

from our viewpoint...

We should help end carnage of our teens

It's far from certain that the Kansas Legislature will do anything to help end the carnage among teenage drivers in this state, but it should.

The Senate has passed one version of a bill restricting teen drivers and the House may pass another. There's no guarantee, however, that even if a bill passes it will do much good.

For one thing, the Legislature isn't prepared to deal with the fact that kids can get a learner's permit at 14 and a restricted license at 15, allowing them to drive to work and school.

Those permits, along with farm permits issued to underage drivers, are widely abused today. Rural families supposedly need to have kids drive at 14 or 15 because otherwise it would be a "hardship" on the families.

When you see two teens in a wreck while headed to the same high school in separate cars, however, or three vehicles from one farm home headed to the same school, you have to ask where the hardship is.

Those kids could be safe on a school bus rather than driving to town and back — and around town after school.

There are some good ideas in the House version of the bill, or were at last reading. Teens between 16 and 17 would be able to drive, but with more restrictions than today. They'd get a license which would not allow them to drive between midnight and 5 a.m. or with more than three other teens in the car.

A rather silly provision would bar young drivers from using a cell phone or text messaging device while driving. Apparently, at 17, they'll be able to handle those.

The truth is, no one should be driving and using a hand-held phone. Certainly, no one should be texting while driving. Both should be illegal — for anyone. So should watching a television or video device, other than a navigation aid.

Yet the House apparently feels teens will buy into this "do as a say, not as I do," approach. It's just not enforceable.

Any change which would keep 14- and 15-year-olds off our highways and rural roads — and safe from the dangers of driving while inexperienced — should be welcome. We hope the Legislature passes a bill, but we'd really like to see it deal with the real issues.

One thing kids need to know is that if they mess up and have a wreck or a couple of tickets while on a restricted license, and especially if they're in violation of age restrictions, then there won't be a regular license waiting when they are 17.

Without some teeth, this bill won't mean much. It'll take tough enforcement to make it work.

That said, we urge the Legislature to get together on this issue and pass a bill we all can live with. Traffic accidents are the leading killer of young adults, after all.

Let's keep some of our teenagers alive. — Steve Haynes

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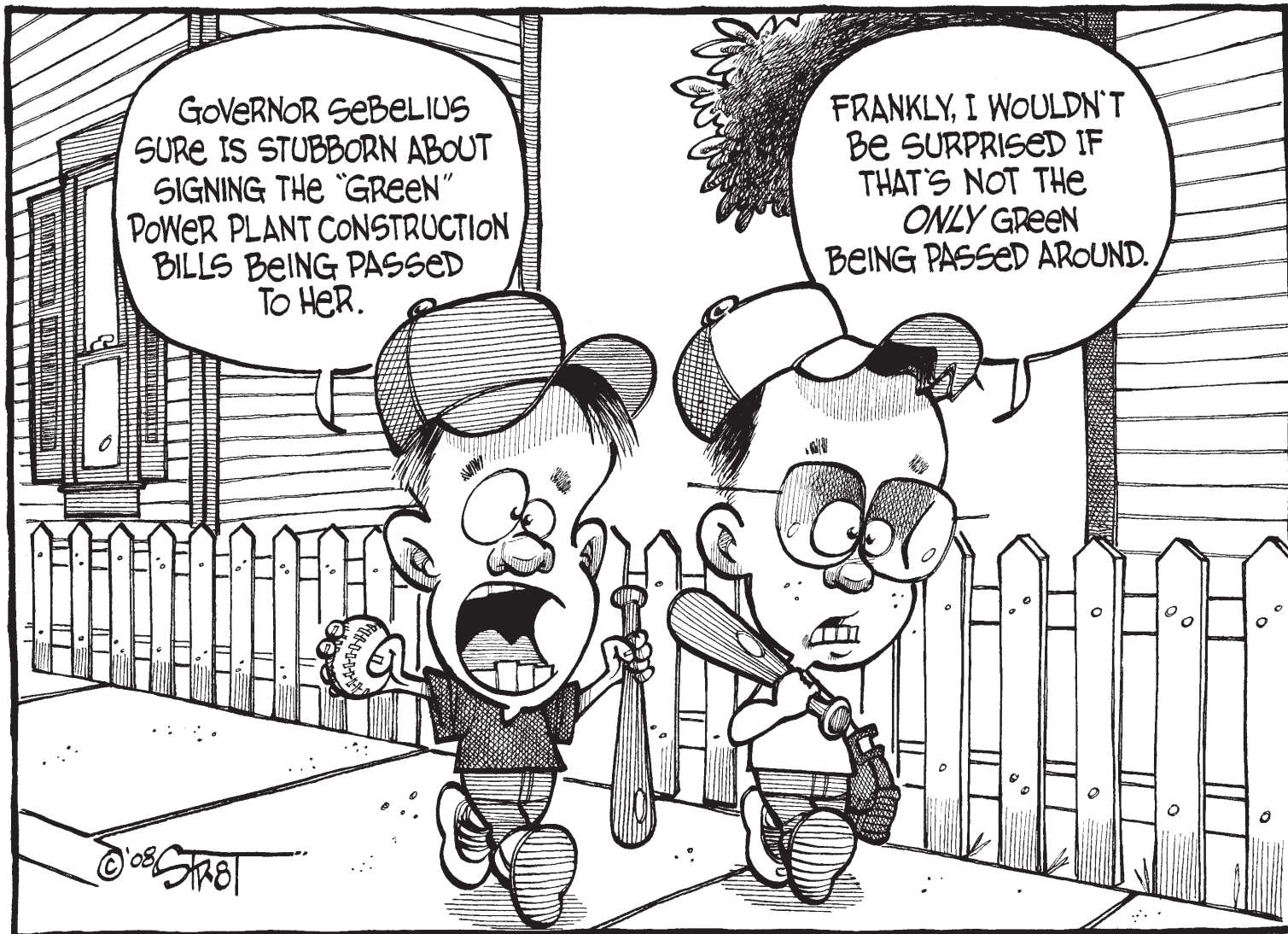
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My expectations about Estonia changed

Estonia. When I thought about this former Soviet satellite, which wasn't often, I imagined heavy food and cold winters, an underdeveloped nation struggling to survive in this new world of democracy.

