

## Kansas slights visitors with tiny welcome signs

Kansas has some of the worst "welcome" signs in the nation. If you don't believe us, go up to the boarder and check—if you can even read the sign.

We can't. That's the first problem.

In an apparent effort to save scarce state cash, the Sebelius administration got these down to nearly the size of a "city limit" sign. And while we applaud frugality, you gotta be able to read the sign to get the effect.

We think the sign says "Welcome to" before Kansas, but who can read it on a postage stamp? A temporary "Welcome Hunters" sign is a lot bigger.

Our neighbor to the north, by contrast, has big, bold signs that feature a covered wagon or a cowboy and a slogan, such as "Nebraska, the good life." Nothing fancy, but readable.

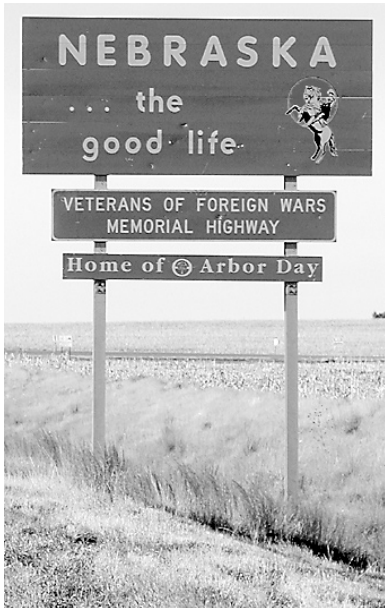
Kansas once has such signs, big green ones that said "Kansas, Midway USA." These featured an oversized sunflower with a "stalk" — really the I-beam holding up the sign — set at an angle.

A separate panel that read, "Robert B. Docking, governor," offended the Republican Legislature and may have set the stage for later changes. None was for the better.

As governors came and went, so did the signs. All would be replaced as a new administration hired a new ad agency which produced new slogans and logos. What waste!

The sunflowers fell, their sign extension taken up by "Ah Kansas" logos. That slogan, paid for by the Bill Bennett regime, was forgettable, as was the later "Kansas, simply wonderful."

The Joan Finney administration replaced those with a Kansas logo that seemed to



explode into confetti, product of yet another agency. Then, under Bill Graves, the governor's wife Linda designed a sign with a big, ugly sunflower and a purple background.

Those came down when the Sebelius gang hired yet another agency to produce yet another state "image." A wavy logo appeared on everything from stationary to signs, but the size dropped so far you can't read 'em.

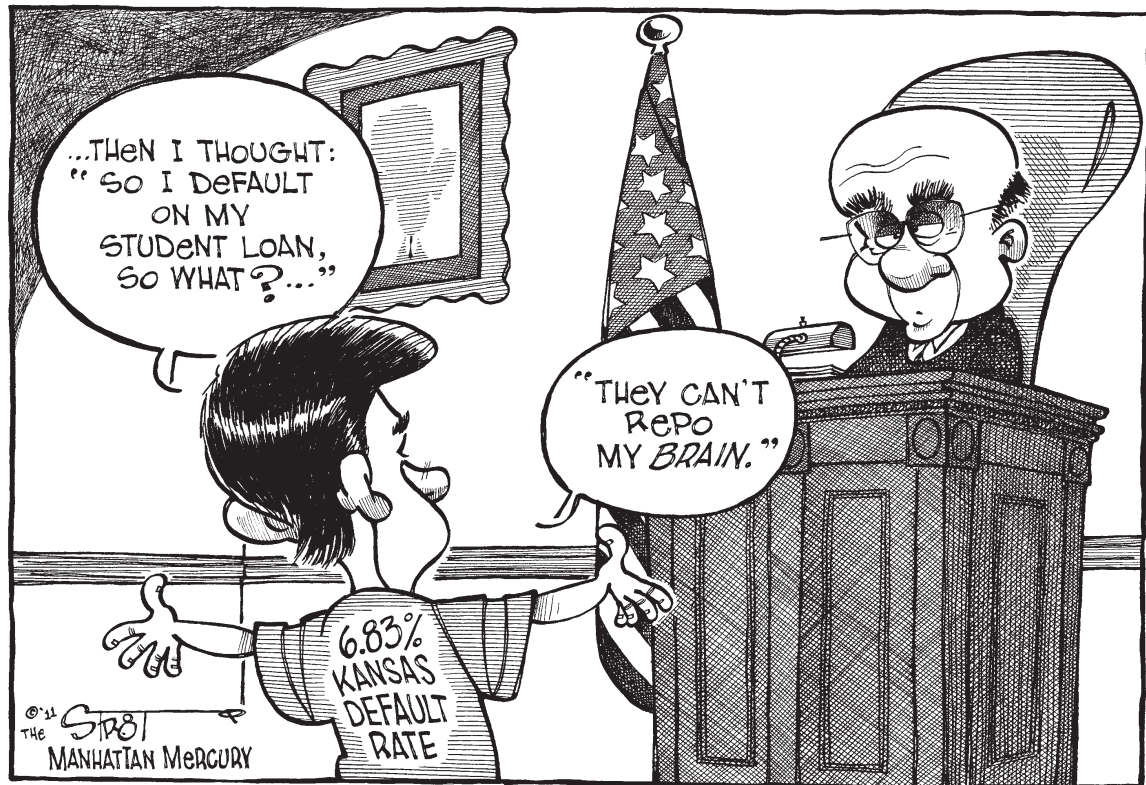
If there's a theme here, it's that governors can waste a lot of money paying ever-willing agencies to produce an "image" that will be canned four to eight years later. No Legislature should allow money for that.

