

## City could go easier on people with weeds

The city's newest councilman is known to dislike the nuisance ordinances, which forbid people from keeping junk cars, high weeds and other clutter on their property.

Rob McFee, who won office as a write-in candidate this spring when no one bothered to get on the ballot, has received a couple of notices about unlicensed vehicles on his land over the years. He's no fan of the process.

But having accepted a seat on the council, he's not answerable to us all for his performance and his comments.

While complaining about how the city's "citizen harassment intimidation team" abused an old lady this week, he made one pretty good point:

The way the city handles things now is about guaranteed to make people who get a registered letter about their weeds or cars unhappy. The city could make the process more taxpayer-friendly.

Instead of just generating a letter, the city could have someone go by and talk to the homeowner. Those who live out of town could get a phone call.

There's no need to change the ordinance. All that's required is the desire to do better. An informal contact isn't required by the ordinance, but it's not prohibited either.

If a landowner is abusive or confrontational or just won't take care of the problem, send them a letter. Sue them. Mow the weeds, tow the cars and bill them.

But why not try gentle persuasion first?

Good idea, Rob.

That said, this whole process is still important.

Clean, attractive communities attract new people. No one wants to move to a town where yards are full of junk and property is ill kept. Towns like that are dying.

It's not the ones that urge people to clean up that die, as Mr. McFee suggested at the council meeting. It's the ones that don't care.

Sure, a man's home is his castle. But neighbors have rights too, and one of them ought to be not to look at high weeds, junk cars and assorted trash next door.

People who want to keep old cars and junk should fence or screen the area from public view. Lawns ought to be kept neat and attractive.

If there are some, especially those in nursing homes, who can't afford to have someone mow, it would be a good community project to get them some help. The effort would benefit all of us, both by doing good and by cleaning up the town we live in.

Mr. McFee isn't the first to serve on the council who didn't keep a neat, deep-green lawn. He may not be the last. He certainly has a right to his opinions, and sometimes those are right on the mark.

But even he admits the city should have an ordinance. The only real dispute is over how it's enforced.

A little more niceness wouldn't hurt, but the city needs to keep after this problem.

—Steve Haynes



## Bus travel a real experience

Summer is officially open. We planted our tomatoes this weekend.

Jim brought home about six healthy-looking plants more than a week ago. They promptly went into a limp, dehydrated wilt. A drink of water would restore them for a time, but I had to keep a close eye on them or it would be "droop-city" again.

While I took an extended Sunday afternoon nap, Jim made me look bad by readying the tomato bed. He likes to dike the edges so we can flood it and not have to water so often.

We're also getting some cottonwoods started in the same bed, so it might take more water. Jim transplanted the seedlings last year, and most seemed to have wintered all right, even achieved some growth. We've had pretty good luck transplanting wild "ditch trees." They may not be the "cottonless" kind, but they are such a stately tree.

We're trying something new this year: peppers. I don't know what kind of peppers they are. I think someone gave them to Jim. I can't imagine him buying bell peppers, since he can't eat them anymore. He can eat the "hot" kind, but if they're hot, I can't eat them. Looks like only one of us is going to be enjoying peppers, whatever kind they are.

—ob—

Recently, I had an experience I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy.

You know I took my granddaughter, Taylor, back to Texas after her annual summer visit. What I didn't mention last week is she and I rode to Dallas with another daughter, Jennifer, and her daughter, Alexandria.

Jennifer had classes to attend for her job and the timing was right for Taylor and I to ride down with them. The only catch was Jennifer had to stay longer than I could be away from my job.

So, I decided to ride the bus home. Don't get me wrong. Bus companies



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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do the best they can. And it is an economical way to travel. But, if I ever, and I mean EVER, think about riding the bus again, just take me out and shoot me.

Not only was the automated "help" line not helpful, it was downright exasperating. After several attempts with non-English speaking agents and multiple tries with the help-line, I thought I was close to purchasing a ticket when, oops, "Sorry, our reservation computer system is down. Try again later." Click.

