

Elfkins continue reports

To the Editor:
All the Elfs and Elfkins came down to the happy town of Oberlin on Christmas. Every house was decorated with lights and sounds of joy, praise, merriment and wonder.

Elfkins First Report

We spoke to Dorothy Moore, who manages the Golden Age Center, a pleasant and caring person. Think of her as "Dorothy from Kansas!"

She is so thankful to the people for providing this beautiful building for family gatherings, meetings, exercise, benefits, gymnastics, banquets, puzzles, games and more.

Meals are provided for seniors during the week, cooked in Atwood and served here.

"I've been managing this center for 10 years," she said, "and so enjoy the new building built by the community two years ago."

"I appreciate this job opportunity. The new building, the community has provided offers great comfort, convenience and pleasure for all our seniors here."

Thank you, Dorothy.

Second Elfkin Report

"There are houses of love, where children live!" We report to Wise Father Elf, Mother Elf and Brother Elf about these homes where all the children are happy and well taken care of by mothers and fathers. (Some have children who had no one to take care or love them.)

Father Elf spoke about these fathers and mothers who cared enough to take them into their homes and make them their own and raise them up in Christian love. Father Elf said: "Every house where love exists, there truly are caring families."

Little sister Elfkin was very excited and interrupted! "We saw all these big houses, too! They were celebrating the birth of the greatest baby ever born!"

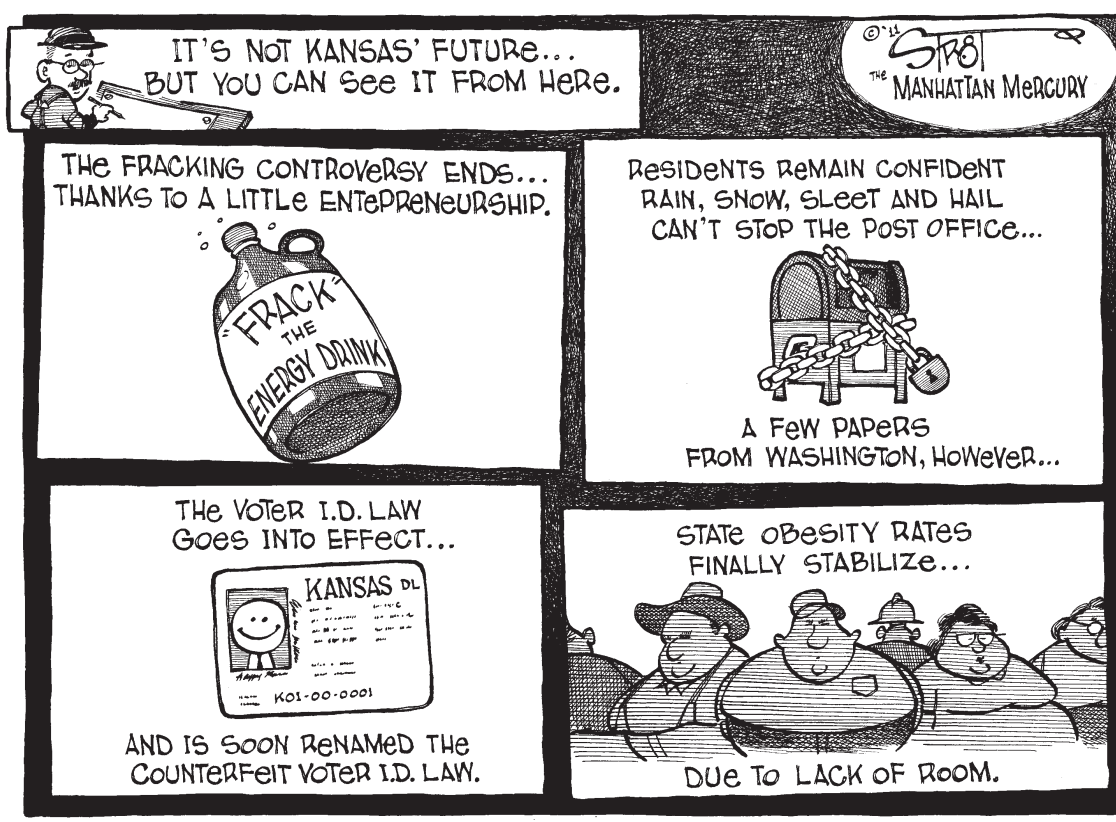
Brother Elfkin teased, "They aren't big houses, they're churches, silly! On Christmas, every small and big house comes together with people who worship in songs and praise, giving thanksgiving to the "Glory of God" in the highest, and Peace on Earth among men, with whom he is well pleased."

