

## Air Force needs new planes sooner not later

The Air Force is taking another round of bids on 179 new tankers to replace aging Boeing 707s ordered under the Eisenhower administration.

Boeing won the bid at least once, but the award was reversed when, among other things, officials alleged that an Air Force general who helped with the review had a promised job waiting for her with Boeing.

Subsequent wrangling over contracts — and political infighting prompted by a plum that could top \$100 billion — have set the project back more than a decade.

There are only two bidders — Boeing, the last maker of large transport aircraft in the U.S. after the departure of Lockheed-Martin and merger of McDonnell-Douglas, and EADS, the government-controlled European Aerospace Defense and Space Co., maker of the Airbus line.

Boeing wants to sell the government a modernized version of its 767 aircraft, first flown in 1982. Production would be in Seattle and Wichita, primarily, as with other Boeing models.

Airbus offers a military version of its A330, a 1992 airframe. The tanker version is already being built for the Australian Air Force, giving the A330 something of an edge. At least Airbus has a picture of its product in action. Production would be at a new plant in Mobile, Ala., and in Arizona.

However, Boeing claims its smaller tanker will save the Air Force as much as \$10 billion in fuel over the life of the planes. The Air Force

will have to sort all that out — again. It will make hundreds of comparisons of cost and performance items.

Bids have been submitted several times. At one point, it looked like Boeing would have its way with the departure of Airbus partner Northrup from the bid. However, the European concern has since decided to go it alone.

Senators and representatives from Alabama and Arizona have lined up behind Airbus while the Kansas and Washington delegations back Boeing. Money and jobs are everything in an election year.

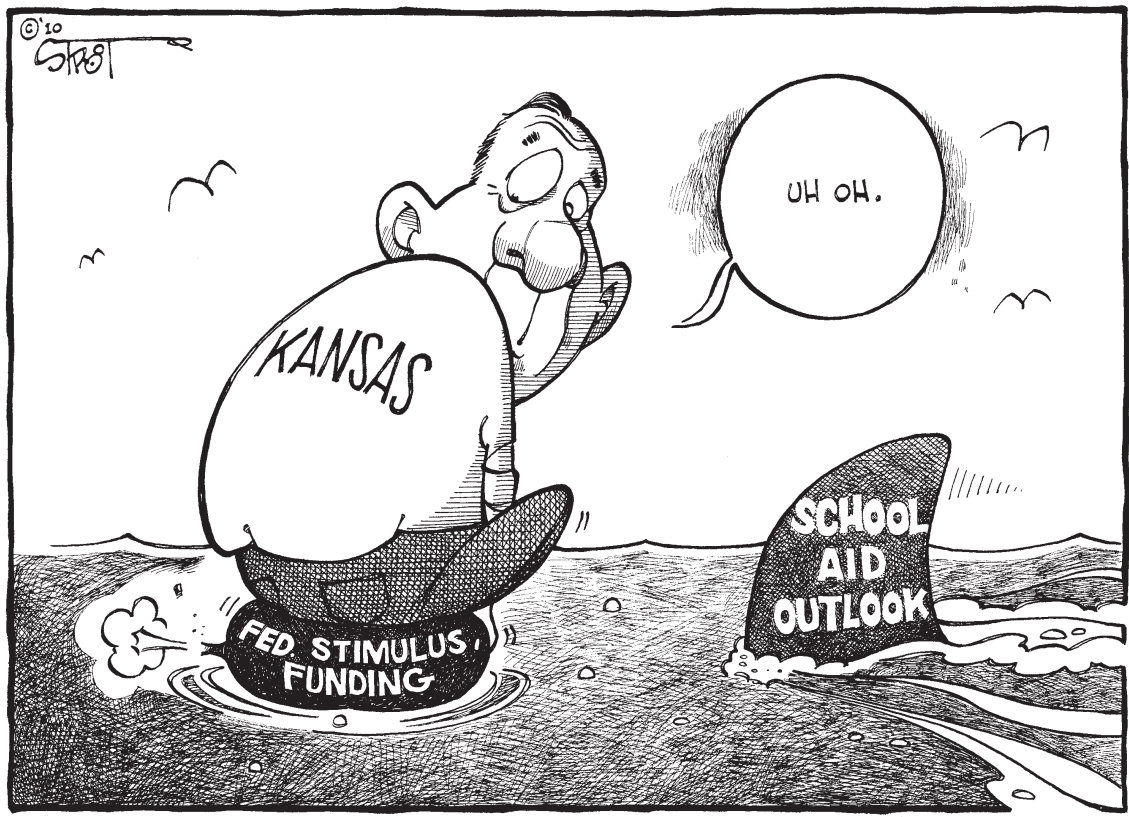
Meantime, American pilots are stuck with tankers that are more than half a century old. They're old, slow, small and increasingly hard to maintain. How long can that go on, especially if it could take 20 to 30 years to replace all the old planes?