Perseverance paid off, finally. I had my ticket and was ready to roll.

Kara took me to the bus station, where we waited and waited. Forty minutes later the bus pulled up, the driver helped load my luggage and we were off. Every row of seats had at least one person, so I asked if I could sit with a kind-looking woman close to the front.

Kathryn and I kept up a lively conversation about recipes, jobs and children, which helped pass the time. In Oklahoma City, the man behind us was getting off. Kathryn and I agreed I would take that seat so we could both be more comfortable. Wrong. About 15 more people boarded and now every seat, including the one I had just vacated and the one beside me, was now occupied.

My new seat mate was a Hispanic man named Martin Flores. I asked him, "Habla Ingles?"

He responded, "No, habla Español?"

"Poquito," I answered. Trans-

lated, that means "a little." Which was more false than true. My Spanish is pretty limited to phrases associated with our mission work building houses in Mexico. You know, "Where do you want your windows (or doors)?" Stuff like that.

Somehow, though, I established he worked in a restaurant in Ardmore, Okla., and he was on his way to visit his parents in Washington state. After looking at the ream of tickets he held for all his transfers, I realized poor Martin would be on the bus for days.

I made sure he was on the right bus when we all had to transfer in Kansas City. Sure hope he made it to where he was going.

My next seat mate was a handsome, muscular man named Chris who was on his way to Los Angeles. He was a carpenter and wanted to get a job building sets for Hollywood movies. Hope he realizes his dreams, too.

I was lucky enough to get off the bus in Junction City and ride the rest of the way with my brother Bill, who was going to the farm that day. After a sleepless night on the bus, I wasn't much of a conversationalist.

The next morning, I awoke to a stiffness like none other I had ever known. An appointment with my massage therapist was my only hope.

She rubbed and oiled and massaged. It felt so good, the bus ride was almost worth it.

Almost.

## Try these pleasers for your gang

I really love to cook, and I like to try new recipes.

Back when the children were young and we lived in the mountains, I wrote a cooking column called Open Range.

I'd make all sorts of things, from gingerbread houses to chili. I'd make the recipes, take pictures of the food, feed it to my family and write a column around the dishes.

Some of the things I did were old favorites, and some were new things I wanted to try. Sometimes I would go looking for recipes for a theme. The biggest failure was the recipes for left over boiled eggs after Easter. I should have stuck to deviled eggs and egg salad. I tried something that used spinach.

Not only wouldn't Sam eat the green eggs, neither would Steve, the children or the dogs. When you can't get a dog to eat something, it is a phenomenal flop.

I still like to cook, but with the children gone and with our busy work schedule, I seldom get much of a chance to do more than a few old favorites.

Last week, however, Steve was asked to bring the treats for the after-church coffee hour on Sunday. He said yes, and I had a whole congregation of guinea pigs.

I've learned a lot since the green eggs fiasco, and since Steve thought cookies would work, I was ready.

Steve was all for me making a batch or two of Tollhouse Chocolate Chip Cookies, his favorite and probably one of the easiest cookies in the world to make. His other suggestion was messier but equally easy —



### Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
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Rice Krispie Treats.

I smiled, said thank you and headed for the cookbook shelf. Twenty minutes later, I had four recipes and was ready to hit the grocery.

Now most of the ingredients for all the recipes were on hand. I was a little afraid I didn't have enough flour and margarine, however, and I figured an extra bag of nuts would be a good idea.

With ingredients on the counter, I started mixing and baking while Steve mowed the lawn. He came in the house a couple of times, complained about the heat and headed back outside. I was so busy mixing and baking, I really didn't notice the heat.

When I was done, I boxed everything up and made copies of the recipes. I've discovered that this is a good thing to do for potlucks, bake sales and open houses. Someone always wants one of the recipes.