"Why do all the churches have a different name above their doors?" asked the smaller Elfkins. Mother Elf said, "Just because they have different names for their churches, they all have the same faith in the Lord Jesus! The celebration of the birth of Baby Jesus brings us together in hope and love."

It's time for us to return to Heaven, enjoy a wonderful meal, and celebrate with joy our heavenly Father, Savior Lord and Holy Spirit!

God Bless everyone and we wish you a Happy New Year!

Your Loving Elfkin Family



Republicans don't need Newt

The dull roar you hear coming from the White House these days is actually the sound of Obama staffers trying to contain their glee. Is it actually possible that the Republicans will choose Newt Gingrich as their nominee for President?

It's not an earth-shaking prediction to say that Barack Obama will easily defeat the former House speaker should such a matchup unfold. Newt's unelectable.

Political ad makers would undoubtedly have a field day next fall with his 30-plus years in politics, three marriages, work as a lobbyist, history of unpredictable and petulant behavior, etc., etc.

Why are Republicans on the verge of nominating a candidate who might threaten to join Alf Landon and Walter Mondale as one of the biggest Presidential-election losers in history? For an answer, you need to look at the political phenomenon known as the Tea Party. This grass roots movement galvanized opposition to President Obama's health-care reform in the midst of a sharp economic downturn and ushered in large Republican gains in the 2010 off-year elections.

The movement has always been a bit divorced from reality - criticizing President Obama for budget deficits that were the product of the Bush tax cuts, wars and a severe recession, for example. And yes, it was tinged with a bit of racism - exemplified by the "birther" movement and vociferous support of the Arizona immigration law. But their unifying mantra has always been uncompromising opposition to the policies of Barack Obama.

Say what you will, the movement was successful at the ballot box in November 2010. And that pushed the Republican Party far to the right.

To expand and solidify its takeover of the Republican Party, the Tea Party movement needs to nominate



Smokey Hill Observer

By Alan Jilka
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one of its own as the standard bearer next year. Therein lies the problem: One by one, this year Tea Party favorites have crashed and burned.

Sarah Palin had the inside track at first. But Palin advertised her lack of substance early and was written off by most Republicans after her comments in the aftermath of the Arizona shootings in January.

Donald Trump stepped in for a few weeks just to fan the birther nonsense. Then Michele Bachmann picked up the mantle for a time, even managing to win the Iowa Straw Poll. But her star faded just as quickly as the national spotlight showed her penchant for twisting the facts, or even making up her own.

Gov. Rick Perry then jumped in with all the swagger of a swash-buckling Texas cowboy. He exploded after a series of gaffes and poor debate performances. Herman Cain inherited the Perry (Tea Party) crowd. But he, too, soon withered under the relentless scrutiny of modern-day presidential politics.

Throughout this soap opera, Mitt Romney has remained the steady presumed front-runner. And con-

servative Tea Partiers do not like Romney. With all the flip-flops in his political career, it's hard to say where he really is on a lot of issues. But consensus has it that he is the most moderate of the candidates.

And "moderate" is a dirty word to the Republican far right, who see the battle as a struggle for the soul of the party.

