

Feline causes cat-tastrophe

I didn't really hear the crash, but the scream woke me from a sound sleep. "Get out! Get out of here, you miserable cat!," my husband was yelling. He was really, really mad. The yelling was uncharacteristic. At 1 a.m., he usually tries to be quiet.

He's the night person and I'm the day gal. He gets up at 8:30 a.m. And goes to bed at 1 to 1:30 a.m. While I get up at 6 to 7:30 a.m. And like to go to bed at 11 p.m. So we try to have quiet time while the other one sleeps.

Something really bad must have happened, I thought as I woke with a start.

As I listened to Steve stamping around into the bathroom, opening drawers and venting his frustration on the floors, I wondered if I should get up and find out what was happening.

I didn't need to. He came into the bedroom and was still stamping and muttering about strangling the cat, just as soon as he found her.

I haven't heard him that angry in years.

He had a bad temper, he says, when he was young. However, he



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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has tried hard over the years to teach himself to control it and today he hardly ever has steam coming out of his ears.

Whatever that cat did, I thought, had him going.

He finally calmed down enough to tell me that Jezabelle had knocked a full glass of ice water over on him, his chair and all the books and papers we had been reading that night.

It seems, the cat, which was sitting in my chair, suddenly decided to move over into his lap. This move was made across a small table between the two chairs. A table containing a large glass of ice water.

Luckily for Jez, she's quick to disappear, and Steve's quick to cool down.

It turns out that neither of them learns from one experience, how-

ever.

The very next night, I heard a moan from the sitting room and a shout.

"She did it again!"

This time there was no explosion. The cry was more of desperation and frustration.

He knows that Jez loves him as much as a cat can love anyone and wants to be with him. He would just prefer that she sit quietly and not spill ice water in his lap at 1 a.m.

I'm assuming they've come to a truce or that he's figured out somewhere else to put his evening glass of water, because this happened a week ago and I haven't been awakened by agonizing screams and the sounds of a cat rushing for cover since.

Of course, we've been gone for three or four days.

Medicaid expansion costly

Last week, I received the results of an analysis commissioned by the state Department of Health and Environment on the potential enrollment and budget impact of the Affordable Care Act's implementation to the state Medicaid/Children's Health Insurance Program.

Assuming that moderate statewide population growth will continue and using 2010 Medicaid enrollment as a base, the study estimates that if the state chooses not to expand Medicaid, the enrollment will increase by 20,653 in 2014, ramping up to 41,538 (23,740 for Medicaid and 17,798 for children's health) by 2016, when the Affordable Care Act is to be fully implemented. The anticipated 10-year state general fund increase with no expansion is \$513 million.

If the state chooses to expand Medicaid, enrollment will increase by 111,880 in 2014, ramping up to 226,003 (25,416 from currently eligible Medicaid, 49,384 from currently eligible Children's Health Insurance Program, and 151,203 from those newly eligible for Medicaid in 2016, once the Affordable Care Act is fully implemented.) The anticipated 10-year state General Fund increase with expansion compared to no Affordable Care Act will be \$1.1 billion.



Letter from Topeka

By State Rep. Ward Cassidy
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Gov. Sam Brownback has not yet announced a decision on whether or not the state will expand Medicaid. \$1.1 billion over 10 years to state expenditures is a significant increase that would have an impact on the state's ability to pay for other core responsibilities, such as education. If the state expands Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act does say that the federal government will pay 100 percent of the cost of the expansion for the first three years and then 90 percent after that. However, if the federal government, which is currently running trillion-dollar deficits, is not able to make good on its offer, then the impact on the state would be even greater.

I need to make a correction about a statement I made last week about KanCare. Most of the recipients had received their card by Jan. 1. The problem was that, in some areas, very few were showing up to get

prescriptions with their new card. Overall, KanCare is off to a very strong start. There would have to be problems, with such a large undertaking, but in the long haul I believe it will benefit the state.

I just finished updating my website www.wardcassidy.com. There is information about all of District 120 counties, my weekly news article, an update on the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System and other information. We will start our district tour soon and will be glad to answer any questions you might have.

