

Deb Miller excelled in transportation job

News that Secretary Deb Miller is leaving the Kansas Department of Transportation to work for a private consulting firm does not gladden the heart, because Deb Miller has been good for Kansas.

You could argue that the fact she served three governors over eight years proves she was the right person to lead the agency during a difficult time. Consider especially that those three — Democrats Kathleen Sebelius and Mark Parkinson and Republican Sam Brownback — agreed on almost nothing else.

As secretary of transportation, Ms. Miller has at least two outstanding accomplishments: she shifted the culture of the department from an agency that listened mostly to engineers, to one that tried to listen to people, and she managed the almost impossible when she shepherded a new transportation program through the Legislature in the midst of a recession and massive state budget cutbacks last year.

Ms. Miller did much more than that, of course. She brought a new sense of mission to the department and she brought many ordinary Kansans in to advise the engineers. She lifted the “glass ceiling” for the agency’s women with the appointment of the first woman district engineer, among others. She sent teams out to listen to local public officials about their highways, and made it a point to get to know the movers and shakers across the state.

In our area, after listening to the people, she championed a plan to make low-cost “practical” improvements to rural secondary highways, starting at K-23 south of Grainfield.

Paved shoulders replaced steep drop-offs into the ditch. The department stressed citizen involvement. Local officials helped set priorities for improvements.

It’s high time, we’re sure, that she get out in the private sector and make some money. The state cannot pay leaders of her calibre what they are worth, but in a sense, her contributions have been priceless. She always took time to listen to people’s ideas, incorporating the best of them into the department’s planning.

That alone was a seismic shift in an agency where thinking had become ossified after the last great upheaval, when after years of political influence, the engineers were put in charge and the old state Highway Commission put out to pasture.

If that had to happen, then so did the new revolution of meshing people’s desires with sound engineering.

So, hats off to the departing secretary. She has led the department well, with the good of our state always in mind, and leaves a legacy of good roads, improved rail and airport programs, and strong planning for the future. Those plans range from a network of four-lane expressways to carry ever greater traffic to improved rail lines, a major intermodal hub outside of Kansas City, preliminary talks to extend an Amtrak train from Oklahoma to Kansas City and continued strong emphasis on keeping Kansas highways in top condition.

So long, madam secretary. And thanks.
— Steve Haynes

Feathers in mouth a bad sign

You’d think with the kids gone, things would have gotten less hectic around our house.

Let’s face it, three kids keep you jumping, and I figured that when the kids went off to college and the old dog died, it would get more peaceful around here.

Well, two out of three of our children are married and living in Georgia. The last, our son, graduated from high school in 1999 and never looked back. He lives in Lawrence now and comes home only when threatened.

The old dog — two of them actually — did die, and I vowed no more dogs, gerbils, rabbits, hamsters, lizards or snakes. I also decided that two to three cats was the limit.

So why am I living with four cats and a dog?

Well, the dog belongs to Steve and she lives outside. Unlike the children, he really does feed and take care of her, so I can’t complain too much on that score.

We own two cats — Molly and April Alice.

So why do I get up every morning to four noses sniffing and four tails twitching for breakfast? Well, Jezebel belongs to youngest daughter, who’s husband is allergic to cats.

Frank is April Alice’s son and belongs to our son. The two boys were living the life of carefree bachelors in Lawrence when our son moved into a new apartment which forbade his companion. So Frank came to live with his mother, Molly and Jezebel.

No house with four cats and a

dog is ever totally peaceful. There is always quibbling and jockeying for the best spot in the sun, sofa, chair or lap.

Things got really out of hand last Thursday, however.

I was listening to the last high school football game of the year on the radio in the dining room. Steve was tuned in to the sixth game of the World Series on the television while fixing supper. Three of the cats were milling around the food bowls — they each have one — trying to figure out which one was the best, although they all contained the same stuff.

My sister called and was telling me about how she had stuffed 20 relatives into her two-bedroom home for an alumni weekend when the kids all came home with their kids.

With one ear on the radio and one on my sister’s hilarious recounting of a wild weekend, I noted that the fourth cat, Frank, was at the back door.

Frank is a notorious in-out. If he can get the human servants to cooperate, he will go in and out the back door 100 times a day.

I was just about to get up to let him in when I noticed movement in his mouth.

I made frantic gestures at Steve, who — involved with a strike out on the television and putting a BLT together on a plate — was oblivious.

Frank continued to maul the animal in his mouth. Steve continued to watch and cook. I was mesmerized by the cat, my sister and the football game.

Finally, I got Steve’s attention and he checked on the cat. The bird was toast and partially eaten by then.

Looking back, I realized several things:

Thankfully, the World Series and high school football are over for another year.

I owe my sister a phone call and an apology.

My husband makes really good BLTs without ever seeming to look at what he’s doing.

And, always check the cat’s mouth before letting him in.

Well, time to feed the cats. Come on Molly, Jez, April Alice and you too, Killer.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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This year, lights go out early

This year it’s going to be different. I told Jim we were going to start putting up our Christmas lights this week so when we return from Thanksgiving in Texas, the lights will be up and ready to go.