It'd be nice to say we should settle this on the basis of who has the best plane, but that question seems to be lost in the political and lobbying wrangle.

What needs to happen is to get the bidding process decided so new tankers can be built and delivered. The Air Force is long since past the point where it needs them.

For Kansas, the answer to the question of who builds them should be obvious, but whichever firm wins, let's get these planes flying.

No airline can afford to fly 707s today, and neither can our air force. — Steve Haynes



## Snakes are misunderstood

Snakes, Steve observed, get a raw deal.

They never get to be the spokes-animal in commercials.

You know what I mean. Think about it.

There is the Geico gecko, the Budweiser clydesdales, plus all those cats, dogs, rabbits, turtles, gerbils, frogs and birds that act in or speak for everything from cleaning products to insurance.

And then there are my favorite animals — the Frontier Airline tail crew — Jack the rabbit, Foxy the fox; Larry the lynx; Flip the bottlenose dolphin; Grizwald the bear and Jim, Joe, Jay and Gary the penguins.

I checked the Internet and found dozens of animal actors.

There are commercials out there where live and animated animals drive cars, chat with each other, play golf, ice skate, dress in funny clothes, drink beer, eat cereal and in general cause assorted mayhem.

Everyone remembers Morris the catm so why can't Squirm the snake get a slither-on part in a commercial.



## Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
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Now, you'd have to be a little careful about where you put him.

Fashion would be a no no. You might be able to dress dogs, cats, hamsters — even chickens — up in fashionable shirts and shorts set, but try it on a snake and it just doesn't work.

I doubt if the Washington Apple Growers Association would want to hire him, either.

I can just see that commercial: "Hiya doll-face, you wanna get really smart. Have an apple. They're good for you."

Oh yeah. That wouldn't fly.

Well, how about: "Hi I'm Squirm, the spokesnake for Over-the-Road tires. When you hear the hisss. Think of Over-the-Road."

OK. Not the greatest idea in the world. I've seen worse on the air, just not many.

Poor Squirm. Could be he's doomed to washing cars or cleaning out warehouses in west L.A.

Then again, that gives me an idea. Maybe we can get him a job in an exterminator commercial.

"Hi, I'm Squirm. I'll be right over to help you with that rat and mouse problem. Or, you can call Ready Kill, the vermin mover that doesn't use venomous reptiles."

Or if all else fails, there's always that plumbing job. I hear plumbers make really good money. They always need a snake, even if the job isn't quite as glamorous as television.

## Spicy treat popular at church

A recipe for stuffed jalapeños caught my eye. It sounded easy and I tried it. Since then, I have had to make them about twice a week. Jim and James both practically stand by the oven 'til the little gems are done.

I told Jim I wanted to take them to the church potluck.

"You and I will be the only ones eating them," he said. "No one else will like them."

Well, I have the empty pan to prove he was wrong. In fact, one of our friends said, "Anytime you want to drop off a pan of those at our house, you are welcome to."

So here goes. I hope your family loves them as much as mine. They are not spicy hot.

**STUFFED JALAPEÑOS**  
Soften 8 ounces of cream cheese and blend in about 4 tablespoons of shredded cheddar cheese.

Cut a dozen jalapeños in half, lengthwise. Remove the seeds and veins (I use a melon baller). Fill the pepper with the cheese mixture and wrap half a piece of bacon around each pepper, securing with a toothpick.

Now, here is the secret ingredient. Mix 1/4 teaspoon chili powder with about a half cup of brown sugar. Roll the jalapeños in the sugar and place on a cake pan or a cookie sheet with sides.

Bake 30 to 45 minutes at 350 degrees or until bacon is done.

Beware! If you start, your family will want them all the time and you won't be able to stop.



## Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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—ob—

It's time for the baby's next feeding, and I'll have to put on my chore boots.

Our first baby calf arrived over the weekend and she is a cutie. Coal black, shiny hair, big brown eyes and a ravenous appetite. She took to the bottle immediately and is ready to graduate to larger feedings.

Our rancher friend David called to see if we were ready for calves. One of his cows had a set of twins, and after feeding them once, she would only claim one. Now, it's our turn.

If Dave comes up with another one, we'll take it too. If not, we'll probably pick one up at the sale barn. I think they do better with at least one penmate.

—ob—

My 45th class reunion is fast approaching, and my girlfriend Galene, whom I have not seen in more than 20 years, is coming to stay with me for a few days.

I told Jim the tile project for our bathroom and utility room floors was the one thing I wanted done before she comes, and he promised to do it. He has gone above and beyond, though, and promised to fin-

ish a few other odd projects before her arrival. Nothing like expecting house guests to get us motivated.

## From the Bible

It is written: " 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'"  
Romans 14:11 NIV

## Write

The Oberlin Herald encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

Mail letters to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan., 67749, or by e-mail to oberlinherald@nwkans.com.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area.

