

from our viewpoint...

State has survived dull license plates

Kansas has somehow survived the state's failure to make everyone switch to the new, if dull, light blue license plates.

In fact, drivers with the 2002-issued "capital dome" tags are still getting along just fine. These tags, made of aluminum and covered with reflective sheeting, are nowhere near worn out. They could last another decade, maybe two.

The Department of Revenue had planned to replace all tags between 2007 and 2009, with the blue "Ad Astra" tags. The rationale was people who get by without paying for new tags would have to do so once the white tags were outlawed.

Then came the budget crunch. The state just couldn't afford to issue new tags for everyone. So it didn't.

And the world has not come to an end.

Aside from the fact the "capital dome" tag, with its hints of yellow wheat and blue sky above, is one of the most attractive our state has ever issued, these tags really should be good for 30-40 years.

It would be an environmental sin to replace them just because some bureaucrat figures it would make it easier for the cops to spot scofflaws.

If they wanted to do something to push enforcement, why not make those tiny expiration stickers just a tad bigger? Too easy, we guess.

Anyway, the "dome" tags soldier on. In fact, the last couple of tag designs before that could still be in service. They're pretty much indestructible unless you use them to stop a trailer hitch.

The real question is, why not just let people keep tags as long as they're legible? That might just save the state more money than it could make from improved enforcement.

California has left it's tags in use for decades at a time. So have some other states. There's no magic in changing the design every couple of years, not at the cost of making all new plates.

The way the budget is today, Kansas has plenty of priorities beyond new license tags. — Steve Haynes



What are your earliest memories?

How far back can you remember? That question often arises when friends get together. I would say most people can go back to about 3 or 4 years of age.

They are in awe when I tell them I can go back to about a week or two after my birth. You read that right! When I was born, mothers and babies stayed in the hospital for two weeks. Today, Mom goes in, baby comes out, bags are packed and they are back home before anyone knew Mom was gone.

I tell friends the sounds new borns make, such as 'gaa gaa, goo goo,' etc., 'are sounds of baby talk. That's right, baby talk. And what babies hear are actually words and phrases.

The "Institute of Baby Banter at Birth and Other Things Newbies Fool Us With," recently published the results of their study and their conclusions are something I've known since birth. When friends press me to give examples of my claim, I have no hesitation to relate to them a conversation I had with a baby in the crib next to me in the hospital nursery, a conversation that sticks with me yet today.

One day that baby wanted to know how much I weighed. I told her 6 pounds and 5 ounces. She said she weighed 9 pounds and 4 ounces. I told her she was a fatty. I noticed her fists starting to curl up, so I quickly changed the subject.

Our conversation continued for probably 10 minutes until some ladies in white came in to check the inventory in our diapers. Apparently what we were supposed to do we did very well because they left the room with their noses pinched shut. We thought that was funny.

But back to our conversation.

My nursery friend wanted to know where I was from. I told her I didn't know because wherever I was it was so dark I couldn't see anything. She sort of smiled at that answer. She then wanted to know if I was a bottle or a breast baby. Of course not knowing what she was even talking about and yet not wanting to sound stupid (after all she was three days



tom dreiling

• time out with td

older than me), I told her I was a nipple baby. She almost fell through the guard rail around her crib in laughter.

Then she asked if I was a boy or a girl. I told her I didn't know. She said, "Well, dummy, there's only one way to find out."

I asked her how.

"Pull down your blanket, remove those safety pins on your diaper, and take a look," she instructed.

So I did.

She said, "Well, what are you?"

I didn't answer right away because I was busy looking around. Exploring reveals all kinds of interesting things.

She kept pestering and pestering, so I finally yelled out with excitement, "I'm a boy!"

"A boy," she repeated, kind of disappointedly.

"Yes," I assured her.

She was quiet for a few moments, then asked in a teasing kind of voice, "Well...just how did you find out that you were a boy?"

"That was easy," I told her, "BLUE BOOTIES!!" (gotcha!)

