

## Longer runway here a bargain at what city expects to pay for work

Does Oberlin need a 5,500-foot runway at its airport?

At a cost to taxpayers of roughly a quarter million dollars for a project that may cost \$4 million to \$5 million, the answer has to be, "Why not?"

If this town can get that kind of civic improvement for less than 6 percent of the cost, then we ought to be out looking for the money.

It's true, the project originated with the needs of Bus and Coach International when the firm envisioned having its executives and customers flying in and out of this area all the time. The firm no longer seems to view Jennings as its headquarters, though it says it is committed to having an operation here and its main phone number is in Jennings.

And while the executives have put their homes here up for sale, the firm still has people coming and going. It still will be using the airport, and might eventually have well-heeled customers jetting in to look at customized coaches.

Larger air ambulances, other businesses and even the Kansas National Guard may well use a longer runway.

The "airport committee," which includes public officials, development boosters, Decatur Tomorrow representatives and aviation

interests, has put a great deal of effort into the runway projects. State and federal officials, impressed by Oberlin's commitment and solidarity, got behind the city's plan.

And that kind of effort should not be wasted. Neither should the opportunity to get a new runway at a bargain-basement price to taxpayers.

"Build it, and they will come?"

Sure, maybe there's a little of that. But transportation facilities of any kind are like gold to a community. They draw business, they create business.

That can be true whether you are talking about a longer runway at the airport or a better highway to bring traffic from Missouri.

Oberlin needs to be behind the runway proposal, now and in the future. As former Councilman Jay Anderson, an airport committee stalwart, said, it is just too good an opportunity to pass up.

The City Council and staff, having approved the next step in the process, should start now, with help from the county commissioners, to identify the money needed, when and how much, and make plans to raise it.

The airport project, and the support it has gathered, really are too good an opportunity to miss. — *Steve Haynes*

## Grim reaper follows along

The "grim reaper" made a pass over the Plotts' house this weekend.

Saturday morning our tomcat Sammy had been his usual playful self. Jim fed him, Sammy took his usual nap on Jim's lap and he had tormented his half-sister Sissy with his normal swats, slaps and chases.

Then something went horribly wrong. He became sick, he yowled a mournful, pain-filled yowl and his back legs just dragged behind him. "Jim!" I yelled. "Something's wrong with Sammy!"

"Call the vet!" Jim said, "and get the cat-carrier."

Within five minutes Jim, son James and Sammy were in the van and on the way to town. Half an hour later, the call came: Sammy had had a stroke. Blood clots had broken loose and cut off circulation to his hind quarters and probably hit his lungs, too. Nothing to do for the old boy but end his suffering.

Jim was pretty torn up, but knew it had to be done. It was a sad guy who came home with his buddy wrapped in a towel. Our little pet cemetery had to expand. Sammy has joined the ranks of Snuggles, Max and Petey.

I didn't know how Jim would take it, but when I hung up the phone I dialed my friend Charla, who owns the female cat that is the mother of Sissy and Sammy.

I told her the situation and asked if her mamma cat might be having another litter of kittens anytime soon.

"As a matter of fact," she said. "I have one of her kittens in the house right now. She looks like a Siamese



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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and is already house trained. I would give her up for Jim. Besides, we just got a puppy and she needs a lot of attention, too."

I told Charla I wouldn't say anything to Jim until I had a chance to "quiz him out" about how he might feel about getting a kitten so soon.

I needn't have worried. When Jim walked in the door, the first time he said was, "I called Charla on the way home and she has a kitten."

So, now we have a new kitten in the house. No name yet. Charla said she has been calling her "Kitty-Kitty." I guess we're open to suggestions.

The other two cats eyed her suspiciously at first and there was some "fusing" and hissing going on, but it was all from Kitty-Kitty. This morning, however, she and Sissy were playing like old friends.

I woke with Kitty sleeping on my pillow and purring in my ear. I think she's going to fit right in.

Death wasn't done with us yet. I went out to feed the chickens this morning and found one of our pullets hanging; her head caught in the fence. Then, on the way to town, I hit a rooster pheasant and sent him to that big game preserve in the sky. Anything with feathers or four feet

better give me wide clearance.

