

Rural America needs all the friends it can get

Good news for rural America is a new U.S. Department of Agriculture program to help states lease land and improve habitat for public access.

Called the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program, the effort is authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill. It offers states and tribal governments up to \$50 million in grants through 2012 to expand or create public-access programs for hunting and recreation. "We believe that encouraging outdoor recreation activities in rural communities represents a real opportunity," said Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack.

The number of hunters and fishermen has been declining for years as America becomes more urban and less rural. Once, hunters could knock on the door and expect to be welcomed by a farm owner. Today, with many farmers living in town or miles from their fields, it's increasingly difficult to get permission to hunt or fish. Private leases take more land out of the pool.

But \$50 million isn't much money in this day and age, so why is this important?

First, with much land coming out of the Conservation Reserve Program, farmers maybe can use a little cash. The federal money might preserve some habitat that would otherwise be lost to the plow.

Second, rural America needs all the friends it can get. Face it: there aren't many of us compared to our brethren in the city. We don't vote in numbers anymore. So anything we get from Washington will be the result of partnerships with city folk.

We need them on our side. We need them to understand our positions, our needs. We need them to care. And hunters who visit the farm and get to know farmers are just the type of supporters we need.

We should make them our friends.

What we loosely call the Farm Bill today really is a welfare bill. Most of the money goes to urban programs. We've seen what happens when city-bred environmental interests get their hands on this money: Conservation Reserve cut, ethanol programs under attack, cheap food always in the forefront.

Rural Americans, as few as we are, cannot go to Washington and force anyone to do anything. Not enough of us. Farmers are fewer still. So we need all the allies we can find.

Third, hunting, fishing and recreation are big business. Secretary Vilsack estimates and people using public lands under his department spend \$12 billion a year in nearby towns, creating a quarter-million jobs. The department sees a chance to spread that around, and those of us surrounded by private land could use some of that business.

Kansas officials, knowing how little public land we have in this state, welcomed the new program. Kansas already has 1 million acres under lease and might be able to do more with some federal money.

We wouldn't say \$1 million per state was enough to change the world, but it's a start. To really help us, this program needs to grow and expand. But anything Washington does to help us is welcome.

— Steve Haynes



It was a once-in-a-lifetime trip



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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I've had numerous people (yeah both of you) ask about our trip to Mackinac Island and the Grand Hotel.

What can I say. It was grand. Well, it was also fancy, expensive and a heck of a long way to go to enjoy a little cool air.

We agreed. We're glad we did it, and we'll probably never do it again. It's too far and too much.

When you can get to Estes Park in a few hours, why go all the way to Michigan.

Well, there's Lake Huron, of course and the Grand Hotel itself.

If you're not a guest, they charge you \$10 just to look around the place.

If you are a guest, of course, they charge you a whole lot more.

Room prices are \$190 to \$290 a night. That's a bundle, but the Brown Palace in Denver starts about \$250 a night, so maybe it's OK. And the Grand will feed you breakfast and dinner at that price.

But wait! That's per person with a 6 percent Michigan sales tax and, since there is no tipping allowed at the hotel, a 19.5 percent gratuity addition.

Ouch!

The cost of the room depends on your view. If you want a nice view of Lake Huron and the Mackinac Bridge, you pay for it. Our view was off a loading dock and back stairs. If I wanted to see Lake Huron, I got up, got dressed and went out on the huge front porch and looked at it.

Yeah, it's a nice view. Not a \$100-a-night view, but nice.

So what do you get for this oh so-scary price?

Food, music and art and the feel-

ing of vacationing like the rich did in the early part of the last century.

First of all, they feed you. The room price includes breakfast and dinner.

Breakfast is a full meal off the menu, or as many trips as you want to the buffet, with waiters offering coffee and juice.

Lunch is on your own, but the hotel has about nine places that, for an extra charge, you can get anything from quiche to an \$18 hot dog, or you can try one of the many restaurants on the island.

In the afternoon, there is high tea. You can have tea and finger sandwiches, chat with your friends in the lobby and listen to a lady play the harp.

Then there's a demitasse service with strong coffee, finger sandwiches and someone playing quite music on the piano.

The lunch, high tea and demitasse are all extra charges, as are drinks you might desire with your meals or at the bar in the evenings.

Dinner is included in the price of admission, and is a full dress affair. Men must wear suits and ties and the ladies are asked to wear their best. An army of uniformed waiters and waitresses serve you an appetizer, soup, salad, entree and dessert.

And music. There's always mu-

sic.

Besides the lady on the harp and the pianists in the morning and afternoon, a combo playing in the upstairs bar, a dinner-time quartet and an orchestra with a singer in the ballroom after dinner. There's music on the porch most afternoons provided by choirs and musical groups.

And art. That was Steve's favorite part.

The hotel has its own collection of art, which is quite good.

While we were there, it also had a couple dozen pieces from the Manooagian collection, which were destined for a new museum being built on the island.

The collection is mostly from American Impressionists, including a couple of pieces by John Singer Sargent and at least one by William Merritt Chase.

All in all, it was a great opportunity to eat too much, drink too much and generally loll in the lap of early 20th century luxury.

We enjoyed it tremendously, couldn't button our too-tight pants when it was time to come home and likely will never do it again.

It was truly a grand, once-in-a-lifetime experience.

You get what you pay for

Our marriage endured the ultimate litmus test and survived: we worked together all last week and are still speaking.

