

Legislation could put carnival out of business

Here's hoping area legislators can do something about a bill requiring new regulations on rides which might put many of northwest Kansas' home-owned carnivals out of business.

The bill passed late in the session without the usual notice or a chance for public hearings. Carnival operators had little or no warning, and no chance to tell legislators how these citizen-run operations would be affected.

In fact, the measure, pushed by Rep. Tom Sloan of Lawrence, has failed every time it's gone through the committee process.

Some of the bill's provisions included a rule that rides would have to be inspected 30 days before they could operate, employees would have to be trained and certified and operators would need to carry \$1 million in liability insurance.

Members of the Decatur County Amusement Authority in Oberlin were shocked that the Legislature would do such a thing without looking into the consequences. It's just another example of a government "mandate" that "sounds like a good idea" when presented but in practice causes all kinds of problems.

State officials like to complain when the federal government does this to them, but the state itself is capable of all sorts of mischief.

This bill apparently was buried early in the session, then at the last moment was slipped into a vaguely related measure and rushed through the process in the final days of the session. Area legislators say they had no idea what was happening or what kind of problems this "good idea" might cause. One apparently was assured the law wouldn't affect nonprofit, home-owned carnivals.

That makes it just another example of the kind of awful work the Legislature sometimes does in the closing days, when everything

is rushed and now one has time to read the details.

It's possible no one intended to put the home-owned carnivals out of business. It's also possible some slick lobbyist for traveling carnivals had just that in mind. Or maybe the whole thing is just a misguided attempt to make us all safer.

The thing is, there no evidence at all that home-owned carnivals are dangerous. To the contrary, the ones out here have good safety records.

Because they operate only a few days out of the year, using volunteer labor, it would next to impossible to have them inspect the rides, let alone get the hundreds of volunteer operators in each county out for training and testing beforehand.

And a million-dollar insurance policy could prove far too costly for the charitable groups that run these carnivals. The Decatur County group is paying \$9,000 per year now for only \$500,000 in insurance.

This is just a bad deal all the way around. We could wind up losing our fun-filled, family oriented carnivals, have no way to replace them, and all for nothing.

This law needs to be changed, and soon. Colby's Rep. Jim Morrison is preparing a fix.

But beyond that, the Kansas Legislature needs to put itself under rules that require real hearings for all bills and forbid late-night, last-minute passage of law no one has heard about, or worse yet, died in committee for good reason.

That's just government at its worst, and the legislators ought to put a stop to such practices.

— Steve Haynes



Scenic meandering enjoyable

Getting home from Columbia, Mo., last week was an adventure at every turn, literally.

First, we had to get out of Columbia, and with a Missouri football game at 11 a.m., that was no sure thing.

Since we were staying on the south side of town, a friend suggested, why not go south, toward Jefferson City, rather than north past the stadium to I-70, where traffic was sure to be bad?

Good idea. We started south, but apparently missed the turn to the Jeff City highway — what shows on the map as a gentle curve to the east actually is a hard left at a light — and went straight down a county road that wandered, eventually, south, then west, then back north to the small town of McBaine. We thought we were lost, but another paved road headed northwest. A couple miles out of town was a sign that said, "I-70, four miles."

Bingo. OK, we were lost, but the round-about route got us to I-70 about 10 miles west of Columbia in 25 minutes with nary a bit of traffic. It might have taken longer to go the 15 miles past the stadium.

On the way, we passed the largest oak tree I have ever seen. It was big, bigger than any cottonwood I'd seen in western Kansas. Trees out here can run six feet across or more, but this was more like 15. I can't tell you exactly how big, because someone had made off with the plaque from the concrete pedestal beside the tree.

There's just something about getting away from your comfort zone for a few days that recharges your batteries. Of course, it helps to have a beautiful natural setting, all your meals prepared for you and great friends to share it with.

Speaking of "comfort zone," there is nothing comfortable about sleeping on bunk beds with a wafer-thin mattress. But, it's all part of the experience. Next year, however, I'm taking one of my twin-size air mattresses.

The featured speaker was funny, articulate and had a machine gun delivery which I really enjoy. You had to listen fast. She was a real person with a real history, real problems and a real, unshakable faith.

The workshops were equally as good. It's always hard to choose which ones to attend. I settled on "Managing Your Time" and "Beyond Regrets." The craft session I took was flower arranging.

My friend April taught the time class. She began by listing all the things we, as women, try to accomplish in a day. Many women still had full-time jobs that ate up eight to nine hours out of the day; sleeping took another eight; television about three hours; housework, children, husband, cooking took another chunk; then there was kids' sporting events, volunteer and church work,

hobbies and friends. All to point out that there is simply not enough time to do everything and we shouldn't try to be "Superwoman." Learn to say no, she said.