-ob-

Am I bad. The only brother whose birthday I can remember is Jim Kelley, who was born on the Fourth of July. All day Saturday I told myself to stop and call him, but I was cooking for a big barbecue and was constantly stirring, frosting, filling or mashing. Before I knew it, the day was gone and we were watching fireworks at the lake when I remembered I had forgotten.

So, in an effort to gain forgiveness, I'll try to make up for it here: 'Happy Birthday, Jim!'

### From the Bible

The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.

He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

*Psalms 34:18-20, 22*



## Poor the real losers in death

It's not every night you turn on the television and confront the image of a friend. It's almost bound to be bad news when you do.

So the other night when I tuned in Sports Center to see the highlights of the Rockies game, there was Alexis Arguello, the fighter. Dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound at his home in Nicaragua.

I can't claim to have known Mr. Arguello well. I only met him a couple of times, at his office when he was vice mayor of Managua, and later at a dinner party. He was the sort of person, though, that you feel is your friend after a few minutes.

Bob Sweeney, a friend and fellow publisher from Denver, had talked me into a trip to Nicaragua a few years ago that turned into a whirlwind, once-in-a-lifetime experience. We met three past presidents, hobnobbed with old Sandinistas and talked with many of the key and not-so-key figures from the Contra-Sandinista war.

Bob had promised the vice mayor, during a visit a year earlier, that he'd buy fight gear for his pet project, a boxing program for poor youths from the barrios of Managua. Bob shopped for \$1,000 in boxing gear and the rest of us chipped in for bags of soccer balls for the kids.

But let me tell you about Alexis Arguello, the fighter. He was the only man ever to have claimed world championships at three weights. His record was 82 and 8 in professional fights, with 65 knockouts, and *Ring* magazine named him the 20th best puncher of all time. At 5 foot, 10 inches, he had range and power that few light-weight fighters could match.

Fame and fortune were not necessarily kind to him. He developed a drug addiction he found difficult to kick, and in the revolution, lost much of his money and property. Later, though, as a true national hero, he joined the Sandinista party and ran for vice mayor.

When I met him, Mr. Arguello had been asked to replace the mayor, who was retiring.

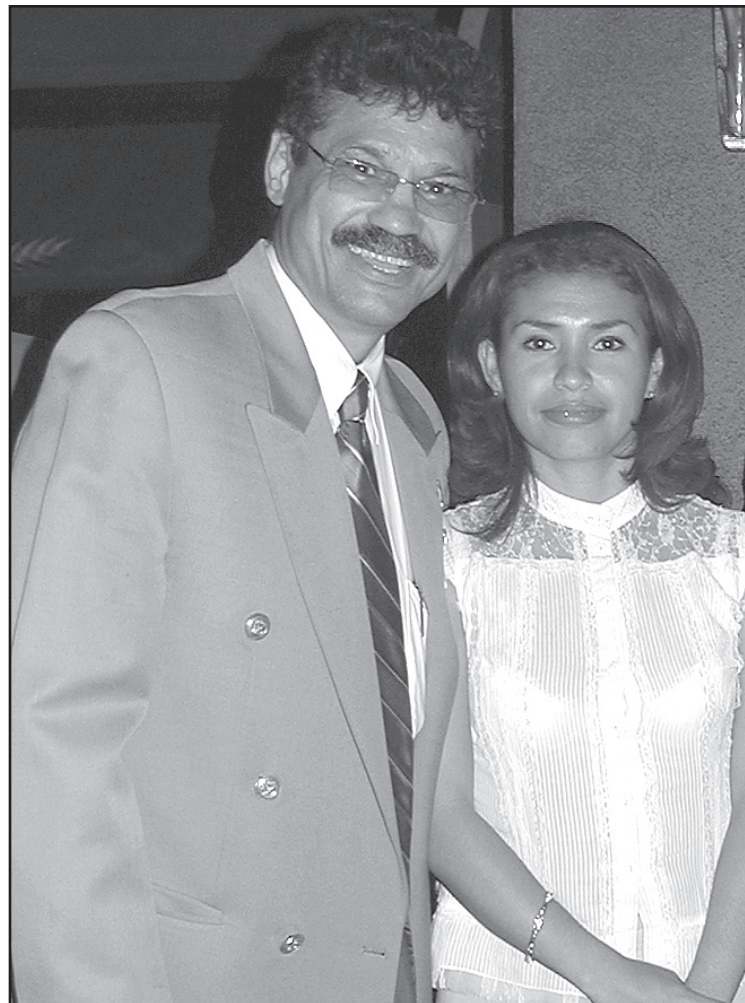
We went to his office to give him the boxing gear. I thought we were lucky to make it, since Bob had nearly caused a riot in the barrio the day before, throwing soccer balls into a mob of teenagers who'd been playing with a flat, scuffed up ball.