Ward Cassidy of St. Francis, a retired school principal and teacher, is the state representative for the 120th District, covering Decatur, Cheyenne, Rawlins, Wallace and Sherman counties and the northwest part of Thomas, including Colby. Send e-mails to ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov.

Senator offers money facts

"Weekly Hard Facts"

- The Kansas Department of Education says taxpayer support for education will set a new record this year at \$12,738 total per-pupil spending.
- By 2033, 21 percent of Kansas' population is projected to be on Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, up from 13 percent currently.
- Kansas' Medicaid expenditures are projected to grow by \$4.7 billion, 29 percent beyond the increase projected without the Affordable Care Act.

- Legislators can only control about 30 percent of the budget by making a commitment to hold schools harmless and honoring all statutory obligations built into the budget.

State and local governments spend the largest part of tax revenues from property and sales taxes.

- "Paycheck Protection" empowers employees by requiring labor unions to obtain approval from members to spend their contributions for political activities, parties, advocacy or candidates.

By Friday, the Legislature will have reached the halfway point for the 2013 Session, known as Turnaround. This date is when each chamber begins to consider the bills from the other. The pace for the next couple of weeks will pick up,



Letter from Topeka

By Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer
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as there will be more bills reaching the Senate floor for debate as committees continue to pass bills out for debate by the Senate.

Major Issues

A bill is pending that would require drug testing for recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families who are eligible for cash assistance and unemployment compensation to undergo drug testing if there is reasonable suspicion they are using illegal substances. SB149 has been referred to the Senate Commerce Committee for hearings.

Strengthening the state economy is a pressing issue this session. The goal is to develop a favorable tax policy that would further enable employers to create jobs and at the same time move toward a zero income tax.

The Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee this week moved to leave in place the deduction for

property taxes Kansans pay.

ACTION FROM MY OFFICE

This past week, the Senate honored students from the Kansas Academy of Math and Science at Fort Hays State University. I was honored to meet Amber Predew from Goodland High School. Amber was questioned in Senate Education Committee and came across as being very knowledgeable.

This program is growing each year, and Fort Hays State should be proud of it.

There are still some slots open for Senate pages this session. For page and other information, contact my office.

To reach Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, write him at State Capitol, 300 SW 10th Street, Room 136-E, Topeka, Kan. 66612 or call (785) 296-7399. His e-mail address is ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us. His e-mail address is ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us.

Honor Roll

Welcome and thanks to these recent subscribers to *The Oberlin Herald*:

Elsewhere: Curtis Williams, Centennial, Colo.; Steve Reist, Kansas City, Mo.; Keith Shaw, Tallahassee, Fla.; Edwin Waterman, Ponca City, Okla.; Steven Wurm, Missoula, Mont.; Kathy Bergkamp, San Antonio; Marcelylene Olson, Mount Vernon, Wash.

Nebraska: Mary Brown, Omaha; Mary Smith, Del Roe, North Platte.

Kansas: Marie Agne, Lenexa; Theo Wiedeman, Ransom; Sheila Marney, Rossville; Craig Reaves, Chanute; Bill Kelley, Junction City; Ben Richardson, Doreen Boutz, Salina; Margery Adams, Steve O'Toole, Olathe.

Area: Farm Credit of Western Kansas, Colby; Doyle Richardson, McCook; Galen Lafferty, Danbury; Leo Weis, Hoxie; Gail Bailey, Norcatur.

Ludell: Richard Rippe, Kevin Rippe.

Atwood: Earle Niermeier, Marlin Wahrman.

Rexford: Anogene Rogers, Edna Colson.

Selden: John Geisinger, Betty Hickert, Kenneth Mumm.

Norton: Betty Reid, Arlene Hix, Vendla Tacha.

Jennings: The Bank, Tom Votapka.

Oberlin: Rod Fringer, Margaret Steadman, Gary Walter.

*Snow covers county and relieves wheat

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Norton, said that department crews went to rotating 12-hour shifts before the storm hit.

