Salina man cannot seal deal with 'Ripley's Believe It Or Not'

not: A retired Kansas artist drives a van covered in pennies to Florida, where it is spotted by representatives for Ripley's Believe It Or Not. The company wants to purchase the van to exhibit in its Orlando museum.

For \$10,000, the artist agrees to clean the van and make alterations to its adult-oriented exterior artwork to make it more appropriate for the family-themed museum. After delivering the van to Ripley's, he buys another van and drives back to his Salina home with a down payment check for one penny and the promise of another check for the balance.

But soon after his arrival, the artist discovers Ripley's is shipping the van back to him with no explanation. To make matters worse, it is being sent cash-ondelivery, with shipping charges of \$1,180. The artist originally spent \$100 for the van. He also spent \$900 decorating it with sculptures, paintings and 50,000 pennies.

Is this another case of an artist being ripped off by a villainous corporation? Or was Ripley's misled when the artist didn't complete the requested alterations on the van?

Our story begins in 2007 when Jim McDole, a retired Salina artist and sculptor, bought a 1984 Dodge van, which he proceeded to cover with 50,000 pennies from roof to exhaust. He named the van "Pennies from Heaven," and for the next year drove the van across the country to art-car festivals.

A month ago, McDole drove the van to Florida to visit his collegeage daughter. As he turned into his daughter's gated community in Orlando, the van was stopped by men who introduced themselves as Ripley's Believe It Or Not employees. They asked if they could give McDole's number to Edward Meyer, vice president of exhibits and archives for Ripley Entertainment. McDole said he was greeted warmly by Meyer on Aug. 15 at the Ripley's corporate office in Orlando. Meyer gave him a tour of the museum's collection, which included 136 shrunken heads, while a documentary film crew shot footage in the background.

Meyer told McDole the company wanted to feature the van at the Ripley's Believe It Or Not museum in Orlando.

He had six weeks to make the van presentable, but we disagreed on what presentable

> Edward Meyer, exhibits, archives for Ripley Entertainment

selling it, but Ripley's is an icon with museums all over the world." Meyer offered McDole \$8,000 for the van. McDole made a counteroffer of \$10,000. Meyer agreed to pay McDole's price but only if he would agree to make certain changes on the van.

Those changes included polishing up the dirty pennies and gluing on replacements for coins that had fallen off during the trip. McDole also was instructed to alter some adult-oriented artwork, which included a beast with blood-dripping fangs and a large-breasted "Lady Liberty" with prominent

"They wanted me to paint a Tshirt over the cleavage and lessen the blood on the fangs to make it less gory," McDole said.

To seal the deal, McDole and Meyer signed a purchase agreement on a sheet of Ripley's stationery. The agreement stated that McDole would receive a \$10,000 payment for the van in return for "repair and general maintenance" to be completed before Sept. 30.

McDole also received a Ripley's Believe It Or Not certificate of recognition for "the creation of a 'Pennies from Heaven' Art Car" and a symbolic down payment check for one penny.

McDole worked on the van for two weeks and delivered it to Ripley's on Thursday, Sept. 4. That's when the trouble began.

McDole said Meyer personally accepted delivery of the van and had equipment and crew ready to lift the van inside the museum. At that time, McDole expected to receive his check for \$10,000. However, he was informed that the check had to be co-signed by the president of the company, who wouldn't be available until the next day, a Friday.

"I was shocked," McDole said. "I had already stayed two weeks longer than I'd planned working on the van. I already had bought a conversion van, and I had to get "I was honored," McDole said. back to Kansas. I left him my ad-

check."

Meyer remembered the incident differently. He said McDole broke his contract by not completing the agreed-upon changes and then became angry and left the van in Orlando when his \$10,000 payment was not forthcoming.

"He had six weeks to make the van presentable, but we disagreed on what presentable meant," Meyer said from his Orlando office. "The overall condition of the van was not to our specifications, and he was unwilling to take it back and make further changes."

Meyer said McDole canceled the deal before leaving the building and refused to take the van

According to McDole, he had no idea the deal was off until the following Monday, when Meyer called to inform him the company was shipping back the van.

"I couldn't believe it," McDole said. "They're making me do a forced repossession with no explanation.'

To make matters worse for Mc-Dole, the van was delivered to his home with a C.O.D. shipping charge of \$1,180. Reluctantly, McDole chose to pay. "I didn't want to see the van sit-

ting in some shipping company yard to rot," he said. When contacted, Meyer said

there had been a misunderstanding with the transportation company and that all shipping expenses would be paid for by Ripley's.

"It was not our intention to have (McDole) pay," Meyer said.

Despite his stressful experience, McDole said he has no animosity against Ripley's Believe It Or

"Ripley's a good company I don't hold anything against them," he said. "It was a misunderstand-

McDole said it was never his intention to sell his van anyway, and he is glad to have it back. He plans to continue driving it to schools, fairs and art shows, where it never "I had never had any intention of dress and told him to mail me the fails to attract attention.

Sudoku puzzle

	2						9		
		9		2	8				l
				1				4	
9		3			6		4]
	7		4			2		5	
1				4					
			6	9		3			
	8						7		

Difficulty Level ★★★★

9/19

This is a logic-based number placement puzzle. The goal is to enter a number, 1-9, in each cell in which each row, column and 3x3 region must contain only one instance of each numeral. The solution to today's Sudoku puzzle is below.

Lawmakers halt audit on illegal immigrants

TOPEKA (AP) - Legislators have decided against initiating a state audit of the costs to Kansas associated with illegal immigra-Instead, a committee has di-

rected auditors to review existing research on such issues and summarize them for lawmakers. The push for a new audit arose

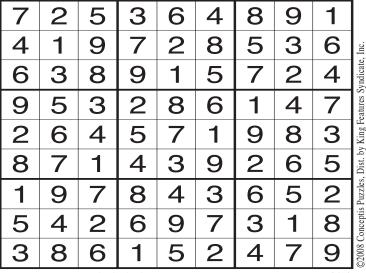
from an unsuccessful effort to pass legislation this year dealing with illegal immigration.

Backers of the audit wanted to study not only the costs, but how immigration affects wages and the benefits derived from immigrants.

But the Division of Post Audit's staff concluded there aren't enough good statistics for a valid study.

"What you'll get is estimates on top of estimates, and it will all be a very broad range," said Leo Hafner, deputy post auditor.

During a meeting Wednesday of the legislative committee directing the division's work, a majority decided to back off.



بسل جسس بھر جسس جس General Public Transportation Van



CONSTRUCTION, LLC

785-475-3130

If possible call for Reservations by 11 am the previous business day. Provided to Colby, Brewster, Gem, Menlo, Rexford and a Portion of Oakley as needed.

Hours: 8 am to 4 pm

Days: Monday - Friday

Phone:

460-2901 (8 am-12:30 pm)

443-9208 (12:30 pm - 4 pm)

"This Project Funded in Part by the KDOT Public Transit Program'

• CARRIERS WANTED

The Colby Free Press is looking for Carriers **In Oakley**

Two Routes Available!

Offering a \$25 Sign-on Bonus!! (Bonus will be received after 3 months)



For more information call the Colby Free Press office: 785-462-3963 or stop in at 155 W. 5th Street