Jim got a job replacing the front of an office building and needed a "ground man." Since I'm mostly unemployed, except for the occasional feature article or two, it seemed logical for me to be his sidekick for the job.

Now, I've never shied away from hard work, but Jim has this ridiculous idea that we need to be at the work site before 7:30. That's a.m.

Do you know how early I have to get up in order to be ready "to roll" (his words, not mine) by that time? I don't care if I am just "schlepping" hammers and nails, I still have to do my hair and powder my nose.

Jim's been very patient with me. Intellectually, I know that being married to a carpenter no more makes ME a carpenter than standing in a garage makes me a mechanic. However, I have learned a few things over the years by watching him work. One is "measure twice - cut once."

Perhaps I didn't learn that too well. That's why, after I cut the wrong end off a piece of wood - twice - he came close to losing it. But, when I reminded him that "you get what you pay for," he backed off. I may not be good help but, I am cheap.

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Good news from Texas. Our granddaughter Taylor arrived home safe and sound from her two weeks



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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in Canada. Her mother said she tried to deny that she was tired after her flight, but with only a little encouragement, Taylor took a four-hour nap.

After she's had some time to rest and catch up with her friends, I'll grill her about her trip.

—ob—

It's becoming obvious my list of friends has shrunk. You know, the whole Friendship Bread Starter thingie. I still have one bag of starter left from this last batch, and I'm desperately looking for a home for it. Seems like I'm not the first person to be sucked in the "chain letter" of starters.

I managed to coerce a friend who wanted one bag to take two. She has three daughters who bake. Surely, they can keep it going for years.

When I asked one friend if she wanted a bag of starter, she didn't even wait for me to finish the question.

"No, no, no," was her immediate reply. Adding, "I don't want to be tied to any schedule like that."

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I was alerted to the impending surgery of one of my high school

classmates. That led me to call other classmates to let them know.

Each one added a piece of information about the failing health of other classmates until I surmised that we are falling apart. As my friend, John, put it, "Growing old isn't for sissies."

From the Bible

Celebrate the Feast of Harvest with the first fruits of the crops you sow in your field. Celebrate the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field.
Exodus 23:16 NIV



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170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243

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

Steve and Cynthia Haynes, publishers

Official newspaper of Oberlin, Jennings, Norcatur, 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, \$38 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$42 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$48 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$50-\$250 (in U.S. 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.

Nor'West Newspapers

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Is common decency in past?

The chutzpah of some travelers is unbelievable.

You see it driving, on the bus or subway, but nowhere is it more apparent - or more appalling - than on the airlines.

Just a few examples:

My sister flew out to Colorado to meet us last week. She said in Denver, since she had a four-hour layover, she got to the gate before the airline agent. When the poor woman got there, passengers peppered her with questions and complaints before she could even log onto the computer.

Sis said she stuck up for the agent, and later, when she got her boarding pass, found herself "upgraded" to a front-row seat in the little Beech 1900 she flew on up into the mountains.

She put her bag in the overhead and took her seat, then a woman passenger boarded, found "her" bin full, removed Sis's pack and tossed it at her.

"Here," she said. "You can find someplace else for this."

The flight attendant and the passenger behind her stood mouths agape, but Sis just took her bag back to a bin in the center of the plane. She said it wasn't worth a fight.

Later, the guy behind her told her the last time he'd seen something like that on an airplane, it'd caused a fist fight.

So, where do people like this get the idea they own the world? You got me.

The next one is not uncommon. Some people don't bother to read their seat assignments. They just board the plane and take the seat they want, usually a desirable aisle seat.

When the real seatholder comes, they simply refuse to move. Usually, it's not worth a fight.

Just as common are the people who complain about things over which neither the airlines nor anyone else has much control. A friend's son related that on a flight home from Germany, he'd witnessed some appalling behavior.



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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It seems a woman passenger had given birth over the Atlantic. The pilot decided to divert to a Canadian city to allow the woman, her husband and the tiny "premie" to get quickly to the hospital.

The flight was hours late, and apparently, some of the passengers complained bitterly.

What did they want? To have the pilot make the woman hold that baby all the way to Denver?

Don't people have any common sense?

Don't they care about anyone but themselves?

Guess not.

Whatever happened to virtues like compassion, respect for the rights of others, common decency?

Another issue: It's disappointing that the Oberlin City Council apparently decided how to handle a complaint about events at the cemetery without public discussion last month.

The complaint involved a letter to the council about placement of some trees around a grave. The council treated the complaint as a personnel issue involving a particular employee and went into closed session.

While in closed session, the council apparently agreed to handle the matter by having the mayor write Dr. Jay Anderson, a former councilman, telling him to move the trees.

While apparently no vote was taken in closed session, it's clear from the mayor's letter that a decision was made about the complaint, which was not entirely a personnel issue.

The Kansas Open Meetings Law requires council decisions to be

made in open session, even decisions on personnel matters which can be discussed in detail behind closed doors. And discussions in a closed meeting must be limited to the subject stated in the motion.

The dividing line between a complaint about a city employee and a complaint about cemetery policy is a gray area. That should be resolved by bending over backward to follow the spirit of the law.

And the discussion of cemetery policy ought to have been done in open session, as it eventually was at the next meeting, because the whole town needs to know what the policy is and how it will be enforced. The council's reasons for this should be on the record.

Our hope is, in the future, the council will come out of closed session to talk about and "decide" how to handle any policy issue or complaint. Then there will be no question what happened, no murmurs around town about secret meetings, as there were following this letter.