The second lesson might be that simple is better, that any slogan should be enduring — or on a plate that can be easily changed with the administration — and that the sunflower is the most recognizable symbol we have.

We've been the Sunflower State, the Wheat State and a lot of other things. Sunflowers are attractive and the image sticks around.

Kansas should put up permanent border signs. The rest is just politics — or the fuzzy thinking of underage kids at some New York agency.

Make 'em big enough to read and leave 'em up. That's the way to do it. — Steve Haynes.



## 'Elfkings' report on Oberlin

To the Editor:

We, the smallest Elfkin children, were sent here by the All-Wise and loving Father Elf, Brother Elf and Mother Elf. They sent us to come and find out about the people and community of Oberlin, Kan. Why, you ask?

Father Elf said, "Many town folks of all ages have been praying and asking for help because of some sad losses of lives and depressing events there. Furthermore, these last years, the population was dropping. Youth leaving. Businesses closing one at a time. Fewer people willing to serve in local government or school boards or the county commission.

"There's never enough money to go around to support or run or fill the needs of the city. Old feuds simmer. Civic clubs shrinking in numbers, people passing on or up."

We seem to get in an old rut, and that is why things need to be heated up: to bring things to the light and the surface. If we don't — it becomes "status quo."

We are so excited about being sent here, and this is a noble mission to come along to help the community of Oberlin. We will help them to engage in new thoughts, new insights and fresh vision to connect the dots, to open minds and hearts to change. Tradition has deep roots here in Oberlin, so moving our community from yesterday to tomorrow will take time, vision and lots of energy.

When we Elfkins walk the streets, we see lots of promise and hope here. People are friendly, welcoming, smiling, waving, talking and being very kind to each other. Yes,

we also see many people volunteering and taking leadership roles, being good stewards within this community.

Thank you, wise and loving Father Elf, Brother Elf and Mother Elf for sending us here. We know now why you love the folks in Oberlin. They have welcomed and loved us.

See you next week. Look for our Elf Report and update.

Your Little Elfkins

**Street Report on Good Deeds**

We were walking in front of Fredrickson Insurance Agency when we saw this beautiful white-colored, glittering manger scene of Joseph and Mary with baby Jesus in the crib. We stopped and commented that we don't usually see public displays to do with God anymore. Tammy and Fonda spoke up and said, "We did it because we wanted to. Besides, Christmas has everything to do with God, Jesus and angels and His love towards us."

Fonda told us the theme for this season is "Wrapping Up a Merry Christmas." Didn't it start with the Baby Jesus?

**Second Good-Deed Report**

We walked into Stanley Hardware, and we saw people bringing canned food and packaged boxes and putting the items in the big front window display. We asked about this. Joe said, "This is the 12th year we have had a Food Bank drive from Thanksgiving to the end of the year. Our goal is to collect 2,000 food items to help people."

**Third Good Deeds Report**

We Elfkins continued down the street 'til we came to this beautiful new brown building. We were so curious about the cars parked outside. We walked in to see beautiful rooms, so warm and cozy, with good aromas throughout the halls. We inquired and found out it was the Oberlin Meal Site and the Golden Age Kitchen was on the other side. A kitchen was in the center.

Helen and Myrna were decorating a Christmas tree with colorful ornaments, pretty ribbons and several strings of multi-colored mini lights. We asked what is this for? They responded, "It's an Adult Angel Tree."

Now, we had heard of Children's Angel Trees — but, what was an adult one? Do you mean that any adult will be remembered and have a present under this tree? Yes, they said. All the people have to do is help us out. Any adult, a neighbor, shut-in, old friend, adult family member, or someone that doesn't have someone can be remembered by each one bringing a wrapped Christmas present with their adult's name and address on it and put under the tree here at the Oberlin Meal Site. We Elfkins asked, can we deliver the presents? Please? So, it was agreed. The deadline to bring the wrapped presents is Dec. 22 and on Dec. 23, the Elfkins will deliver the presents.

If you want to give a gift to some adults, but don't have a name — call *The Oberlin Herald* (475-2206) and give them your phone number. We have some to share.

## Carrots plucked before snow

Before the snow hit and the ground froze solid, I went out and picked my last root crop.

I had already brought in the cabbages. They weren't very big, but one makes a nice slaw for the two of us. A store-bought cabbage will make three to four slaws each but they aren't as flavorful as mine.

