

Death brings the end of an era

The passing of former President Ronald Reagan marks the end of an era as surely as the fall of the Soviet Union.

Mr. Reagan came to prominence with "The Speech," an accounting of the rise of communism and the threat it posed to freedom.

The Speech catapulted the ex-actor into prominence in Republican party circles and among conservatives around the nation.

That notoriety in turn led him to run for governor of California, where despite cries that he had no political experience, he won the race against a legendary veteran pol, Assembly Speaker Pat Brown.

Amassing a credible record as governor, Mr. Reagan became in turn a viable candidate on the national scene. He won the Republican nomination and went on to win the presidency.

A creature of the Cold War, he was at home pushing a huge defense budget and at the same time talking with Soviet leaders. While some were surprised at the fall of communism, the end of the Soviet empire and the demise of the Berlin Wall, perhaps Mr. Reagan was not.

His detractors said he was too old, too slow-witted and too conservative. Though he campaigned for a balanced budget, he ran up some huge deficits.

But on his watch, the free nations did prevail and the Dark Empire faded away.

His contemporary, Margaret Thatcher, former prime minister of Britain and a fellow conservative, said of him, that Mr. Reagan has a better claim than anyone of having led the Free World to victory in the Cold War.

The Iron Maiden was one of his chief allies in that struggle, which she noted, ended in victory without a shot being fired.

Some said Mr. Reagan simply spent the Russians into bankruptcy. Others implied that the communist system, which once seemed so formidable, had rotted from within and would have fallen no matter who had been president.

In later years, the ex-president lived in increasing obscurity as his Alzheimer's grew steadily worse.

From the vantage point of the next century, his names harkens to a simpler time when Americans knew who the enemy was and who the good guys were, a time when Republicans stood for strong defense and smaller government and movie heroes could realize the American dream.

He was only the union president — he led the Screen Actors Guild — to occupy the White House, though the AFL-CIO may not have supported him much.

For a "B" list actor, though, Ronald Reagan played pretty well. Few on the stage today could match his stature.

— Steve Haynes

ELECTED OFFICIALS:

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300 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-2332
- ★ **U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 224-4774; fax (202) 224-3514
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Office hours:

8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (785) 877-3361
Fax: (785) 877-3732
E-mail: telegram@nwkansas.com

STAFF

Cynthia Haynes editor and publisher
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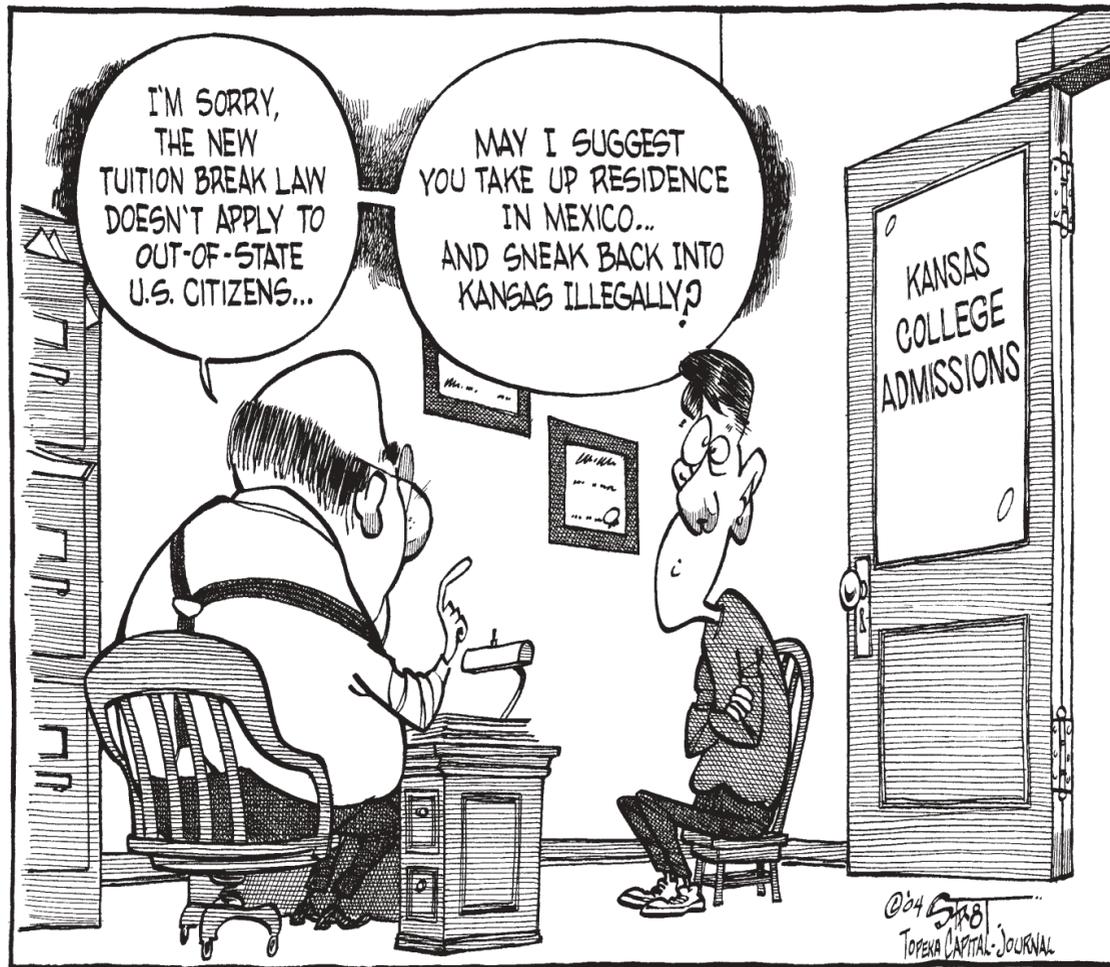
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She's dreamin' of wieners, swimmin'

It's official! Summer is here. No matter that the calendar may say the 20th of this month. It's summer when I say it's summer.