"There was a lot of pre planning," she said. "The worst of it seemed to be central to Ellis and Russell counties. We closed I-70 ... from 11:30 a.m. Thursday from Salina to Hays, and then pushed back west first to Colby, and then to Goodland due to semi-truck parking being full. We got it open around 9:30 p.m. (Thursday) night.

"We were hearing that U.S. 36 was pretty snow-packed. At one point, I think almost every route we had was snow-packed, including Decatur County. We were really advising people to stay home. Our crews put in long hours and did an excellent job in the face of being a big storm targeting a big region. It seemed to come in waves; we had one band, a second and a third."

Snow-packed as the roads were, Decatur County residents, for the most part, took the advice to stay home throughout the storm, said Emergency Preparedness Director Jacque Boultinghouse.

"This was not a big event for Decatur," she said afterward. "I know the state has declared Kansas a federal disaster (area), but it was only a snow storm for us. There wasn't much wind, which was good. There was activity all night long in other counties, but here it was quiet. Everyone just stayed home where it was nice and warm.

"There have been a couple of accidents, nothing big enough for them to call me about, though. I think people just stayed put. I'm sure the Interstate is a different story, and thankfully, we don't have one in our county. Several counties along the Interstate had to open shelters. I'm guessing we had 10 to 15 inches of snow; some might even have had 18."

Fred Stasser, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Goodland, said that the storm started moving into the area Wednesday morning from the south.

"It dropped a couple of inches

Snowy encore hits Sunday

Last week's 10 to 15 inches of snow was quickly followed up by another, milder storm Sunday night, which piled on about three to four inches.

While most people stayed off the roads, and there were few incidents in our area, at least one death was blamed on the storm when Carlos Esqueda, 21, of Kansas City, was killed in a rollover accident west of Goodland on Monday morning. His passenger, Pablo Flores, 22, also of Kansas City, was injured but alive.

Jeremy Martin, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Goodland, said that Decatur County got the most snow in the area from Sunday night's storm, with Colby seeing only an inch to an inch and a half. The storm, he said, originated over northern Texas and Oklahoma.

"Amarillo is really bad still," he said Monday morning. "They've been having complete blizzard conditions, with winds up to 65 mph. We've seen a little of it in southern Kansas here - I know in Liberal winds are about 50 mph

and visibility is down to less than a quarter mile. But the blizzard conditions are really just along the border of the panhandle."

Gov. Sam Brownback declared a state disaster last Tuesday during the first storm, and emergency operations were still going around the clock Monday to help those counties expecting to get hit with more snow. The governor's public affairs officer, Sharon Watson, said 8 to 13 inches was anticipated for southwest Kansas and up to 24 inches for south-central Kansas. Freezing rain and winds up to 55 mph were also expected, she said.

The storm kept roads slick in northwest Kansas, especially along Interstate 70, where Mr. Esqueda rolled off the road at 7:56 Monday morning. Firemen, emergency medical technicians and Kansas Highway Patrol troopers rushed to the scene four miles west of Goodland and took the man and his passenger to Goodland Regional Medical Center, where he later died.

fairly quickly," he said, "then there was a lull in snow until late Wednesday night, when the storm increased and moved closer. It dumped a lot of snow after midnight, and there was some light freezing drizzle that preceded it and made roads slick briefly before the snow started. As far as amounts, we have reports from all over the area. (These ranged from 5 inches in Tribune to 15 inches in Hill City.)

"As it moved our direction, we had moisture from the Gulf ahead of it, so there was plenty of good moisture available for us. The system itself was very strong, and everything was just right for it. It was slower-moving than the average storm we see in here, which gave ample time for precipitation to fall. And we didn't have the strong winds we usually do to blow it into

the ditches, so it actually stayed on the fields."

And speaking of the fields, will all this snow make a difference for the wheat crops?

