

## Hospital administrator gave community her all

It will be hard to find anyone to run Decatur Health Systems who cares any more about the job, the people and the town than Lynn Doeden has.

More than that, though, Mrs. Doeden showed vision and dedication in her 13 years at the helm of the Decatur County Hospital and the health-care system she helped build around it.

Her tenure alone shows how well she fit into the job; her immediate predecessors, good men all, lasted but a few years each. It's a tough job, balancing the needs of community, doctors, budget, staff and board.

Lynn never shied away from a challenge. When Banner Health Systems dumped the hospital after 50 years, she helped build the present management firm to take over. Her success with that might have been accomplished enough. That gamble might have taxed a lesser person.

She took over after a round of major cost cuts, cuts that left many people without a job and more with fewer hours and less income. Yet, as the economy shifted, she was forced to cut even more. And she faced that challenge.

Then, when the town's clinic seemed to be failing, when the only doctor who could deliver babies left and much business was leaving town, Mrs. Doeden did what many thought necessary to save the hospital: she pushed to build a clinic of its own.

This was a step that hospitals nearly every western Kansas county had taken, some of them years before. It was not done without pain and anguish — and some hard feelings

— in those places, either. But our neighbors not only showed the way, they proved that a strong clinic attached to a hospital that meets the needs of a town could prosper and bring the hospital along with it.

Now Mrs. Doeden is leaving, and while the task of rebuilding the system remains half done, the plan is clear and the hard part has been accomplished, bringing hospital and clinic together.

She has enough battle scars, we're sure, to last a lifetime. It may be best for someone else to come in and pick up the pieces, lead the combined health-care system to greater glory. The new person will start without the baggage accumulated in all those past scrapes.

The foundation Lynn established will make success possible, and for that, we are in her debt. She never backed down when she thought she was right. She accomplished a great deal in her time at the helm. It was her lot sometimes to do the unpopular thing when that's what needed doing. If that was divisive, well, sometimes trying to do the right thing is not popular.

It could be said of Mrs. Doeden that she did her best, which is a great deal more than many. Her heart was in the right place, and she got things done.

We wish her well as she continues her career, and we wish the county's hospital board luck as it searches for a replacement, and for the doctors we so sorely need. This community needs to pull together behind them, because they will need everyone's support.

As for Lynn Doeden, her impact will be felt here long after she leaves. — *Steve Haynes*



## OK folks, it's time to look up

Oberlin, I think it's time we had a talk.

It's been a rough week for us. Heck, it's been a rough year.

I know I've only been here two months, but I feel like we've grown very close, and I care deeply about you. Right now, it seems like everything is going wrong — if it's not crops failing because of drought, or catching fire, it's some of our community's biggest pillars stepping down from their posts and seemingly giving up. That's hard for any town to take.

But I tell you what, Oberlin. You know what the best thing about hitting bottom is? You can only go up from there.

And this week is feeling awfully close to bottom. People aren't getting along the way I imagined they would in a small town. There seems to be less neighborly help and more bureaucratic inaction, less understanding and more blame shifting, and less compromise and more anger than I expected. But then again, almost every expectation I had about moving here has been proven wrong. And that's a good thing.

I think now more than ever, we need to examine ourselves and our



### Newcomer's View

By *Stephanie DeCamp*  
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place in society. Our mayor and hospital administrator have stepped down and out of the arena, and it's time to admit that we may have had something to do with that. As much as you never want to hear it, when someone breaks up with you, you have to wonder if maybe — just maybe — you had something to do with it.

So what does that mean, and what am I getting at? I'm getting at this: If there's a problem, change starts at home. If there's an issue, compromise is a value, not a hindrance. And if we want to make this place the best it possibly can be, if we want to bring back our civic pride and the energy that used to course through these brick streets, then we need to start working together.

I dare you.

This week, I dare you. I dare you to reach out to someone you've been upset with, fighting with or filing complaints against. I dare you to talk to them as if they were related to you: with reason and compassion. I dare you to compromise, and to bury the hatchet. If we can start this on a personal level, then just think what we can accomplish together on a municipal level.

So write to me. Send letters and e-mails telling me what you did this week that changed something. Tell me how you helped your neighbor, or resolved a conflict, or got to know someone you never thought you'd have anything in common with. It's time to dig through our sufferings and find some gold in there.

Because we can only get better from here, after all.

## Her wise words confuse teen

I forget how ridiculous some of my euphemisms may sound.

My 13-year-old granddaughter, Taylor, has been with us for a couple of weeks and is usually eager to help me do anything I ask. But when I was expecting company one evening and we had been late getting home, I said to her, "Come on, Taylor. Hurry and help me put a little spit and polish on the house."

"All right," she replied, "as long as I don't have to actually spit on anything."

-ob-

Last week was my birthday, and it was the BIG one. Without spelling it out, I can tell you that now Uncle Sam will help pay for my health care coverage. He's getting off easy, though. I am disgustingly healthy.