I didn't know what "Beyond Regrets" would be about, but, as the title suggested, it dealt with the regrets we have in our life. I felt a little awkward after answering the leader's questionnaire, because I was the only one who couldn't list any regrets. She wanted to know if we had regrets that still haunted us or debilitated us in any way.

Do I regret some of the decisions I've made, some of the things that have happened in the past, wrongs that have been done to me? Of course, I do. But (and this is the key) I don't dwell on them. I don't even think about them. They don't matter.

I regret that my first husband couldn't keep his marriage vows and was unfaithful. However, I wouldn't have the two daughters God gave me had I not been married to their father.

I regret the mistakes I made during the years I was single, but I



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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We started out to find my sister, who lives southwest of town. A barricade across the county road hinted at problems ahead, and sure enough, an arm of the Cottonwood River was flowing across a low spot.

Back at the next bridge, we found the same story. We got across the river, but could go no farther south. We finally worked, or waded, our way back to the state highway through some minor water on the road, then went south to high ground and started working our way to my sister's house. Then she called with directions.

When it was time to leave, she suggested heading north on the one road she thought was above water. She was wrong — the river was spilling a torrent across it — but it was that kind of day. We turned around and backtracked the 10 miles or so to the state highway bridge, and good thing we did.

Every road to the west was under water, and in the next county, the river was bluff to bluff. Five to six inches of rain will do that.

The rest of the trip home was dull, if tiring. But I'm not sure we could have taken much more adventure.

Only we couldn't find them. No answer at either house, no answer on their cell phones.

And I'd been calling them both all week. Finally, I reached a niece who said my brother had left the day before on his annual sales trip to Amsterdam. Oh well. To his credit, he did try to call me back before he left. I just didn't get the message.

Summer critters in full voice

Did you noticed how noisy it was last week?

Walking around town at midnight, it was almost impossible to hear what Steve was saying.

Yeah, I know, most people don't take their walks at midnight, but sometimes, that's the only time we have to get out, stretch our legs, take the dog for a walk and enjoy a summer evening.

Last week, the crickets were chirping; the cicadas were singing; a bunch of calves, recently separated from their mothers, were bawling; and an owl was screeching in the tree tops. There might have been a whole pond of frogs croaking their hearts out, but I couldn't hear them over the other noises.

It was deafening — and I loved it.

Even when I got home, with the window open in the bedroom, I could hear a persistent buzz. It was low and indistinct — more of a background noise — but constant and sort of soothing.

Summer is winding down, and the critters are in full voice, calling to mates and momma.

I really love this time of the year. The days are warm and the nights are cool. The tomatoes are ripe. The zucchini is ready for locked cars.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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And the cats stay outside all day long, enjoying the sun.

The only real drawback to late summer — it's not really fall yet — is the imminent approach of cold weather.

But for now, we sit on the back porch and listen to the Rockies on the radio, take in the summer music and keep an eye on our six- and eight-legged pets.

Grizelda, the orb-spinning spider, spins a beautiful web while Mandy, the praying mantis, stalks the railing looking for prey.

Mandy's been with us all summer. He rode into the house on both Steve and I in early summer. We spotted him and carefully returned him to the wilds of the backyard. He was just an inch and a half long in those days. Now he's a good three inches of lean, mean, bug-eating machine, just the kind of pet a gardener needs.

The toads I captured earlier in the year and transported to my garden are gone now. Finding spot to burrow into for a long winters' nap.

Wish I could do that, but it won't happen until after the end of tomato, zucchini and green pepper season.

From the Bible

And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.

And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,

And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:16-18

Getting away is like recharger

This past weekend was my annual women's retreat. I didn't think it could have been better than last year, but, I was wrong.

There's just something about getting away from your comfort zone for a few days that recharges your batteries. Of course, it helps to have a beautiful natural setting, all your meals prepared for you and great friends to share it with.

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Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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wouldn't have been ready to meet (and appreciate) the Godly man put into my life, had I not gone through that time. My life isn't perfect, but no regrets.

My craft project was flower arranging. It was loosely organized with an instructor who advised, "There's no wrong way to do this. Whatever you like is just fine." We were given a wide selection of baskets, bowls and vases to choose from, plus bushels of silk flowers and greenery. It was a mad flurry of wire snips cutting blossoms and leaves from stems. Some went for the fall colors, others a red, white and blue theme, some pastel and me — I chose a yellow-and-white spring flower theme. We were all very proud of our arrangements and crowded over everyone else's.

The drive home gave us a little time to decompress as we came back to the reality of dirty dishes, unmade beds and dust bunnies in the corners. It might be a crazy life, but it's my life and I love it.

I'll be ready for retreat again next year.

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