

Carnival members need to reveal safety problems

The resignation of most of board members from the Decatur County Amusement Authority is as unfortunate as it is mysterious.

These people are the core of the volunteers who run and maintain the carnival rides and games during the annual county fair. Everyone who enjoys the fair owes them a great deal.

Many of these members have worked on the carnival for years without much thanks or attention. That may be partly because the Amusement Authority ceased having much contact with the public a few years back, giving out less and less information about what happened at the fair, how the rides did, how much money it made, what its needs were.

Many people may have lost track of the carnival and its workers. We know a few have asked what was going on.

In their letter of resignation, the members — seven of the 10 on the board — cited unresolved “safety issues” at the fair and carnival for their sudden departure. There had been rumblings of discontent before, but the members have not taken their case to the county commissioners, the Chamber board or any forum where they might have been resolved.

Instead, they dumped their collective keys on the Chamber’s desk and departed.

Their concerns may well be justified. As it stands, no one really knows.

The Chamber is moving to reorganize the authority board. That will take some time. New volunteers must be found. Skills learned. Secrets discovered.

We’re sure the fair and the carnival will survive, but it’s a shame the old members let

this wound fester to the point where they felt it necessary to quit.

Whatever. They leave behind some issues.

County officials have warned the authority that the carnival rides are not covered by the county’s insurance. That liability may have weighed on the board members.

If there are safety issue, then they must be taken care of before next summer. It would make no sense to run the carnival if the rides are not safe.

If the former members know something they have not disclosed, they owe it to the public to bring the facts out. It would be a disservice to everyone to sweep safety issues under the rug. People could be hurt.

One issue we’ve heard about involves not the rides themselves, but vehicles crossing the railroad tracks to get to the livestock area. That can and should be dealt with.

As the recent upheaval with the Fair Board and Fair Foundation show, no one is indispensable. It is a shame to see long-time volunteers disgruntled and unhappy, but the fair and the carnival will go on.

But any safety issues need to be brought out into the light of day, not grumbled about in private. The safety of fairgoers, especially children, is too important to play games with.

The county commissioners, Fair Board and Chamber need to deal with this problem quickly. The former Amusement Authority members need to speak out and let the public know what they are worried about.

And any problems they know of should be solved before the next fair. — *Steve Haynes*



Animals on way held interest

There were some real party animals at Steve’s class reunion this weekend, but I was more interested in the wildlife we saw between Wednesday night and Sunday.

We were supposed to leave for Emporia and the reunion on Wednesday, but I wasn’t done with my office work, so we put off the trip a day. Our room at this sister’s cabin at the lake would not go away.

As I prepared to leave the office Wednesday night about 11 p.m., Steve brought me a present — a little toad. He was a wonderfully bumpy, jumpy specimen and I was excited to take him home and let him go in the garden. The only problem was I had my car. Steering a car with one hand and holding a toad in the other is not recommended by most driving teachers. However, it was after 11 p.m., and I was the only one on the road for the five-block trip.

I figured our garden was a better place for him than the brick downtown.

The next morning, we loaded the truck and headed out. We had gone about half a mile when I was telling Steve that I had packed four days worth of dog food even though we would only be gone three.

“Dog,” I screamed. “We forgot the dog!”

Animals are always the last things to go in the vehicle. We weren’t planning to take the cats on such a short trip, but the dog loves the lake. She can run and jump in the water, then run some more then jump in and start all over again.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
c.haynes@nwkansas.com

We quickly backtracked and put Annie in her kennel, which we had packed.

Since our journey was running a little late, we headed straight for Lawrence to take our son out to supper. We had been planning on driving up to Lawrence from the lake but, hey, we were flexible.

The trip was reasonably uneventful once we got going, and we had a great time with son and his cat and his roommate’s cat, which we had never met. While son’s cat Frank is laid back, this new cat Oprah is not. Still, we both got to give her a quick pet before she hissed and dashed off under a bed.

After leaving son’s house, we headed out of Lawrence only to have to slow down for several squirrels and an opossum crossing the street between fraternities. The opossum looked really confused. The squirrels were just, well, squirrely. On was carrying a nut in his teeth.

