she loves the lake — and Molly the diabetic cat — so she could get her insulin shots.

But at a stop between Hays and the middle of nowhere, we realized Molly was in trouble. She couldn't stand and she started having convulsions. We figured she was having an insulin reaction, but we weren't really sure what to do to help a cat.

We called Uncle Pup, Steve's brother the vet. He said it sounded like hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar, and to get some sugar down her. The only sugar we had was a baking mix, half Splenda and half sugar. We pried her mouth open and shoveled it down. No good. We tried again and again until our arms looked like sugar donuts and we were as sticky as kids with cotton candy.

The cat got worse as we drove east. She was literally dying in my lap.

Finally we stopped at a conven-



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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nience store, bought a bottle of honey and washed off the sugar. Steve suggested we call vets in Salina, which by then was only about 10 minutes away. He figured one would be open, and he hit pay dirt on the first try. We rushed to the clinic, which was really an all-night emergency room for pets.

By the time we arrived, Molly was in a diabetic coma. The young vet rushed to put her on an IV of normal saline and dextrose, a kind of sugar. Her blood sugar was 23, when normal should be about 100. Her temperature was low and she was in bad shape.

The vet said come back in the morning. She should pull through.

We spent the night in Salina and just before 8 a.m. picked up Molly. She was wobbly and blind, but the vet said both conditions should clear up. The vet suggested we take her straight home to our regular vet and get her some more fluids. Then the receptionist gave us a bill that would

rival the national debt. (OK, so it would rival what the national debt was when I was a kid, not now.)

That was Friday. Our vet gave her about four more ounces of IV fluid and sent her home with instructions to cut down on her insulin dose and check her blood every so often.

Which is why we spent all day Saturday and Sunday stabbing our cat in the ear. That poor baby's ears are like swiss cheese, and we're going through those expensive blood-checking strips like they were candy.

The good news, however, is she can see and walk normally again and has been really good about having her ears stuck.

At this rate, the cat is going to be more expensive than the house or car. Gee, I wish I'd thought to puther on my insurance as a dependent.

I wonder if I can take her medical expenses off my taxes?

Cold-induced rasp fools man

Things are not always as they appear.

I've had a cold and when I answered the phone the other day, the caller said, "Hi, Jim."

I didn't mean to embarrass the caller, but my voice is so raspy, I sound like a rough and tough longshoreman. Which is to say, I sound a lot worse than I feel, although Sunday, I felt pretty "tuff": Fever, sore throat, general aches, pains and sluggishness. Slept most of the day and didn't even go to church.

I better get well soon, because this is one of "those" weeks. I am so overbooked I need to hire a double. My week looks something like this:

a community meeting one night, two committee meetings (at different times) another night, hosting my ladies' club meeting, working on our little town's website, Bible study one night and leaving for an annual women's retreat on Friday.

Busy? Yes. Would I have it any other way? No.

I have never understood people who say they're bored. It's my belief that if you're "bored," you are also boring. If you think you're bored, look around. There is always someone to help, a church that needs a willing volunteer, a child that needs a caring adult in their life, an animal that needs a good home.

My children knew that "bored" was not in their vocabulary. My girls may have played the "bored" card once, but they soon learned that mother had a long list of jobs to alleviate their boredom.



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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Believe it or not, a parent's job is not to make life as cushy and comfortable as possible or provide entertainment for their children. It's to help them grow into caring, responsible citizens.

-ob-

I'm afraid my two setting hens have been laboring for naught. It's been more than a month since they began sitting on their nests, and not a single egg has hatched.

I think they both gave up, because it looks like they abandoned their nests. Maybe next year they'll try it again. I hope so, because our hens will be 4 next spring, and it'll be just about time to be introducing some new layers. That way the old flock can start to "retire" and the new flock take over.

Besides, I would rather two or three mother hens raise the new flock and then I don't have to start over with dozens of chicks in the bathtub again. I almost think I'm past that.

-ob-

At the risk of making my neighbors jealous, I think I'll make a BLT for lunch. Not that my neighbors

would envy my culinary talents, but they do envy my tomatoes.

We may well be the only people in town whose tomatoes survived the hail. Ever since our first crop was hailed out years ago, Jim has covered our patch with hail screen supported on aluminum pipes.

Everything else in the garden was smashed, but the tomatoes stand proud and tall.