Our host, our patron, if you will, owned a television station, so we were trailing a reporter and a camera crew. We did a standup, with Alexis and Bob talking about brotherhood



### Along the Sappa

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**RENOWNED FIGHTER** Alexis Arguello attended a dinner given for American publishers in 2007 with a date. Several Americans wanted their picture taken with the boxer, then vice mayor of Managua.

— Herald staff photo by Steve Haynes

and forging international ties for youth. It was great stuff.

Afterward, in a quiet moment, Arguello asked me if I thought he should run for mayor. He said he feared "the politicians" would not let him do what he wanted to with city government. I told him only he could decide that, but suggested he consider how he could accomplish the most for his people.

His decision, eventually, was to run, and he was elected mayor last fall in a campaign against Eduardo Montealegre, a brilliant U.S.-educated (Brown, Harvard) conservative who for all his polish, lacked the ex-fighter's charisma.

No one knows what drove Mr.

Arguello to shoot himself last week, if that indeed is what happened. I've seen no news of the autopsy reports, and while his death made headlines here, at least on the sports pages, the details won't be news.

Perhaps those pressures he spoke of became too much for a gentle man who made his name in a violent sport. Maybe the devils from his personal past took control. We will never know.

A lot of people have lost a friend, though, especially the poor of Managua and everyday Nicaraguans, who revered him as a national hero, flaws and all.

## 'Garden envy' sad situation

It's a sad thing to see — garden envy.

I was sitting at Rotary the other day and the topic moved from sports and politics to gardens, probably because it's sort of slow in the sports world and we've rehashed state and national politics to death.

John opened with a bow shot — his tomatoes were doing well. Ralph upped the ante — he had fruit on one of his plants. Around the table it went from having plants to BLTs for lunch. It was like listening to fish stories at the Liars Club. Those tomatoes just kept getting bigger and bigger.

Then Steve arrived home with real, vine-ripened tomatoes from a friend in Sharon Springs.

Back at the office it was more of the same. Kim's cantaloupes are developing nicely and Pat's green peppers are blossoming. Linda said that her chickens are good at keeping bugs away from her garden.

I produced some of my carrots.

This is the first time I've tried carrots, and the staff was not impressed. The two specimens I brought in looked like short, orange pencils. But, hey, they were my very own home-grown carrots. I was proud of



### Open Season

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them. I might even eat them.

Actually, the garden is doing pretty well, even if I don't have any ripe tomatoes.

Several of the snow peas made it through installation of the neighbor's new fence, which required the removal of their supports when they were just plantlets. The ones that survived have provided us with a few dozen pods and a lot of fun.

The zucchini is blooming, but so far the flowers all seem to be nonproductive. You know, the male ones.

Soon, I'm sure, we'll be trying people's back doors and leaving excess zucchs in unlocked cars.

Actually, my system is to take the spares to the office and anyone who comes in for a paper, subscription or classified ad can have one only if they take a zucchini.

A couple of years ago, a lawyer down the street had a bumper crop of cucumbers. He put them in a pot outside his door on Main Street and everyone could have what they wanted. He gave it up, however, when people started replacing the cucumbers with zucchini.

I may have to try the pot idea, myself this year. I have about 50 tiny cucumbers on the four vines we bought. Since Steve doesn't like cucumbers, I'll have a few more than I can eat.

Other than that, the corn is doing well, the broccoli has little white moths dancing over it and my green beans are almost one-half inch long. Oh, and the two cabbage plants we can't remember buying are heading up nicely.

Now, aren't you envious?

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