We had just gotten off the turnpike at the Emporia exit and turned onto U.S. 50 when we spotted a young coyote in the middle of our lane.

We slowed down, expecting him to take off. We had to stop and honking at him before he would move away from the road kill on which he had been feasting.

Our estimation of his life span is not great unless he learns that most vehicles do not come up and honk at hungry coyotes.

Other wildlife encountered on our trip included a mother and two baby skunks. We were in the car and they were off the side of the road, which turned out to be a good thing for all concerned.

We also spotted numerous hawks, crows, jays, wrens and young pheasants. We even saw a box turtle sitting on the side of the road.

At son’s house, a praying mantis was waiting for bugs beside the door. He wasn’t quite as much fun as the tarantula we petted last week on the way home from Colorado, but you take what you can get in the insect world. Come to think of it, so does the mantis.

Or maybe he just takes what he can pray for. Or prey for.

Men provide an inspiration?

Men just don’t get it, do they? Jim was heading out the back door to do chores this morning and I said, “Wait a minute. I need some inspiration for the column.”

He started in. “Well, you could write about the weather. Or, you could write about the kids. Maybe you could say something about the...”

“No,” I said. “Shut up, you fool, and kiss me. I need inspired — not ideas.”

So, now you know my secret. Jim is a good kisser.



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
cplots@nwkansas.com

mer classmates and relive their “good ol’ days.” I wasn’t in charge of anything except snapping candid shots of everyone. I didn’t have to worry about seating or the menu. I actually enjoyed myself. And it wasn’t even my alma mater.

The only complaint I heard the entire evening was the same complaint every alumni association experiences: No graduates from later years came to the reunion.

The class of 60 years ago turned out, with over half of its surviving members making the effort to return from whence they came.

But only one representative from the ‘70s and one from the ‘80s were there. Not a single person from the ‘90s or 2000s were there.

And I know for a fact there are members from those classes living and working in their home town.

I don’t have the solution to cure the lack of school spirit. Wish I did. No, the only thing that will cure that ill is time.

In about 20 years, their personal history will start to become important to those graduates. They

will want to reconnect with friends from their past. The hometown they couldn’t wait to get away from will start to look pretty good. They might even consider moving back.

Until then, it will be up to the few faithful to keep the alumni associations active — to remain the keepers of the flame.

There’s another flame we need to keep burning.

Tuesday marked the sixth anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack on America. I urge every citizen to join me in flying Old Glory that day. Whether you have a flag pole and a big flag, or just one you can hang in your window, do it.

Six years ago, we were galvanized together as a country. American flags flew all across this land. Patriotism was the watchword of the day.

But I fear it’s faded. It should not be so.

On Sept. 11, fly the flag, and be proud to be an American.

Careers amaze at reunion

Had it really been 41 years? Guess so, because here we were at our 40th class reunion.

OK, it should have been last year, but four classes from Emporia High School decided to go together and put on one big bash.

I’d been to the 10th and 20th reunions and had to skip the 30th for some reason, but I wasn’t going to miss this one.

The first night, our class — the class of 1966 — met alone. All the others had to meet at some bar, but we were lucky; we got to meet a Lindy’s house at the family lake. It’s not much of a lake, just a block or so long, but it’s their lake and they have a lot of fun at it. Her mom lives at the other end and her sister has a house on the opposite side.

It’s a little surreal seeing people you haven’t been around for 41 years. Some seem to have changed hardly at all. Others, you wouldn’t recognize.

Ann and Betty looked the same. Nearly inseparable in high school, they drifted far apart after college. Betty said she was doing social justice work in the north woods of Wisconsin, just off Lake Superior, while Ann is a consultant in Manhattan, living in New Jersey.

Sure, like all of us, they’d aged, but no one had any trouble recognizing them.

People spent a lot of time peering at the little pictures on the name tags, trying to place a face now with a face then. Everyone said I hadn’t changed — except for the hair. They always say that. It started going gray when I was 25 and I gave up worrying about it years ago.