As I write this (Jan. 10) the snow removal machinery here at the Sonoma Resort at Saddle Rock in Aurora (Colorado, for my Kansas readers) is busy clearing the streets and sidewalks. The piles of snow they are creating are as high as they've been all season long. Of course this is good news for all the kids in the resort (and there are many), as well as for all of us and especially the farmers. After school today, the kids will make good use of the snow piles. Ahh, to be young again! I think

the snowfall here was in the neighborhood of 5, maybe 6 inches. I've never been very good at estimating snow falls.

I will not comment on the shootings in Tucson, Arizona. In lieu of commenting, I will do as I always do when such situations occur — pray. Those directly affected need our prayers more than another word or two from those who at this time know little as to why what happened happened. Prayer is powerful, it can't be matched. If you haven't done it in a while, now would be a good time to reacquaint yourself with it.

I took special note of the problems New York City faced in its recent snowstorm and how they were really coming down on their mayor. I got to thinking New York City has a population of somewhere around 10 million. Now, if each one of those 10 million had a snow shovel....Must I go on?

Two guys who should be setting an example...aren't. What do President Obama and Speaker of the House Boehner have in common? They both smoke! Enough said.

When I viewed the new, beautiful activity bus my alma mater is wheeling around the territory, thanks to a front page photo in The Hays (Kansas) Daily News. I thought how lucky those students at Thomas More Prep-Marian High School are. I say that because I can remember as a child when athletes at that school were transported to games by their parents, there were no buses. It was a military academy at the time and parents would team up to fill their cars with athletes and head out in whatever direction the opponent lived. I hope the students of today truly understand how privileged they are to travel in such style.

Comments to milehitom@hotmail.com

Letter Policy

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To the people of Sherman County

To the Editor:
Good things are happening in Sherman County. Goodland Ambassadors have a ribbon cutting (for new businesses) every week or two, and those businesses employ 1 to 5 people.

New buildings are going up in West Goodland for business expansion.

The old Buffalo Inn building is opening around the 1st of February, 2011.

We just finished a year with a big wheat crop and a record corn crop with prices that we haven't seen before. All of those piles of grain mean lots of labor and fuel cost, not counting the millions of dollars those piles represent.

The Energy Center West of town will be up

your schools, community
• guest column

and running in 2011. I am here to tell you it is going to happen!

We as taxpayers have a chance to step up in April and fix the school system for the next 40 years. If we choose to do nothing to the school buildings like they are now, they will be as obsolete as the one room school house by the museum that I went to school in.

We have a chance to get from 5 schools to 2

schools. Surely that will be a big money savings, which in the light of the State Legislature we are going to be hard pressed for money.

My wife and I enjoy the Senior Citizens Dinner at the high school every year. It's great we have a chance to see how special our students are. Thanks to the administration and school board for making it a special day for us!

We elect who we think are the best people in the community to serve on the school board. We know they have worked long and hard to come to a solution to fix our school system. So I am asking you all to step up and fix the school system in April 2011.

Dale Stephens
Lifelong Sherman County Resident

First week of the session

Monday was the new beginning for the Legislative Session.

We had a new Governor inaugurated that morning. At 2 p.m. the Representatives were sworn in and the session began.

I was fortunate to receive four committee assignments. They are Education, Commerce and Economic Development, Insurance and Local Government.

On Wednesday evening, Governor Brownback delivered his State of the State Address to all Kansans. We were all anxious to hear his plans for the State of Kansas. I was glad to hear he has no planned tax increases. Instead

he plans to cut the state budget for the first time since 1972.

The Governor wants a Spending Freeze Bill on his desk by the end of the month. Governor Brownback presented plans for a Long Term Financial challenge for Education, KPERS and Medicaid and asked for legislation toward long term solutions.

Governor Brownback is wanting to eliminate eight State Agencies and eliminate 2,000 unfilled state employment positions.

It is exciting to know we have a Governor who has the best interest in mind for Western Kansas. WOW!

What a State of State address. Thank you for letting me represent the 121st District. Please contact me with your concerns and thoughts. If you are in the Topeka area, feel free to stop by and visit my office. My office is in the Docking Building, 7th floor, room 754.

My contact information is: Rick Billinger, State Representative, 121st District, Box 594, Goodland, Ks 67735. Office 785-296-7659, Cell 785-899-4770, Home 785-899-5824, E-mail www.rick.billinger@house.ks.gov