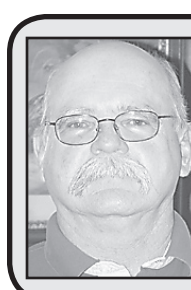


I am afraid that I need to lead off with some sad news. I just received word that long time City Council member and friend Ray Ward passed away Friday night after a battle with cancer.

Ray and I often disagreed on issues during council meetings, but we had a great deal of respect for each other, and Ray's wisdom and knowledge will be sadly missed. My prayers and thoughts go out to this family.

I missed the last council meeting, as I was in Wichita at the Kansas Municipal Electric Association conference. Our electric purchasing contract is up the end of December, and we are exploring our options on securing a new contract with one of two providers that have made proposals, Dan, Karen and I have spent many hours going over the numbers and the pros and cons of each. Hopefully we can present our findings to the council at the next meeting.

The council held a workshop this last Thursday to discuss some of the subjectivity in the city's nuisance ordinance. There was some good



## Mayor's Moment

By Bill Riedel

mayor@oberlinkansas.com

dialog and I believe that we have some ideas on making the process proceed smoother, and taking out some of the subjectivity.

The search for water is progressing as well, as we have found some good water. The issue now is whether there is enough to supply the city. Test wells have been drilled and samples sent in for testing. We hope to have some results back soon and report them to the council. A big thanks to Councilman Miesner, Willard Perrin and Miller and Associates for their work on this project.

I had the honor to speak at the Veterans Day parade, and I must say that it was the most humbling thing that I have done. The parade

was one of the largest I can remember, and seeing all of the kids along the streets waving their flags was special indeed.

The high school band and the singing of the National Anthem by Miki Dorshorst and Samantha Anderson were something to behold.

We had veterans from 20-something to 90-something years old. I must say I was honored to be asked to be part of this. Thank you to all of our veterans and their families, and God bless.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank all of the volunteers that made the Pheasants Forever banquet Friday the largest ever. Eight to 10 of us worked the kitchen with the FFA

kids from the high school – they did a great job I might add – and at least 25 to 30 worked the banquet.

We served close to 400 people, and as usual, Mike Bailey did a great job as auctioneer. I believe a great time was had by all. A special call out to my sister-in-law, who drove out from Fort Collins to help us serve, Thanks, Beth.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving, and include our veterans in your prayers.

## Alert: Parents of a Child with a BIRTH DEFECT

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## Governor to change Medicaid

In my last article, I mentioned that there would be changes coming to the Kansas Medicaid program. This past Wednesday, Gov. Sam Brownback announced his plan to help our state work with the increased costs of this program.

What is Medicaid? It is a 46-year-old health-care program for the poor, elderly and disabled. It is paid for jointly by the federal and state governments, but managed by the states. In 2011, Medicaid served over 65 million Americans.

Medicaid is the largest source of health care for children. It also serves close to 9 million younger people with disabilities, among them 4 million children with mental illness. Eight million low-income seniors (who also qualify for Medicare) are included. Also covered are low-income pregnant women.

The controversial Affordable Care Act – Obama Care, which the Kansas Legislature passed a resolution last session to join other states in protesting – calls for the federal government to pick up all medical costs for newly eligible Medicaid enrollees for three years, beginning in 2014. Kansas will be required to pay a share of the costs after that, topping out at 10 percent by 2020. We will also be required to pay for the "matching rate," which ranges from 25 to 50 percent of medical costs.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2014, all uninsured Americans with incomes up to 133 per cent of federal poverty guidelines will qualify for Medicaid. Using the law's required method to calculate income, a family of four with an income of \$30,800 or less will qualify.

Our economy is struggling, and that will only add more people to the Medicaid rolls. This will hurt our state budget even more. As it is, Medicaid has grown at an average of 7 percent a year for the last 10 years.

I have been to meetings the past few weeks on immigration, school finance, the problems of electrical power in Kansas, over-crowded prisons and the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System. I will keep our area up-to-date on these issues as I learn more.

I appreciate all the positive comments people have given me about my efforts to represent northwest Kansas and working to keep people informed.

Ward Cassidy of St. Francis, a retired school principal and teacher, is the state representative for the 120th District, covering Decatur, Cheyenne, Rawlins, Norton and Phillips counties. Send e-mails to ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov.



## Letter from Topeka

By State Rep. Ward Cassidy

ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov

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## Chapter 13 Grasshoppers!

Last Chapter: The time machine brings the twins to Manhattan where Susan B. Anthony is giving a speech on women's suffrage. Seated among men and women and a few boys, Jack and Mollie are surprised to learn that Kansas women could not vote. Later, wearing their special glasses, they look on the time machine's computer and find that it wasn't until 1912 that Kansas women could vote.

Jack and Mollie wondered what to do. They were standing by a wheat field, no buildings in sight, and a storm was coming. At least it looked like a storm.

Mollie was getting annoyed at the dozen or so grasshoppers that hopped about in the weeds and grasses. Some had hopped on their clothes and even in their hair.

They'd both looked for their glasses, but their pockets were empty.

