

Kansas people need say in choosing state's judges

The decision to open up interviews conducted with candidates for Court of Appeals and Supreme Court vacancies in Kansas is a step in the right direction, a good move, a fine idea.

It doesn't, however, change the fact that in Kansas, appellate judges are chosen in a process that is by nature elitist, inbred and undemocratic.

Appeals judges, and district judges in most large counties, are chosen by committees dominated by and chosen by, mostly, lawyers. While they supposedly represent the voters in this process, the members of these panels are anything but representative.

Kansas used to elect its judges. We still elect district judges in most areas, outside the metro areas, and the process works pretty well out here. Judges seldom if ever come under attack for their decisions, though they surely must weigh public attitudes when deciding cases.

The electoral system, with judges running by party and seats open for contest every four years, allows for change when a judge is not responsive to the public. Usually, this means poor public service or erratic decisions. A decision to oust a judge is rare, but voters have done it.

Appeals judges are another matter. Once appointed by the governor, they answer to no man, short of committing some impeachable

offense. As we've seen with presidents, impeachment is reserved for truly bad officials, not for those with whom we disagree.

While district judges may have to keep an eye on the voters, appeals judges simply do not. While they are supposed to stand for "retention" every four or six years, the fact is, no Kansas judge or justice has been voted out of office since the state adopted the so-called "Missouri" plan of choosing its judges.

This has led to some poor law, where judges have substituted their own infinite wisdom for that of the Legislature and governor, making budget decisions and more or less taking over the state's education finance system.

Well, voters could throw the rascals out, you say?

We ask why they have to put up with rascals when they could be choosing their own judges, as once was the case.

In fact, today, it's hard to see the reason we switched at all. But a return to some sort of sanity in judicial selection would be a good thing. If we're not going to trust the voters to select judges, at the least, the state Senate ought to have veto power over the governor's choices, as it does with most appointments.

Open interviews are a start. But in the end, why not just let the voters decide?

— Steve Haynes

Christmas quiet without kids

Christmas was quiet at our house.

We had our traditional dinner, just the two of us: steak, twice-baked potatoes, green beans cooked with onion and bacon. Didn't even think to pour a glass of red wine.

Did the dishes, killed some time. Cleaned up for "midnight" mass at 11. Went to church. Drove around a little, looking at Christmas lights.

Cynthia started whining: "Can't we just go to church. Do we have to do this? It's cold out here."

It's an inside joke, a little nostalgia: We always drove around and looked at Christmas lights. The kids always complained.

It's always a beautiful service, welcoming the birth of Christ, though Cynthia groused that we didn't get to sing "Joy to the World." (We did "Go Tell It on the Mountain" instead. It's not a bad substitute, but I agree, it's not "Joy to the World.")

I told her we'd do that Sunday.

We went home and opened up our presents. There wasn't much: a couple of packages each from Lindsay, one each from my sister, and big boxes for me from Amazon, a little one for Cynthia. (Felicia the webster always orders online.)



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
s.haynes@nwkansan.com

I set Cynthia's windows out by the mantle. She said she hadn't noticed them in the dim light when we left for church, but admitted later she had heard me dragging them out of the closet. Sharp ears, that one.

We didn't even make a mess, hardly enough wrapping paper for the cats to jump into. Time was when we'd be knee-deep in paper and ribbons, but then there were children. Today, it's just the two of us.

That's not so bad. We have the memories. The time I put coal in the kids' stockings as a joke, for instance. I'm still in trouble for that one.

We've always celebrated pretty much the same way: dinner, church, then presents. We sleep in on Christmas Day. The kids never seemed to mind, and we got a lot more sleep that way.