Like most stereotypes, it holds water like a colander.

Each year in March, I visit an embassy during the National Newspaper Association meeting in Washington. Over the years I've been to Greece, Turkey, Chili, Costa Rica and Saudi Arabia.

On each visit, I have discovered wonderful, interesting things about the country, which according to international protocol and law, is where I'm standing when I'm in their embassy.

This year I got to visit Estonia, of which I knew almost nothing except a guess that it was once part of the Soviet Union.

That part was mostly right. Estonia was governed by the Soviets from the 1940s through the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Estonia, a small nation which claims hundreds of islands off its shore, is tucked on the top of Europe between Finland, Sweden, Russia and Latvia.

It isn't the world's smallest nation — it's



cynthia haynes

• open season

only a little smaller than Massachusetts and New Hampshire combined — but has one of the world's smallest populations.

And, we're told, Estonians speak Estonian. Well, that figures.

Many of them also speak Finnish because much of the television programming they watch comes from Finland. Many speak Russian because a lot of ethnic Russians migrated into Estonia during the Soviet occupation.

There are still an estimated 100,000 to 150,000 Russian speakers within the county. For that reason, the government says, 503 schools teach in Estonian, 80 in Russian, 26 in both, two in English and Estonian and one in Finnish and Estonian.

"We have 100 nations in a small country, all living together," the ambassador says.

So how does this small, northern European nation make a living? What do its people do to survive?

Well, the ambassador told us with a smile, they make furniture because the country has extensive forests. And, oh yes, mobile phones.

Estonia, he said, is a big exporter of information technology and Estonians use cell phones and the Internet extensively.

Banking is mostly done over the Internet, the ambassador said, adding that he had never written a check in his life until moving to the U.S. to take his position.

All schools are connected to the Internet and 65 percent of the population are Internet users, he said. For those without a wireless connection in their homes, the government has it available in 1,000 public locations.

And of course, Estonia has tourism. There are no direct flights from the U.S., though, and while 70,000 Americans visited Estonia last year, most were off of cruise ships. The ambassador said he is working to increase the numbers.

Europeans like to visit the many picturesque islands, he said, and the county had 4 million tourists last year.

Well, he sold me. I'll bet the food is good, too.

Kansas fans get a shot at revenge

I hope Roy Williams doesn't have any property left in Kansas.

For like the other Great Traitor, whatever he left behind when he heeded the call of his homeland might be at risk.

As in grave danger.

The Great Traitor, Robert E. Lee, had been one of the bright lights of the U.S. Army: West Point graduate, Mexican War hero, keen military mind.

Lee commanded U.S. troops sent to capture the abolitionist John Brown and secure the arsenal at Harper's Ferry.

Recalled from frontier duty in Texas, Lee was offered command of the Union army after succession.

Forced to choose, his loyalty lay with his homeland in Virginia, and Lee reluctantly went home to take up a cause he had little sympathy for.

He left behind the army and the Constitution he loved to serve his home state.

In Lawrence, a Yankee town where they remember well the Civil War, that makes him a lot like Roy Williams, who came to Kansas as a young assistant basketball coach, a disciple of Dean Smith at North Carolina.

The Emporia-born Smith sent Williams to redeem his alma mater and uphold her basketball tradition. Trained by Smith, one of the great basketball coaches of all time, Williams grew and prospered in 15 years at Kansas. He became one of the greatest coaches at a school where the first coach invented the game.

The first time North Carolina asked him, Ol' Roy said no. Eventually, he did as Dean Smith had done and sent one of his best assistants to take charge of the Tarheels.

Only Matt Doherty was no Roy Williams and certainly no Dean Smith, and when he stumbled, and the homeland called again, desperate, General Roy did what any true son of the South would do.

He resigned his commission and bolted for home.

There, he fulfilled his destiny and snagged the national championship which had evaded him in Lawrence. Which may prove Ol' Roy is an ever better general than Robert E. Lee.

But maybe not. We'll see on Saturday. Back to that property in Lawrence. I hope Roy sold it. All of it.

General Lee had property near Washington, a mansion and estate across the Potomac River



steve haynes

• along the sappa

that had come down through his wife's family, the descendants of George Washington's wife Martha.

During the war, feeling was high about the Great Traitor. He was as despised in the North as he was revered in the South, but his wife's estate had been left to the North.

Out of spite, they began burying bodies of

the Union dead in her lawn. She never did recover the family land, and it took her years just to get the antique furniture — some of it handed down from George.

The bodies of those Union soldiers are still there. We know that place today as Arlington National Cemetery.

I'm not sure what the students in Lawrence might do to Ol' Roy's house, if he hasn't sold it by now.

I don't think they'd plant any bodies there.

But you never know.

If I were him, I wouldn't advertise it for sale this week, just to be safe.