Lindy made Jumburgers, a spe-



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

cialty from the drive-in we went to as kids. I think it was closed by the time we got to high school, but the adjacent bar was open, and still is. They put a smile on some faces.

Mostly, we drank wine and beer and talked, trying to get to as many of the 50 or so class members (out of about 240) who made the trip.

When the four classes got together, it seems like we had about everything you could expect: At least one state cabinet member, Roger, who married a girl from Oberlin. A gal who used to be a guy. Twins who never dressed alike and still didn’t. Several professors. Doctors of different strips. Lawyers and railroaders, you name it.

Some of it fit, some of it was a real surprise. Most interesting to me were the ones you didn’t expect, especially the quiet, geeky kids. Bob became a research chemist, worked all around the world, helped perfect the catalytic converter for pollution control. Ralphe taught college chemistry.

Some of the socialites never changed. Some still acted like they were in high school. There are a few couples who married after graduation, raised kids, built homes, never left town. And they’re still together. It’s almost like even their hairstyle didn’t change, though some of those

girls are way too stylish to be stuck in the ‘60s.

Then there were the ones who didn’t show. Some of them we’d really like to have seen, including a couple of lawyers and a doctor. A lot of people asked about my brother, who never comes back to town, even though he isn’t in one of those classes.

There were some of the bright stars I’d like to have seen, but there wasn’t time to talk to everyone who was there.

I’d like to have had 15 minutes with each one and jotted down some notes. The stories they have to tell. Guess that’ll have to wait for another day.

Noticed the night broke up early. We’re getting older, and next time, it’ll be more so. By 10 p.m. Ann and Betty had gone to the bar to talk about old times and couples were drifting off.

Not like the old days. Not at all, but not a bad time, either.

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600 Phone: (785) 475-2206 Fax (785) 475-2800
170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243 E-mail: oberlinherald@nwkansas.com

Published each Wednesday by Haynes Publishing Co., 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Periodicals mail postage paid at Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Steve and Cynthia Haynes, publishers Official newspaper of Oberlin, Jennings, Norcat, Dresden and Decatur County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association, Nebraska Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year, \$33 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$38 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$42 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$50-\$250 (in US dollars only) extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243.

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri. (Also open most Saturdays when someone is in.)

Nor’West Newspapers

STAFF

- Steve Haynes editor
- Kimberly Davis managing editor
- Mary Lou Olson society editor
- Judy Jordan proofreader
- Carolyn Kelley-Plotts columnist
- Cynthia Haynes business manager
- David Bergling advertising manager
- Pat Cozad want ads/circulation
- Karla Jones advertising production
- Joan Betts historian
- Jim Merriott sports reporter



Honor Roll

- Welcome and thanks to these recent subscribers to *The Oberlin Herald*:
- Welco Clark, Rio Rancho, N.M.; Barry Brooks, Lilburn, Ga.; Jim Claussen, Denton, Texas; Fred Reith, Chico, Calif.; Merlou Robinson, Marathon, Fla.; Mrs. William Benton, Merced, Calif.; Thomas McCoy, Belle Forche, S.D.; Vic Goeken, Carthage, Mo.; Dean Knutson, Council Bluffs, Iowa; Mrs. Robert Scherzer, Rockport, Texas; B.J. Klingenstein, Dayton, Wash.; Cheryl Jenkins, Federal Way, Wash.; L. H. Mckirryher, Tucson, Ariz.; Mrs. Dorothy Potts, Amarillo, Texas.
- Colorado: Jean Rohla, Aurora; Rick Kiser, Greeley; Rayno and Patty Seaser, Fort Collins; David Swank, Fort Morgan; David Shuler, Grand Junction; Meredith Huff, Dennis Fraker, Denver; Robert Walker, Hudson; Gary Vaughn, Henderson; Avis Davis, Englewood; Gerald Lawson, Ralph Marcuson, Centennial; Lester Williams, Northglenn; Barbara Lieber, Boulder; John Wells, Arriba.

From the Bible

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.
Psalm 119:105