"We're going to get soaked, if it rains," Mollie said frantically brushing off the grasshoppers. She knew she sounded cross, but she didn't care. This was enough to make anybody cross.

Jack started running, knocking grasshoppers off his clothes as he ran.

"Where are you going?" Mollie demanded, running after him.

"I'm looking for a farmhouse, a barn, something," Jack yelled.

Mollie made an ugly face at his back and said, "I don't like stepping on grasshoppers."

"Just be glad you've got shoes."

By the time the twins reached the edge of the wheat field, the cloud had moved across the sun, grown bigger, and was now an odd shiny color.

"Look!" Jack pointed. "A house. A sod house."

Just as he spoke, a sound like a big rainstorm filled the air. But there was no rain.

"Grasshoppers!" Mollie yelled. "Oh, my gosh, it's raining grasshoppers!"

Millions of grasshoppers were everywhere. Grasshoppers were under

their feet and in their faces. Grasshoppers were in their hair and on their clothes. Grasshoppers landed in the wheat field, on blades of grass, on weeds, and still the sky rained grasshoppers, hitting the ground with the sound of hail.

Jack and Mollie were soon covered with grasshoppers. They slapped them off their clothes and brushed them from their faces. Mollie shuddered at the feel of the tiny claws clinging to her skin. Tears rolled down her cheeks.

Jack grabbed her arm. "We've got to get to that house!"

Again they ran, harder, faster, their shoes crunching grasshoppers. The insects were now so thick they covered the whole ground and were piling up in bunches.

At the house, Jack banged a fist on the wooden door.

A woman opened the door a tiny crack, and seeing them, opened it just wide enough for them to slip inside before slamming it shut on the mass of hopping, wiggling insects.

In dismay, their skin crawling with repulsion, the twins realized they were covered with the hoppers.



"Genny, Luther," the woman commanded. "Get blankets!"

The boy and the girl, both probably a few years older than the twins, grabbed up blankets, and the woman threw one over Mollie's head, the blanket covering her completely, the insects clinging to her. The boy did the same to Jack. Then mother and son ran their hands up and down the blankets, crushing the insects.

The twins gasped for air as the boy and his mother pulled off the suffocating blankets

and shook the dead insects out on the dirt floor. The woman, who gave her name as Emma Hansen, swept up the mess of insects and dumped them in the stove.

Two smaller children in the house chased after the grasshoppers that had escaped and were hopping around the room. The children stomped on them or captured them in their hands, squeezed the life out of them and dropped them in a pail.

"My husband is in town," Emma Hansen told the twins. He should be home soon." She paused, listening. "That's him now!"

The door opened and Mr. Hansen squeezed inside and quickly shut the door. "Get blankets, sheets, our winter coats, anything," he said. "Maybe we can save the garden."

Jack and Mollie helped spread the blankets and coats and old gunnysacks all over the garden. All around them and over them, the grasshoppers leaped and crawled and ate.

The grasshoppers covered a peach tree that grew beside the house. Mr. Hansen took a rake and raked them off, but more took their place. He and the boy, Luther, grabbed shovels and dug a trench. They gathered dry grass and twigs and filled the trench, and Mr. Hansen set it on fire. They raked the grasshoppers into the fire. But there were too many of them and they smothered the fire.

By the time the sun had set a few hours later, the peach tree was bare of leaves and fruit, only the pits remained, and the insects had also devoured the wheat and all the leaves of a big shade tree. They also ate the garden. Crawling under the blankets, the gunnysacks, and the winter coats, they ate every vegetable to the ground.

Only the Hansen's chickens liked the grasshoppers. They gobbled them down until their craws were stuffed full.

Jack and Mollie kept feeling in their pockets for their glasses. They didn't want to stay in this awful place any longer and they didn't want to be a burden to this family. And when the glasses magically appeared in their pockets, Mollie almost cried.

As the twins listened to the family talk about what to do, they knew they must leave as soon as possible.

"It is too late in the season to plant again," Mr. Hansen said.

"Maybe we should go back to Illinois," his wife said.

"I don't know." Mr. Hansen's voice was

suddenly ragged with unshed tears.

Jack and Mollie felt like crying, too. These were nice people. Once they had crops for food and to sell. Now they had nothing.

Mrs. Hansen lit a kerosene lamp as the little sod house filled with darkness. "I'll fix us a bite to eat and then maybe we'd best just go to bed," she said. "Maybe they'll be gone tomorrow."

At those words, Jack and Mollie stepped back into the darkest shadows of the room and put on their glasses.

The next instant they stood outside on the green lawn of a two-story white house. The sod house was gone. The grasshoppers were gone. The trees were green with leaves. Flowers grew alongside the house and there was a garden, a green, growing garden.

"Thank goodness," Mollie said.

"I wonder if any of the Hansens still live here," Jack said. "I wish we could ask."

They'd not known until their Hays trip, after seeing the Blue Light Lady, that with their glasses on they could be neither seen nor heard.

"I wonder where we are?" Jack said.

"Maybe it just rained grasshoppers here and nowhere else."

"Maybe they were all over Kansas," Mollie said, "even in Hays."

To Be Continued.

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