I had a nice surprise, too. I thought the library shelves and cabinets were my present, but, no. My husband had something else in the works. I had been gone most all day, and when I parked the van out front I saw a sign on the front door that said, "Happy Birthday Carolyn! Surprise Inside."

I thought he had really pushed hard and finished some of the cabinets. But when I opened the front door, the library shelves looked the same as when I had left. It wasn't until I stepped into the kitchen that I saw the ribbons and another "Happy Birthday" sign on the new storage drawer under my oven.

It's perfect. Extra deep for those big pots and pans you don't use often, but want handy when you



### Out Back

By *Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts*  
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need them.

I am one "lucky ducky" to have a husband who not only can build things like that, but who WILL.

Of course, that's what he says about me and cooking.

"Not only can she cook; she will cook."

-ob-

Speaking of cooking, this will be the week for it. The county fair starts this week, and I usually enter an apple pie.

A dear friend (and friendly competitor) and I usually take turns winning "Grand Champion" on our pies. This year should be a shoo-in for me 'cause Dianne said she wasn't going to enter. I better not get too cocky, though, or this could be the year I burn everything.

Jim gets all excited when I tell him I'm taking my apple pie to the fair, because he knows he gets the rejects. I make three pies on entry morning and take only the best looking one of the bunch. He's already stocked up on vanilla ice cream.

-ob-

My oldest daughter, Halley, arrived Saturday night. She will stay

a few days, then take Taylor home with her. Hopefully not before we get some projects done. Or not. It doesn't really matter. I get so caught up in just talking and hanging out that I forget about working on anything.

That's the way it's been with Taylor, too. We have spent a lot of time together, but not really done anything special. What has been special is our "talks." She is a very insightful young lady and asks some deep questions. I know she has her own thoughts, but always asks, "What do you think about that, Grandma?"

### From the Bible

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

— II Peter 1:20-21

## Senate fight a major battle

By the time you read this, perhaps we'll know who won the fight to control the state Senate.

The results will determine a lot about the future course of state government, though the battle itself has been waged largely out of sight.

The Senate is the last bastion of the "moderate" wing of the Republican party, a group that by and large has run things in this state for many years. Moderates like to trace their heritage back to Gov. Bill Graves, President Dwight Eisenhower and Gov. Alf Landon.

Until recently, the faction controlled the leadership in both houses of the Legislature, the governor's office (except when a Democrat happened to get elected) and the party machinery.

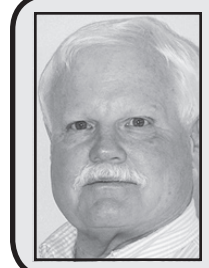
Over the last decade, the party's conservative wing has been ascending, however. First the conservatives took over the House of Representatives, then with the election of former U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback as governor, the executive suite.

After this conservative surge, the forces that be on the right set their sights on the moderate leadership of the Senate, which stood in the way of many conservative goals.

Even so, the conservatives seemed to have their way, passing massive tax cuts and a budget that not only balanced, but included the required reserves to tide the state over any revenue shortages.

To understand all this, first you have to understand the "one/two/three party" system in Kansas politics.

In our state, there's really only one party, the Republicans. They've been in charge so long, dating back to statehood, that no one remembers why we have so few Democrats.



### Along the Sappa

By *Steve Haynes*  
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Second, while we have, officially, two major political parties, the Democrats seldom win a statewide office and almost never control the Legislature. A lot of people who would be Democrats in most states register and run as Republicans here.

With the Democrats on the outside looking in, the two Republican "parties" slug it out for control of our government. It's like having three parties, only one doesn't count. And the dominant party is split into conservative and liberal wings, the "moderates" backing bigger government and more spending, the conservatives wanting to put a stop to all that after years of moderate control.

A few exceptional Democratic candidates win statewide races, including the conservative Dockings, father and son, and the liberal Kathleen Sebelius, a superb political creature who grew up in the governor's office in Ohio.

But the main lesson of history is, if you want to hold office in Kansas, be a Republican.

No party can survive and be as dominant as the GOP in Kansas and maintain any semblance of unity, however. Nature abhors a vacuum, and in politics, unity is a kind of vacuum, to be filled by those with a lust for power.

It's not just principle that's at stake here, either; billions of dollars in spending ride on the outcome, and the potential recipients want that money.

This year, the conservatives, flush from huge victories, decided to take on the Senate leadership. The goal set by the state Chamber of Commerce, through its political action committee, and other conservative groups was control of all three. Conservative House members were recruited to run against key Senate moderates.

Not surprisingly, the "mods" fought back, piling up a huge war chest from unions, including the Teamsters, and the teachers, who stand to benefit from bigger state spending. With them are the Greater Kansas City Chamber and the state's highway contractors.

Who will win? Your guess is as good as mine. My guess is the conservatives may have overreached. Their play of recruiting House members to unseat the Senate mods may seem too much like a power grab to voters. Plus, it prompted a heavy reaction from the crowd lined up at the public trough. But in recent years, the voters have been in a conservative mood, so who knows.

By the time this reaches you, though, the answer should be clear.

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