Sunday, church started with

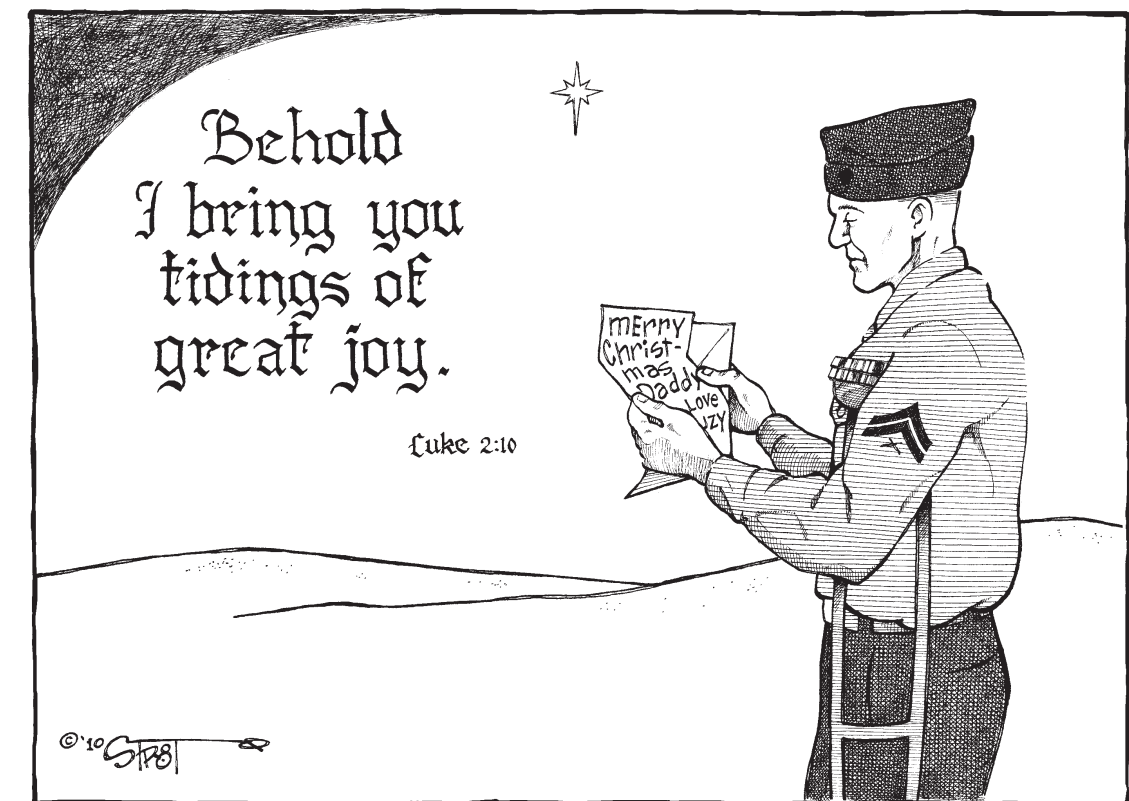
"Hark, the Herald Angels Sing," and ended with "Joy to the World." Any service that starts with John Wesley and Mendelssohn and ends with Isaac Watts and Handel can't be bad.

Busy as the season has been, I don't think we minded the quiet weekend. We got a lot done, though Cynthia didn't do any baking and I didn't work on the spare bedroom.

A few years ago, we pretty much told the girls not to bother coming home for holidays, what with the high prices, the weather, the airline problems and all the hassles. We meet in better weather.

But still, too much quiet might get to us. Next year, we might just slip down to Augusta and watch the baby open her presents.

But that's for another year. Now, it's back to work.



Summer garden still provides

My first seed catalog of the year arrived the day before Christmas.

Now that's getting a jump on the season.

I don't even remember buying anything from these people, but obviously some time or another, I must have.

Frankly, I haven't gotten over this year's garden yet. In fact, I was out on Sunday, digging carrots.

I planted a zillion things this year — lettuce, spinach, cucumbers, green peppers, tomatoes, radishes, zucchini, yellow squash, corn, broccoli, carrots, cabbage, snow peas, wax beans, green beans and spaghetti squash. We also have onions and garlic.

I planted, weeded, thinned, fought bugs, mulched and picked from May through November.

As soon as the lettuce, spinach and peas were done in the spring, I planted squash and corn. As the corn stalks were pulled, lettuce and spinach went back in. The radishes gave way to tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers.

I picked green beans every day or two for months. The tomatoes lasted until almost Halloween and the broccoli was still producing into November. Finally, about mid-November, I picked the cabbage and pulled the last of the broccoli plants.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
c.haynes@nwkansan.com

The garden was done except for the carrots. Steve said that I should leave those in the ground until I wanted them.

That sounded like real good advice. Let's face it, I was tired of the garden. Tired of weeding, watering, picking and produce.

I still had boxes of green tomatoes ripening in the basement, a couple of zucchini, three smallish spaghetti squash and a half dozen little heads of cabbage in the fridge.

I was tired of gardening. Tired of produce littering every flat surface in my kitchen. Tired of leaving baskets of tomatoes on the neighbors' doorstep in the middle of the night. (Most of my zucchini died, so it had to be tomatoes this year.)

Let the carrots wait, I figured.

Well, they waited and waited and waited.

With a break for Christmas and temperatures falling into the single digits, I figured I'd better harvest my last crop.

Easier said than done.

The ground is frozen solid. I couldn't dig them with a potato fork. I couldn't budge them with a hand digger and trowel.

I finally grabbed a hammer and screwdriver and pounded the screwdriver into the ground around each carrot to loosen the earth. This was moderately successful and I now have a dozen or so carrots of moderate length in my larder. However, that's only about a third of the crop.