## He's sleepin' in a Choo Choo

We rushed to Georgia to meet our granddaughter, but Cynthia wanted to spend some time seeing the country on the way back. We both had some ideas.

First on her list was Chattanooga, where she wanted to see the aquarium and I wanted to see and ride the trains at the railroad museum.

It's only a four-hour drive from Augusta, in east Georgia, so after greeting Brad's parents when they arrived from Chicago, we left the baby in their arms and took off, listening to a Rockies game on the way up.

Cynthia had booked us into the Chattanooga Choo Choo, in the old Union Depot at the south end of downtown. This unique hotel started with rooms in a collection of 60-some old railroad coaches just retired with the advent of Amtrak.

I'd worried that the quarters might be tight, but you don't sleep in an old Pullman with pull-down bunks, but in half of a day coach turned into a hotel room. Designers kept the baggage racks for pillow and blanket storage and used the lounges at either end for bathrooms, so there's a real "train" feel. Oh, and they kept ALL the windows.

The place is popular with families, who also fill three hotel buildings put up since the 1970s. The old station concourse serves as the lobby, with "rooms" parked along the tracks and dinner in a real diner available on weekends.

We were late, though, so we took a city shuttle bus downtown, where restaurants line the main streets. We tried our luck at a brew pub, and it was good. Lunch the next day at a place along the riverfront called the Boat House was even better.

Next day, we were up early and headed to the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum, a legendary place which has played a key role in preserving steam locomotives in the South. The excursion line is only three miles of former main line, but there's a tunnel through Mission Ridge, site of an epic Civil War battle, and a real, live steam engine.

No. 610 came steaming in from the shop. While I was outside, the



## Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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lady at the gift shop happened to mention to Cynthia that for \$20 extra (fare was only \$15) you could ride in the locomotive cab. You know what I said.

I shed my good jacket, because it's hot, dirty and moist in a coal-burner's cab. Riders get to sit on the fireman's seat box while he (or she, in this case) shovels and works the engine. That keeps them out of trouble, but I did get to turn on the blower and put water in the boiler with the injector, both fireman duties, so I learned a few things.

And, of course, I got to blow the whistle. Jim, the engineer, showed me how. The engine, it turned out, was the last built by the famous Baldwin Locomotive Works in Philadelphia — in 1954. It worked for the U.S. Army, mostly training crews to work overseas.

"Our diesels are older," Tim noted.

Tim, the second fireman, was a retired college professor who was being trained. I got the feeling if I lived anywhere near something like this, my weekends would be shot.

Six miles doesn't take too long, though, even at 10 mph with a ride on the turntable at one end.

Cynthia wanted to go to the Tennessee Aquarium next so we could ride an excursion boat down the river, but it was pouring rain. We decided to tour the Chickamauga battlefield south of town instead, giving history a couple of hours.

The field where 125,000 Americans fought each other is small in some senses, but you can't begin to take it all in within two hours. We learned a lot in that time, though.

It was here, along Chickamauga Creek, that Maj. Gen. George Thomas earned his reputation by holding against massive Confederate assaults, even after Maj. Gen.

James Longstreet's charge broke the center of the Union line.

Maj. Gen. Alexander McCook faced a court martial and was acquitted, but relieved of command for his part in the collapse. He later redeemed himself defending Washington. Phil Sheridan and W.T. Sherman were but division commanders in 1863.

Fascinating, but we had a date with the fish. We drove back downtown in the rain, winding down Mission Ridge past various state monuments to fallen troops. Chickamauga was the nation's first battlefield park, and scattered around town are nearly 900 plaques, pillars and monuments.

At the aquarium, we found three buildings, a river journey, ocean journey and IMAX theater. You start on the river. Wow. After a couple of hours, it was time for the film and I hadn't made it halfway through the Amazon toward the exit. Cynthia — she must not stop to read the little interpretive signs — said she'd go watch the movie for both of us. Me, I managed to get out in time to rush through the ocean voyage.

They had trout, crappie, catfish, bass, gar, carp, minnows and shiners, big ones and little ones. Oh, I can watch fish all day, and as a museum, the place was well done. The ocean journey — think sharks and pretty tropical fish, tuna and lots of other stuff — ended with a beautiful show of jellies. Wow.

The rain stopped, the sun came out while we were inside, but the excursion boat never moved, so I don't think we missed anything on the river. Next day, we ambled across Tennessee, and man, that's one long state. But that'll have to be another column.

## Photo Policy

The Oberlin Herald wants to emphasize photos of people doing things in the community. If you know of an event or news happening that we should attend, please call 475-2206.

Please be sure to allow a couple of days' notice so we can arrange

to be there. Space in the paper is limited and so is the time of our staff, so we may not be able to get to every event, but we will try.

Because space is so limited, we cannot run team or group photos, any pictures of people lined up or of

people passing checks, certificates and the like. We do run wedding and engagement pictures and "mug" shots with stories and obituaries, when they are provided to us. We cannot return photos unless you submit a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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