I can’t tell you how many years we (well, really Jim) have battled blizzards and blinding snow to get up “just one more string of lights” before Christmas Eve. I don’t want to go through that again, so this week I am going to start carrying up some of the boxes of lights stored in the basement.

I say “some” with tongue in cheek because we have enough lights to decorate the entire town. We have miles of lights in every color. My job is to test the old strings and replace any burned out bulbs. In addition, we have a stockpile of dozens of boxes of brand-new lights we’ve picked up over the years in after-Christmas sales.

Jim has the reputation for putting lights on everything that doesn’t move. And that kind of ambition takes time, so we need to get an early start. I just want him to limit it to our own property.

Monday was my last day back



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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in the official work-a-day world. My society editor counterpart has healed and is ready to get back into harness. Just when I was getting into the “swing of things,” it’s time to go.

I just want to turn her desk back over to her in good shape. I’ve had a lot of fun working these past few weeks and will miss seeing my office friends. But I know I’ll be dropping in on them now and then.

When I told one of my Dallas daughters that snow was in our forecast she said, “Yeah, we’ve had a weather warning, too. The weatherman said to grab our jackets this morning; it might drop into the low 70s.”

She’s so funny.
The older we get, the better Texas

From the Bible

But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

— Matthew 23:11-12

Preacher decries Devil logo

To the Editor:

We are thankful to have “Reviving the Hearts of Oberlin,” a preaching and prayer vigil at The Gateway, during this time. Preaching and prayer started Sunday, Oct. 23, and will continue 24 hours a day until the Lord brings our activities to a stop.

Initially, the vigil was a response to the guidance of God’s Spirit upon several people to gather in loving support of this town and those who are hurting or lost. Many people do not realize we have lost six young men so far this year. Numerous prayers were lifted up specifically for the comfort and healing of those affected by the loss of a loved one. We encourage each of you to seek out Jesus at the church of your choice.

Amazingly, God drew together people with very different spiritual backgrounds but with many shared beliefs regarding Jesus Christ. They were convinced that God’s Spirit had brought them to this event. Most were also amazed at the power of God to bring them together in such unity of Spirit and purpose.

Night and day, God had those He called to this time and place praying, preaching God’s Word, sharing their love of Christ and speaking out about where God was leading their hearts concerning Oberlin. We prayed for the lives and souls of Oberlin, Decatur County, Kansas, the United States and the ends of the earth.

I pray that our school administrators, business people and community leaders are open to receiving Godly counsel. (Psalm 1:1) One prayer and preaching theme kept coming up over and over. Those present attributed it to God’s Spirit. Therefore, in the Spirit of God, I lovingly say the Red Devil emblem is hurting our community.

How can that be you ask? While we know that the emblem has no power, but it seems to act as an

Letter to the Editor

open invitation to the enemy of our souls to come into our community and our lives. It is an open invitation to the enemy to enter the lives and souls of our children and our grandchildren. The Biblical names for the one it portrays include Adversary, distressing spirit, Father of Lies, Liar, Lying Spirit, Murderer, Power of Darkness, Ruler of Demons, Satan, Spirit who works in the sons of disobedience, Tempter, the god of this age, Unclean Spirit and Wicked One.

The Bible clearly describes the influence of Satan on our lives: lying, stealing, creating adversarial relationships, creating disobedience to parents and authority figures and God, facilitating and tempting to evil and wickedness. What would that look like? The influence of Satan and our sinful nature is lived out as adultery, fornication (unwanted pregnancies and/or abortion), lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousy, wrath, selfish ambitions, dissension, heresy, envy, murder, drunkenness, revelry and the like... (Galatians 5:19-21)

An open invitation to Satan is an open invitation to his activity and influence in our community. We are seeing all these behaviors, and it should grieve us and move us with compassion and action. If nothing changes, then nothing changes, and we can realistically expect a continuance, if not an increase, of these behaviors.

Jesus said: “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. (John 10:10 NKJV)

I know a pharmacist who refused to move to Oberlin based solely upon the presence of the Red Devil

emblem. Being somewhat new to Oberlin, I have been surprised by the number of people I meet in neighboring towns and cities that make similar comments.

In our busy work-a-day lives we can easily brush aside the Lord’s leading in this matter with unbelief or denial. You can justify continued use of the emblem in numerous ways, including standing on tradition.

There will be those that will scoff and say “those Jesus freaks have tried before and failed.” There are those who cannot understand why we cannot let this go. Please ponder the connection between the emblem, the name and the influence behind them.

Hopefully it will strike you that hanging on to an emblem is not worth it if there is any possibility that it is connected to the pain and suffering and loss of life in our community. I know that I speak to reasonable men and women in our community. I hope that I also speak to courageous people who are in a position to consider that spiritual discernment is part of faith.

I believe I was compelled by the very Spirit of God to compose this letter. I believe that God wants it made known that the Red Devil emblem is opening people’s hearts up to the influence and leading of the enemy of our soul. This is causing everyone here harm.

I can only convey to you that several people believe God’s Spirit was directing their prayer requests in this area. Would it not serve this city and county just as well to use the school’s proper name and drop the Oberlin Red Devil emblem and references?

Evangelist John L. Paulson, Oberlin

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