"It takes a lot of snow to amount to much as far as moisture," said agronomist Shawn Diederich, of Diederich Agronomy. "We're so far behind that it will take a lot of moisture to make a crop, but every bit helps. Our moisture profiles are so depleted from the drought we're in ... we'll have to get some good, timely moisture until the crops mature."

"So nothing much has changed. We'll take all we can get and hopefully this is just the start. That's about all we can hope for at this point."

*Court to visit crime scene

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or officer to make sure that nobody talked throughout the trip. Once there, everyone would gather in the main living space of the house and would be taken back two at a time through "the most relevant space in the home" - a hallway leading back to the bedroom.

The home hasn't been lived in since that night, said Ms. Romine. There have been some small items removed, and guns, she said, but the

furniture and things that are relevant are still there and similar to the night of the alleged crime.

The drive is about 20 to 30 minutes one way, she added, and the visit wouldn't take long since there is no talking. The whole thing should last about an hour, she said.

She said the prosecution will likely make the request three days into the case to have the visit on the fourth day.

"Right now, my plan is to try and

do it on the last anticipated day that I will be presenting evidence to the jury," Ms. Romine said.

Also discussed at the hearing was the fact that the court has summoned 30 to 40 new jurors and the defense has flagged 15 to 20 it objects to. Mr. Barrett said he will submit his list of objections within a week, and Judge Pratt said that he and Ms. Romine will have their responses in by Thursday, March 7, for a last-minute hearing before the trial begins.

*Fund raisers coming up for swimming-pool project

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donation jars set out. Mrs. Williby is a member of the committee and attends City Council meetings to speak on its behalf.

Mr. Swank, president of the Chamber, suggested the ladies take over Float Fridays, a promotion the Chamber did every Friday last summer, selling root beer floats at the Centennial Park gazebo downtown. That made at least \$1,000, he said.

The group also discussed selling a special snack at the city pool this summer, so that anyone who bought it would know that their money was

going to the pool project.

"I think everyone's been a little intimidated to donate because there's been so much controversy with the City Council," said Mrs. Williby.

Mrs. Johnson agreed.

"I think once (the council) has picked the members of the public building commission, and people see bids going out, they'll be more comfortable donating again," she said. "People like tangibles."

"And the more money we can raise privately," said Mrs. Williby, "the less we'll have to use the sales

tax."

The pool fund-raising account, which has been set up since 1996, currently has \$17,990 in it, the women said. When it began, the project would have only cost \$1.2 million, Mrs. Williby said. Seventeen years later, the cost has ballooned to \$2.1 million, and according to Larkin Aquatics, the engineering firm that the committee has been working with, the cost could increase by 20 percent each year it is put off.

*City Council has tough decisions to make about power-plant repairs

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as-built estimate," he said. "We know the places that need to be repaired, but what we don't know is where the money will come from ... These are some big decisions we're talking about here. When you sit around and look at it, you see enormous amounts of cash going everywhere. The utility rates are higher and higher and the EPA is everywhere, on water, sewer and electricity. ... I don't know. I think your electrical infrastructure fund is getting so small you're in danger of being in trouble."

"We're talking millions to rebuild this infrastructure. There's \$500,000 needed right here. I see businesses suffering and customers suffering ... I think we're all going to be standing here in the dark."

"That power plant is the only source of revenue in the entire town that will pay for itself. It will make you money. It can generate 24/7 if you want it to ... You need to decide if you're going to make something that

will last or shut it down, because you're going to go broke."

Mr. Castle said that he's been studying the city's infrastructure for 20 years and knows where the problems are, but it's the availability of money to fix them that he's really worried about. His department doesn't have the money, people or equipment to tackle the problem, he said, but if the council would agree to work on just a little bit every year, it would help.

"We need to hit the places that are really bad and work up from there," he said. "That's where I'm going to take the (estimate man) first, and he'll say how much it costs, and then I'll need the money."

"Councils have avoided this for years. The only thing invested in was that transformer, and that wasn't our fault. Our substations are great, but the power poles, take a look at those next time you're driving around town. We have some real troubles, and it will take hundreds of thousands of dollars to fix them."