Why did I plant so many this year? And why didn't I pull them when I could have just pulled their foliage? And why am I out here when the temperature in 25 degrees and the wind is blowing, trying to get carrots out of the ground?

Does anyone have a jackhammer or dynamite? One of those might be a faster way to harvest this entirely-too-cold-weather crop.

But the carrots are pretty tasty. I have to report. So it must be worth it. I think.

Family knows dad at peace

This was a day we had been anticipating. Not looking forward to, yet we knew it was coming. Jim's dad died, peacefully, in his sleep early Monday morning, with one son and daughter-in-law by his side.

We arrived about 10 minutes later and were able to say our goodbyes.

Jim had gone to see his father earlier in the day, and I'm so glad he did. One thing neither one ever failed to do as they parted company was to say, "I love you." Jim said his dad was so weak the last time he saw him that all he could do was mouth the words but, I know Jim heard him.

Jim says that a father's legacy is in his children and that his dad had two sons who followed in his footsteps. One became a carpenter and one a farmer, two professions their father had excelled at.

After Jim's dad lost his leg in a farm accident 2 1/2 years ago, he had to live in a long-term care facility. Up to age 91, he had been totally independent, living alone, taking care of livestock and doing his own cooking, though the last may have been a little questionable. We used to joke that Dad had a cast-iron stomach.

After the accident, which cost



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
quality-pro@webtv.net

him his left leg, Dad had to have skilled nursing care. His life had turned on a dime, but he held out hope that he could some day return to his beloved farm.

His wish will come true because, according to his wishes, he will be buried on the farm. He personally picked the spot and his son Gene has prepared the area, fencing it off and making a road to it. We have promised to carve his tombstone out of Kansas limestone and it will be a labor of love.

Jim Sr. was not a perfect man, but he was a good man. He did the best he could. He was a Godly man, wearing out several Bibles in his lifetime with intense study and daily reading.

We have the comfort of knowing he had been immersed into Christ and his salvation is secure. And,

in the end, that is all any of us can hope for.

Dad lived a good life; he fought the good fight. He died knowing he was loved.

From the Bible

And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

Revelation 22: 8-9

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@nwkansan.com.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

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

Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality.

We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses which do not pertain to a public issue.

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

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

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

Phone: (785) 475-2206 Fax (785) 475-2800
E-mail: oberlin.herald@nwkansan.com

Nor'West Newspapers

STAFF

- Steve Haynes editor
- Kimberly Davis managing editor
- Mary Lou Olson society editor
- Carolyn Kelley-Plotts columnist
- Joan Betts historian
- Cynthia Haynes business manager
- Pat Cozad want ads/circulation
- Anita Ketterl advertising makeup
- Tim Davis advertising representative
- Nancy Robinson proofreader

Official newspaper of Oberlin, Jennings, Norcatour, 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.



Woman upset by life, death of dogs

To the Editor:

The paper and community were buzzing last week with the story of the poached deer, big fines and unlawful hunters. A very disturbing story to say the least. However, I was more saddened by the story below that talked about (through the "grapevine") the 1,200 dogs that were destroyed.

As this was a happening in Decatur County, I wondered how come the information we had came to us from Great Bend? Did Decatur County law enforcement not know anything about this tragic event that could have been reported to our local news media?

This may be one of the biggest kennel liquidations in the United States right here in Decatur County and we have no knowledge of it? Through other reports, I have heard that there were 1,000 to 1,200 dogs that had to be euthanized because of poor health. How can anyone have

Letter to the Editor

this many dogs in one place? Is it legal? The expense and manpower it would take would be staggering.

The paper mentioned the economy was a problem because purebred dogs are not as popular these days. I have no doubt this is true, but one does not acquire 1,000 dogs overnight.

How many other dogs have met the same fate that we just don't know about? Another report said the dogs were mainly adult? What has happened to the puppies?

Dogs purchased from a breeder ended up with distemper. This highly contagious disease is what sealed the fate of the 1,000 dogs.

I can only imagine the horrible lives and living conditions these poor dogs faced, certainly not what we want for "man's best friend." The good thing for these innocent

creatures that have been killed is that they don't have to face it anymore.

The "Wisconsin poachers" had to face bail of \$83,000, now felony charges and may face heavy fines, even jail time. Another news story I heard about the dog slaughter was that the owner signed them over to the authorities and would be unable to have dogs in his possession for six months.

Really? Is that all he has to endure for the pain and suffering of those poor animals? I hope there is more to this story. Good grief. I feel this owner should never be allowed to breed or broker dogs again!

Susan Nelson, Oberlin
Editor's Note: All letters are subject to editing under our published policy.