Saturday, I sweltered and sweated while cleaning out the freezer. But Sunday, I gave in and cranked up the air conditioning.

Speaking of cleaning out the deep-freeze: why do I have nine packages of hot dogs? Am I planning a county-wide wiener roast? They were probably on sale. I know they've been there at least a year, so they're more than likely freezer-burned and will taste like cardboard. Then, of course, they'll have to be thrown out, so how much did I really save?

I have given Jim strict orders to not bring home any more nonperishable food. He's worse than I am about buying in bulk just because it's a good bargain. I would venture to guess that, at this moment, I have seven German chocolate cake mixes in the pantry and 11 cans of ready-made frosting. I don't even LIKE German chocolate cake. But it was a good buy.

We have so much food in stock, we should be ashamed. In case of famine, come to our place. We could feed a small third world country out of our cache.

—ob—

Recently I talked with the local pool manager about Red Cross swimming lessons. That reminded me of childhood memories of learning to swim.

The farm tank, pond or creek was where

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



most country kids learned to swim, and I was no exception. We lived too far from the creek, so it was the tank for me. I looked forward to the annual ritual at the beginning of summer when my dad would roll the big water tank out to his shop to spot weld any holes that had appeared over the winter. Then the tank would be rolled back to its place at the end of the pipe from the pump, lowered into position and the pump turned on.

I could hardly wait until it filled. My mother always warned me, "Better wait until tomorrow when it's had a chance to warm up a little."

Wait? Are you kidding? As soon as the water reached the bottom ring on the tank, I jumped in.

Are you familiar with the Polar Bear Club? Those crazy people who hack a hole in the ice on the first day of the new year and jump in the icy water? I could qualify for membership, because that's about how cold the water was in that tank after being pumped up from who knows how many feet down in the depths of the earth. But numbness set in fast and you

couldn't give up after so much anticipation. It's a wonder I didn't die from hypothermia.

My dad's one rule was when you were done swimming, you had to walk round and round the edge of the tank, to put the water into a whirlpool so the dirt you dragged into the tank would settle in the middle. He didn't want the water all muddied up for the cows.

Swimming was freestyle, to be sure. More of a dog paddle, or floating. That's where our 4-H club came in when I was about 9. As a club safety project, it was decided that the entire club would take Red Cross swimming lessons.

I think our club originated the "carpool" concept, although it should have been "truckpool." All 50 members of our club met at a central point. One of the fathers drove his cattle truck, complete with stock racks, to the meeting point, put down a ramp and loaded us up like calves going to market.

This was before the days when safety analysts took all the fun out of life. We stood up to let the wind blow in our faces or sat down on the splinter-filled wooden floor of the truck.

On arrival at the city pool, the ramp would be lowered, and we would disembark like wild monkeys let out of a cage. I can only imagine what the city kids thought of that whole scene.

Now you know where the term "country bumpkin" came from.

So cute and cuddly, who can resist?

Back Home Nancy Hagman



I like to have some cats around to keep the mice down. So, last fall my friend Claudia brought me three. They were all the same size but supposedly one was the mother and the others were her kittens.

Her son, Andy, assured us the "kittens" were toms so I thought it would work out fine. I had a tom, now I had one female. I'd have the potential for more kittens but not to overrun with them.

As spring arrived it became apparent that nature had taken its course. One, two, three litters of kittens.

Two of them from male cats. It's a miracle!

Of course they are soooooo cute.

Then last weekend, we realized that one litter was not being fed. And we hadn't seen the mother for a while either.

They were under the floor of the old granary. How they got there, we aren't sure. But the only way to get them out seemed to be to pry up a floorboard.

They are cute, loud and hungry.

We called Elizabeth, who was traveling, to pick up a bottle and milk. Everyone helped feed them the first night.

The second day we seemed to get more milk on them than in their tummies. But we discovered two of the three would drink out of a bowl.

Kate thought they needed a bath, but she was leaving for a little road trip.

Elizabeth was helping her dad and Tricia was at a sheep show.

I gave them a bath and they're sort of cute cleaned up.

The third day they decided they had enough of the box I fixed for them. Kate came home bringing solid food. I made them a pen that kept them in and the dog out.

Day four, of course with solid food, a litter box or something is going to be needed. Bad news — the husband is starting to think they are cute.

I moved the pen to where there was some dirt.

They can now roam freely but if they need to escape the dog, they can, and she can't get their food.

Everyone is really busy except me. I lost the bottle. I guess the slow one is just going to have to learn to eat out of a bowl. You've heard of survival of the fittest, right?

Day six, Tricia goes to camp, now I get to do the sheep chores, too.

Aren't they cute?

Oops, sorry I got carried away, sheep are basically just dumb.

But that's another story.

It's been a week now; they are all eating from a bowl and solid food. They seem to realize that the box is a good place to sleep. Hurrah.

So does anyone need a cat?

They are all males, Andy checked.

P.S. Did I mention how cute they are?

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