So who's left? Jon Huntsman, another moderate? Forget it. Rick Santorum? What's he doing on the stage anyway? The only other option for conservatives, providing they can get past his suggestion that it would be impractical to deport 12 million undocumented immigrants, is Newt Gingrich.

The situation on the ground leaves Tea Partiers with a lose-lose proposition. Romney is not one of them. And Newt can't win.

Could it be that the Tea Party tide is receding into the waters of historical anecdote?

Alan Jilka of Salina is vice president of Jilka Furniture, former mayor of Salina and a one-time Democratic candidate for Congress in the Kansas 1st District.

Committee plan would save cash, protect retirees

By SENATOR JEFF KING
The KPERS Study Commission has met the challenge given to it by the Kansas Legislature. The commission drafted a plan that could save Kansas taxpayers billions of dollars while offering a vibrant retirement system for public employees.

In its current form, the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System faces a bleak future. With an unfunded liability of \$8.3 billion, the system had the second lowest funded ratio of any state retirement plan last year.

In fact, it is so badly upside-down that it can never be fully funded in its present form.

This system must change. The commission, a group of five legislators and eight private citizens, have spent the past six months studying the system and examining pension reform efforts across the country.

This effort had one objective: to provide a robust retirement for public employees without bankrupting the state's taxpayers.

The commission recommended three sweeping changes that will save Kansas taxpayers almost \$4.5 billion while creating a sustainable retirement plan that will improve benefits for most future eligible employees:

Meeting Legislative Funding Obligations: The commission tasked the Legislature to immediately provide the money needed to properly reduce the system's deficit. Decades of underfunding has exacerbated the current problem. By putting new money immediately into the system, the Legislature would save billions in future costs.

Fully Enacting House Bill 2194: For current employees with three or more years of service, the commission endorsed a plan tentatively adopted by the 2011 Legislature.

That bill (HB 2194) would provide current employees with two choices for their future years of service: pay 2 percent more of their salary into the system for a 6 percent benefit increase; or keep current

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contribution levels while accepting a 20 percent benefit reduction.

Moving New Employees to a 401(k)-Style Plan: The commission proposed a new 401(k)-type system for future employees and those with less than three years of service.

Employees would contribute 6 percent of their salary to their retirement fund, as they do in the current system.

The state would contribute 1 percent for new employees, increasing each year to a maximum of 5 percent after eight years' service.

These retirement savings will grow based on market returns. Unlike traditional 401(k) plans, public employees could invest their savings at virtually no cost with the system's investment experts and would receive an above-market rate annuity from the state's retirement contributions.

Not only will the commission's plan save Kansas taxpayers billions of dollars, it will provide greater retirement benefits to most new public employees.

The new plan will help employees who change jobs or leave Kansas during their career, probably the vast majority of today's workforce. For instance, under historic investment returns, a teacher who works from age 22 to 47 will retire with double the benefits under the commission's plan.

Most importantly, the commission's plan is a "pay-as-you-go" system. This requires the Legislature to pay all of its retirement obligations every year. No longer will Kansas push the retirement costs of today's workers onto the next generation.

Sen. Jeff King (R-Independence) is co-chair of the KPERS Study Commission and author of the commission plan discussed in this article.

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810 W. Columbia - Oberlin

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Monthly - (785) 625-4699

Urology - Dr. Darrell Werth
Monthly
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Tim Davis

Farm Bureau Financial Services is pleased to introduce Timothy Davis, as the most recent addition to the Oberlin office. As a Sales Associate for Farm Bureau Financial Services. Mr. Davis is excited about the opportunity to help Farm Bureau customers prepare for the future and protect what matters most to them by providing products and services that protect families, individuals and businesses.

Prior to joining Farm Bureau Financial Service, Mr. Davis was the Advertising Manager for *The Oberlin Herald*. Timothy and his wife Kimberly are parents to twin eight-year-old girls and are actively involved in community and church events. Mr. Davis is the current president of the Oberlin Christian Motorcyclists Association.

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