

Our immigration system nearly impossible to fix

Where would we even begin to fix the tattered, torn, broken, impossible U.S. immigration system?

It makes no sense, everyone calls for “reform,” yet nothing ever changes.

We spend billions, then billions more, for tighter security, more walls, electronic surveillance, aircraft and more guards. The payoff: nothing but the worst economy in 70 years seems to slow the flood of immigrants.

People who want to come to our country are degraded, insulted and bullied. They have to pass into our fortress embassies, answer questions, wait in line, pay money, then wait years to come to the U.S. — if ever.

People who want to work here — unless they are doctors, chemists or computer geniuses, well, just forget it. Some days, it’s hard for a town to get a foreign doctor through all the State Department’s red tape.

How did the nation that earned the Statue of Liberty fall to this mean estate?

It wasn’t easy. Our immigration system, retooled after World War II mostly to keep people out, was built up over years and years. It won’t change overnight.

Our economy simply won’t run without foreign labor — nothing unusual there. It never has. Neither can the economies of the wealthy European or Middle Eastern countries.

But 30 or 40 years ago, we had a system for migrant laborers to come north and pick our crops. The border existed in peace, with a sort of easy-going back and forth that kept things fluid.

No more. Today the U.S.-Mexican border sports wire, guards, dogs, constant patrols, airborne surveillance, all kinds of unfriendly

attitudes. And still, people come here to work.

Why? Because they need jobs and we have them. They need them badly enough to risk their lives with smugglers, to spend their savings, to risk being caught and sent right back south.

It isn’t the Mexicans who created this situation, wanting jobs and wanting to break the law to get them. It was our wealthy and vastly successful economy that produced jobs we cannot fill with Americans.

Another problem on the border that will have to be solved: drugs and smuggling.

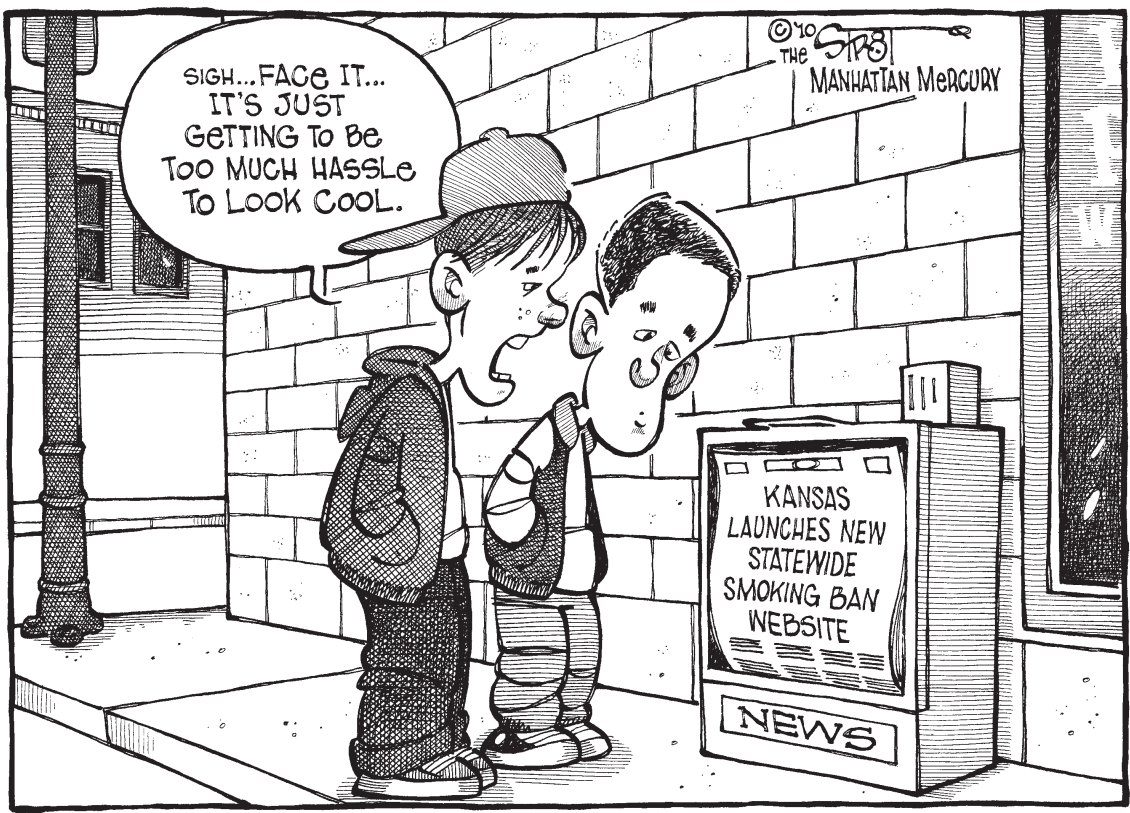
As long as we make drugs scarce and expensive here, and people want them, smugglers and gangsters will bring them into our country.