The cookies were a hit, and one in particular was popular because it had little sugar and no nuts. I gave away all the copies of that recipe.

Here is a copy of the popular recipe. These cookies would make a great after-school snack or even

breakfast on the run.

**Apple and Cheese Pleasers**

3/4 cup flour  
2/3 cup margarine, softened  
1/3 cup brown sugar  
1 egg  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/2 teaspoon baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1 1/2 cup Quaker Oats  
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese  
3/4 cup raisins  
1 cup finely chopped apple, peeled

Combine flour, margarine, sugar, egg, vanilla, cinnamon, baking powder and salt. Mix well. Add oats, cheese and raisins. Mix well. Stir in apples. Drop by spoonfuls onto ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 375 degrees for 15 minutes or until golden brown. Yields 24 cookies. Store in tightly covered container in refrigerator.



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If I ever write a book about the yard, I think I'll call it "The Accidental Gardener."

I know, I know. John LeCarré had one that was similar. I can't help it if I'm a fan.

And it's not that I think our yard it good enough to write a book about. It's green, and it has flowers, but I'd be the first to admit there's no real plan.

It gets what attention we have, when we have the time, and there is never enough. But I suspect that makes us pretty typical.

We have planned flower beds and replanted lots of them. Some, like the iris, worked out as we thought. Others, like the sunflowers, well, the sunflowers are a story.

The sunflowers got started one summer day when I was talking with John Faber out by Brewster. He was planting his, and I asked for some seed.

Now, when John plants sunflowers, he's talking sections. I have to settle for square feet by the garage.

A couple of days later, an envelope stuffed with dark black oilseeds arrived. I planted them by the back fence, and they've been out there ever since.

I told John they were still going after four years, and he looked surprised.

"They probably have lost their hybrid," he said.

Could be, John, but you can't tell from the flowers.

Last year, I admit, I moved them from the fence to the side of the new garage. The star of the show, though, was a volunteer that came up in the back and grew above the roof of the new building. I saved seeds from this 15-footer.

In the garden, two sunflowers appeared at opposite corners. One grew to 10 feet with a single, huge

flower which produced eating-type seeds. The other, almost as tall, was a multi-headed hydra with small flowers.

This year, the oilseeds came up again by the garage with no prompting from us. The only volunteers in the garden were in the middle, though, and I think Cynthia weeded them.

While I admit to inviting the sunflowers, the wheat just came.

It sprouted up one year next to some iris and it's been with us ever since. I can go out and check it, winter or spring, and see about where the area crop is.

I can't tell you what variety it is. It's one of the older, pale ones, with short stalks, fair tillering and a bountiful head.

And hardy. It just keeps coming back.

Then there's the hollyhock on the north side. It just appeared next to an iris bed about the time the ones by the old garage got plowed under. This one is a beautiful burgundy, though, and I suspect birds had a "hand" in helping it move in.

I just mow around it.

The bachelor buttons came with some "wildflower" seed, and boy are they. They've sprung up in half a dozen places, and we've left them in some. The newest is a deep red, a real contrast to the pastels.

The flax I planted out front, a gift from Jim Reeves. It's spread to other beds, and it's welcome most any-

where. Its pale blue flowers are wonderful.

Next to the house is a cedar tree that just sort of grew. I moved it from the corner of the old garage.

In the front is a tiny aspen tree, apparently a clone of the one I brought from Vail. It's a transplant candidate.

I still don't know if my prairie grass is going to make it. I planted that last spring, and by fall, a dozen or so tiny plants were all that I could see in the bed. It was hard to tell if any made it through the winter.

The garlic, that must have survived from Mary's herb garden. We planted iris there, but the garlic just kept growing. This year it has its own corner, and we have no fear of vampires on this block.

There's more, but you get the idea. Sometimes the uninvented guests do better than what we plant, but if they bloom, why there's always room for a few immigrants.

### From the Bible

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.

Ephesians 5: 1, 2