For some reason, they're not producing many tomatoes, but what we have are sure are good.

Am I right? There is nothing that tastes quite as good as a fresh, home-grown tomato.

From the Bible

Then came Peter to him, and said, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Jesus saith unto him, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

— Matthew 18:21-22

Barbecue event tops at park

The people who run Oberlin's Up in Smoke Barbecue Cookoff seem to have the recipe about right.

The annual event draws bigger and bigger crowds, better bands and maybe even better cooks each year. It's always a pleasant interlude between the dog days of summer and the autumn winds.

Saturday at Sappa Park was maybe the best so far in the 4-year-old series. The weather was perfect, the food both abundant and delicious, the facilities at the park, never better.

Smoke wafted across the area around the shelterhouse under a clear blue sky. Despite the sun, the day never got much past the low 80s, perfect park weather.

The cookoff showcased new facilities, some of them paid for by last year's event. Campers were hooked up to new electrical outlets, and a mob of kids swarmed over new playground.

It was fascinating just to watch the "younguns" climb all over the gym set.

The committee had more than enough food for everyone. We heard no complaints. As the sun disappeared in the west, the Highway 385 Band from Colorado played bluegrass, and people talked and listened.

After dark, the crowd began to drift off to town. Someone said, "We should do this every weekend." But I think we'd need a few more volunteers.

It's like the fair. Soon as it's over,



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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can't wait for the next one.

New photos from moon orbit show clearly the tracks of the Apollo astronauts and some of the space junk they left behind.

One scientist estimated that it'd take 10 million to 100 million years for the faint movement of moon dust to erase man's tracks. In 40 years, hardly a grain of dust has moved.

The litter on the moon's surface — parts of the lunar landers, used moon buggies, backpacks, insulation, packing material — that will be there until someone cleans it up.

All of which points out that we should be treating the moon — and whatever planets we visit — as if they were wilderness areas.

Shouldn't we be observing the "leave no trace" ethic of a modern conservationist, and not the plunder-and-pillage scenario of early European explorers in the New World? Seems like leaving tracks and junk all over the moon is a little like throwing beer cans out the window in a national park.

There are no park rangers to enforce anti-litter laws up there, of

course, but maybe there should be. I know, the Apollo teams had no way to haul that junk back, but future expeditions will.

One more thing: the moon is fairly sterile, a benign place compared to the planets. We'd do well to be very careful visiting anyplace that might harbor life, no matter how simple.

A Martian bacterium, after all, might be harmless at home, but create a plague on Earth.

Finally, the wires bring the tragic news of a coed who lost her legs trying to hop a freight train during a weekend excursion to Denver. Seems three students tried to catch a ride back to campus when the accident occurred. It was supposed to be a lark.

It's the kind of crazy stunt that kids will try, but most don't have a clue how dangerous hopping a moving train can be. The injury rate was high enough that railroad employees are no longer allowed to board moving equipment.

The best advice is, stay off the tracks.

About time to get back to church?

To the Editor:

Ronald Reagan said, "If we ever forget we are one nation under God, we will be a nation gone under!"

I heard a song the other day on KLOV. It's my favorite radio station and I hope you're all familiar with it. If you're down, listening will lift your spirits, and if you're feeling good, you'll feel even better. Really great praise songs.

Anyway, some of the words to the song are: "Are you running, searching for something? It's never too late, you can rely on Grace — God is reaching out His hand to you and Mercy doesn't care what you've done — just come home!"

Whether you've never been to church or for one reason or another

Letter to the Editor

have stopped, please consider going. If it's to my church (the United Church), great. Whatever church you choose, please just go. We need to get ourselves back to the Christian foundation our country was built on.

Sunday, Sept. 18, is National Back to Church Sunday, but don't wait 'till then. Go now. I know you'll be glad you did.

The 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks is a day we should all do good things and try to make a difference in as many lives as we can. The United Church is starting

a new Sunday School program, based on this year's Vacation Bible School, which was a big hit. If your children aren't already in a Sunday school program, please plan for them to attend. We'll all learn together.

Classes from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m. will include groups for kindergarten to third grade, fourth to sixth grades, and junior and senior high together. Call the church at 475-2280 for information.

May God bless our nation, our state, and our community.

Phyllis Zwickle, Oberlin

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