We’re only fooling ourselves if we think spending more on enforcement will turn the tide. Demand is too strong, profits too large. And the corrupting influence of the smugglers is too great at the border.

But for the border, the trick will be to make legal immigration both possible and desirable. With a good immigration plan — one without too many restrictions or impossible rules — workers will be able to cross the border legally and we’ll know who is in the country. The “coyote” human smugglers would be out of business, and the Border Patrol could concentrate on the bad guys.

That may be too sensible in a nation where most people seem to focus on more guards, more guns, more insults and more money. But we need to try, and soon. We should be ashamed of what’s happening today.

— Steve Haynes



Descendants were all together

We had all three children and our only grandchild in one spot in Kansas last week, and our daughters seemed a little surprised that we were there, too.

Duh! The last time all of us were together, youngest daughter was saying “I do,” and that was a zoo, as most weddings are.

Thursday the two girls put baby Taylor in her car seat, drove to Atlanta, flew to Kansas City, rented a car and drove to Lake Kahola, near Emporia, to show the baby off to their Kansas cousins, aunt and uncles.

After a little persuasion, their brother took off work in Lawrence and drove out to the lake also.

It was a memorable time: All of our descendants under one roof at one time.

Steve’s parents purchased the little lake cabin in the mid-1950s — when the lake was dry, cabins were cheap — and used it as a weekend retreat. Their four children grew up sleeping in the bunk beds in the kitchen, boating, fishing and swimming.

By the time I joined the family, son No. 2 was in college, so there was a spare bunk and soon, a roll-out crib.

Steve’s mom updated the little cabin about 15 years ago and it now has three bedrooms as well as the bunks.

We shuffled around over the weekend with youngest daughter and baby in the first bedroom, us in the second and eldest daughter in the third. (Daddy and eldest snore, and



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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youngest sleeps lightly.) Son got the bunk beds.

We cooked on the barbecue as various aunts, uncles and cousins dropped by to check out the baby and visit, sort of “relative de jour.”

There’s nothing like a 10-week-old to bring the family out of the woodwork. Only one uncle didn’t show up. He had the flu and didn’t want to take the chance of passing it on.

And yes, we have pictures. Pictures of everyone holding Taylor and pictures of people just standing around talking and playing with the various family dogs.

I guess I shouldn’t have been amazed. This is the age of the caring man. The guys all grabbed the baby as fast as the girls.

First it was uncle Lacy. My son acted as if he had been around babies all his life when, in truth, he’s the baby of our family.

Steve’s brother Doug rocked her and cooed to her. His baby girl is 14 now, and you can tell, he misses having a baby in the house.

Then there were the cousins — Willie and Andy. They both took their turns.

Willie handled her like he does one of his art pieces — with a

mixture of care and deftness. He’s a glass blower and knows how to handle delicate objects.

To my knowledge, Andy has never had a chance to hold a baby, but as we looked around we spotted him watching a movie on television with Taylor fast asleep on his chest — just the way she does at home with her Daddy.

After meeting and greeting all the relatives in eastern Kansas, we all drove to Concordia to see my mother.

This was about the best Mother’s Day gift you could have given her.

Living in a nursing home after a stroke and broken hip, she couldn’t make the wedding in Georgia a few years ago, but her room is plastered with pictures of her grandchildren and her first great-grandchild, starting with Taylor’s sonograms and going through the latest set she got in the mail last week.

It was a great weekend, and we hated to come home, but it was time for the three girls to fly back to Georgia to husbands and father, and time for us to come home to cut grass, check mail and get ready for another week of work.

But, we have pictures. Let me show you the pictures!

Friend will get a private room

I learned something new this weekend. If you want or need something done ... just ask.

If you’ve followed the Plotts family saga for any time at all, you know that our house remodel is “a work in progress.” You also know that I am expecting a long-time friend, Galene, to stay with me for a few days during our 45th-year high school class reunion.

What you don’t know is that, until Saturday, I didn’t exactly have a place for her to sleep. Oh, we had a spare bedroom, but it had slowly, over the years, turned into a storage room. Come on, admit it. You might have one of those in your house.

Anyway, my goal has been to make it guest-ready. And Saturday was “D-Day.” Right after breakfast, I asked Jim and son James, “Could you guys, please, give me 45 minutes of your time before you start your day?”

“To do what?” was their first question.