Besides cabbage, though, I like to have a carrot or two in my slaw, so I picked some. Then I picked some more, and finally, I just pulled every one from the ground. I ended up with almost four pounds of carrots and one scraggly turnip in a paper grocery bag.

It was quite a harvest, and I could have made mud pies in the sink after washing and detopping them.

Then I took the crop to the office and gave about three-fourths of them away. Six or seven carrots is all that Steve and I can eat in the next few weeks. Besides, I didn't get that many cabbages this year.

Still, with the tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squash, radishes, peas, beans and cabbages all picked and eaten or given away, and the garden mostly bedded down for the winter,



### Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
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the carrots (and turnip) are about the end of the line.

Well, there was still some fall lettuce growing out there, but with this really cold weather, it's probably gone, too.

It was a great growing season, and I'm already planning for next year. But, for now, the garden is covered with grass clippings and chopped-up leaves and seems to be preparing for its long winter's nap.

I think I have about two weeks before the first spring seed catalogue hits the mailbox. Meanwhile, down in Georgia, my girls are still picking things.

Lindsay went outside this week and got a green pepper off her vines to put into a recipe, and Felicia has

strings of chili peppers decorating her door and more decorating her back fence. She takes fishing line and a large needle and just picks them and strings them.

I'm both awed and impressed. It makes me want to grow chili, but since the only thing I put chili in is chili, it really would be just for decoration, and I don't have enough garden space to give it over to decorative plants.

In my yard, even the irises have to share space with the garlic and other flowers live with the asparagus.

Well, it would be nice to have an all-year garden, but I'd probably get tired of it. And just think of the weeding!

### From the Bible

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

—Romans 12: 1-2

## Bonfire set for Sappa

To the Editor:

With the consent of the City of Oberlin, the big pile of branches and wood west of the shelter house in Sappa Park by the lake will be burned from 2 to 5 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 18.

Let's have an old-fashioned get-together and roast hot dogs and marshmallows, and make s'mores. There will be music, sing-alongs and much fun dancing 'round the bonfire.

If anyone has horses and flat-bed wagons with hay bales, we could ride out to Sappa Park and laugh

### Letter to the Editor

all the way. We will all meet behind Crossroads Express on the hill at 2 p.m. Bring warm clothes, food and refreshments and happy faces. Everyone is welcome for a fun December picnic in the park!

Susan Rynearson,  
Carolyn Hackney, Oberlin

## Quiet office stills her muse

This is weird. We finally moved the computer from the desk in our bedroom to the desk in the new office. And now I'm sitting here, fingers on the keyboard, staring at my lime-green walls, my mind totally blank.

You see, I'm used to having a TV in the room, perhaps just for noise, but I was used to flipping channels while I worked on this column. The office does not have a television. It just has quiet. The silence is deafening. I don't know if I can work like this or not.

At least the cats are entertaining. I'm watching one play with a rubber band. She throws it in the air, then pounces on it. It must feel strange in her mouth, because as soon as she picks it up, she spits it right back out.

Somehow, she got it under the corner of the new zebra-print area rug I put down on the floor of the office, and she kept digging at the edge of the carpet. Finally, I couldn't take the sound anymore and retrieved her rubber band for her. It's not television, but it'll have to do.

All my big predictions about putting our Christmas lights up early were for naught. Since outside lights fall under the "Jim's Job" category, I don't mess with them until he's ready. I kept asking (he says nagging) when he was going to put up lights.

His answer, "I'm just not feeling it."



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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Well, we mustn't rush the artist. When he's ready, he's ready.

Until then, I will work inside, but I don't think I'll use the traditional tree. You see, I found the perfectly shaped tumbleweed. Usually, tumbleweeds are squat and round. I, however, found one shaped just like a Christmas tree. I'm going to set it in a can of plaster of Paris, spray-paint it silver, put some tinsel on it and call it good.

I remember the year my mom cut a large triangle shape out of chicken wire and hung it on the wall above the divan. (That's the sofa or couch to my younger readers.) She sent me, clippers in hand, to the evergreen trees, where I cut short branches which we stuck in the chicken wire.

Presto! Change-o! We had a Christmas tree, complete with ornaments, lights and presents lined up on the back of the divan.

Jim was talking with our daughter Jennifer in San Antonio, telling her of our recent snowfall. She said it was raining there.

"That's great," he said. "You don't have to shovel rain."

Indeed you don't. But my co-worker Tim at the radio station, where I still work one Sunday morning a month, had to shovel a bunch of the white stuff. The drive had drifted full and even his honkin' big pickup truck got high centered. He warned me not to pull in the drive, so I had to park my van on the edge of the highway and walk through the snow up to the station.

Trying to walk in the tire tracks is harder than it looks. How do cows do it? Their trails aren't any wider than the tire track, and they don't seem to wobble and step outside the track like I did.

Christmas is less than three weeks away. I don't stress too much about shopping. I get Jim a new pair of overalls, and that's about it. I don't need a thing, but if you want to "put a bug" in his ear, my bottle of perfume is about gone.

Don't worry. He knows what brand.

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