As innocently as I could sound, I replied, “Just carry the boxes in the east room to the basement. Shouldn’t take long at all.”

Well, two hours later it was done. The basement is not a pretty sight, but the bedroom is empty, except for the bed that was hiding in there and some sheet rock needed to finish the ceiling and one wall. At least I see the possibility of Galene having a private room during her visit.

— ob —
Jim has been wanting me to wean



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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the calves off the bottles and teach them to drink from a bucket for two weeks.

My hesitation: I had a friend with two little girls who wanted to help feed them. And it’s not nearly as much fun to pour milk into a bucket as it is to hold a bottle for a hungry calf. So, I vowed to keep the calves on the bottle for a few more days.

The girls came and fed the calves and were duly excited by the whole thing. For an added bonus they got to “pick the eggs” too. And take the eggs home to eat for breakfast. They thought they had a great time. I guess if our own grandkids can’t be here, we’ll just “rent a kid.”

— ob —
Speaking of the calves, Jim has made the cutest little stanchion apparatus for them. It has four openings with a “feed bunk” in front. Holes have been cut for milk buckets to set in. This way, each will get the proper allotment and one can’t “hog up” while another gets less.

They each have their own personality. April and Junior are the most aggressive. May is right behind

them but, Julio who was weak when he came to us, still stands back. He needs a little protection and the stanchions guarantee he will get his fair share.

— ob —
This has been a wet spring and flowers are popping. Tulips are almost done and iris are starting to bloom. Roses are budding and spirea is full-blown.

The only down side is there may not be any cutting flowers left by Memorial Day. It could make for “land office” sales for the florists and greenhouses.

From the Bible

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Psalm 100:1-3

Wife directionally challenged

My family got lost on the way to the store the other day, most of it, anyway.

I’m not sure why I was surprised, since Cynthia was leading them, and her idea of direction is a little challenged. OK, a lot challenged.

She has trouble with “left” and “right,” and terms like “east” and “west” just confuse her.

Anyway, we were spending the weekend at the family retreat near Emporia when the girls decided to go in to Council Grove to get diapers and wipes for the grandbaby, which Cynthia had forgotten to stock. I was to go, but the girls decided they wanted to chat.

Now normally, both the daughters, Felicia, the older one, and Lindsay, the little one, can find their way across town or across the continent. But with their mother to lead them, well, they were in trouble.

I tried to give them directions. “Turn right at the dam,” I said. “Go east, and when you turn north, just stay on that road to the pavement.”

Seemed clear to me. And in a 12-mile grid, surrounded by paved roads that all lead to a town and a store, in a vehicle equipped with a global positioning system device, all carrying cell phones, you’d think it’d be hard to get lost. And it is. But three women can spend a bunch of time finding the highway, apparently.

Just what part of “turn right at the



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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dam” they didn’t understand I’m not sure. Probably, they were talking. But they cruised right on past their turn, winding around the lake until the shore road turned south.

Remembering north, they turned around and tried to go that way, but the road they were on, a couple of miles west of the road to town, ends in a “T” intersection. I know this, because later, after hearing their story, I checked the trail of bread crumbs in the GPS in my truck. The little blue line tells all, and you’d better hope the FBI doesn’t want to look at yours.

Anyhow, that road led deeper into the Flint Hills pasture country, and the girls were pretty sure by then that it wasn’t the way to town. Cynthia was whimpering that roads were not supposed to be that grassy. Then it ended, with the only way out to the south.

About that time, I think, Lindsay realized that she had left her baby daughter with two men — her father and brother — and she might never get out of the pasture country alive,

and how could she have trusted them?

Then the “low-fuel” light blinked on in the truck, and things got serious.

The girls kept on pushing west, having wandered back to a main county road — insofar as they have main county roads in pasture country — and eventually hit the blacktop south of Council Grove. I guess they remembered “north,” and if that was the only part of the directions they remembered, it finally got them to the store, a little late but none the worse for the wear.

And they got the diapers and the baby wipes and everyone was happy, pretty much. Even the baby, who had challenged her granddad and uncle, but was clean and none the worse for the wear.

They’ve all found Council Grove on their own since then, even Cynthia, who claims she is lost if she can’t see the elevator in Concordia. But next time. Next time, I think I’ll just leave them at the lake and go get the darned diapers myself.

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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 will always try to make room for a story about any of these events, however.)

We do run wedding and engagement pictures and “mug” shots with stories and obituaries, when they are provided to us. Please remember that we need a clear, sharp picture. Dark or fuzzy prints will not work.

We cannot return photos unless you submit a self-addressed, stamped envelope with clear in-

structions for return. Other photos submitted may be picked up at our office within two weeks. After that, they will be disposed of.

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