

Doctors are our No. 1 economic requirement

Perhaps the biggest single economic development need Oberlin faces today is to recruit doctors.

Things were bad before the hospital forced the sale of the former Medical Arts Clinic, but they have not improved much. Today, the town has not a single resident physician, though two "midlevel" practitioners keep the clinic running with the help of a part-time doctor.

It's been several years since the hospital could deliver babies, forcing young families to take their medical business elsewhere. Strife, controversy and change undoubtedly drove others away.

Whatever the cause, when people go out of town to doctor, it costs us all money. It costs the town jobs and vitality. Eventually, it could threaten the health of our hospital, part of the very foundation of any community.

Most economic development efforts aim to bring businesses and people in from outside. The hospital, clinic, pharmacy, nursing homes and the rest of the health-care system are here now. They represent jobs in town, people whose kids go to our schools and shop in our stores.

We can and must defend the jobs we have even before we go looking for others. Besides, who's going to bring a business to a town without doctors? Or someday, a town without a hospital?

We're not criticizing anyone for the stands they took over the last couple of years. We'll leave that to history.

We are saying that the fight is over. Now we must come together to fight for our future.

To thrive as a town, we need doctors and the entire health-care system they support. Having a clinic and a hospital here is as vital as having a golf course or a swimming pool.

It's past time for Oberlin and all of Decatur County to come together to support the hospital, to back the effort to find doctors and other medical workers and — just as important — to ensure that the medical system not only survives, but grows and prospers.

We hope, as this effort succeeds, anyone who has changed to an out-of-town doctor will reconsider and look once again at the Oberlin clinic, Oberlin doctors, Oberlin businesses, because that is the only way we will make it through the new century.

We don't blame anyone for leaving, especially families having a baby, but we want and need them back. Every one of them.

First things first, though. The hospital, its board, the new administrator when hired, the physician procurement committee, all need our support, personal and financial. There should be no disagreements now, just a common commitment to find some doctors and make things work.

Let's all get behind the effort to find and hire doctors, to build up the clinic and hospital and to make the health-care system a success.

Then, and only then, will good things happen. There is no time to waste. Let's get with it. — Steve Haynes

Many lines divide country

The following column, which originally ran in The Oberlin Herald on June 1, 2011, won first place for humorous columns in the National Newspaper Association Better Newspapers Contest. It was written by Editor Steve Haynes



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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This column is about lines that divide the country.

Not the Mason-Dixon line, which divides North from South back east. It's kinda irrelevant out here, except that in an accident of history, it also serves as (approximately) the border between Kansas and Nebraska. It runs just 13 miles from my house.

That's because Kansas was to have come into the Union as a slave state, part of a long-time compromise that kept an uneasy balance in the U.S. Senate for the first half of the 19th century.

Abolitionists from the North colonized and eventually controlled Kansas, however, leading to a decade of border warfare and eventually, 150 years ago, the Civil War. After Kansas was admitted as a free state, you see, the South could see the handwriting on the wall.

But that is dry, historical stuff. Today, we're going to talk about the Sweet Tea Line and the Green Chili Line. And if there's time, maybe the Firefly Line.

In Yankee states, even the more northern border states such as Missouri or Kentucky, you can go into a restaurant and order iced tea and it will come unsweetened, maybe with some of those little sacks of sugar or sugar substitute.

In the South, diabetics fear order-

ing tea with lunch. In the South, they just assume you want sugar. My son-in-law, who lives in Georgia, likes "unsweet" tea, and he always orders it that way. He gets sweet tea half the time anyway.

The Sweet Tea Line, best I can figure out, is somewhere around the border between Tennessee and Kentucky, give or take a county or two. By the time you get to Texas and the Gulf States, best taste your tea first.

Then there is the green chili line. It's been blurred a little in recent years, but generally it runs north and south through the High Plains. In New Mexico, Colorado, southern Wyoming, Arizona and west, no self-respecting Mexican restaurant would think of not serving green chili, that wonderful concoction of fresh chopped chilis, onion, garlic and (usually) pork, with (sometimes) potatoes or tomatoes thrown in.

Drive east from Colorado, and you'll have a hard time finding anything but red chili, made with ripe, dried chilis, beef or pork, with or without tomatoes, and (shudder) maybe even beans.

Out west, by the way, tradition-

ally, in the Southwest, you get a choice. The server will ask, "red or green." Or you can order "Christmas," by which they mean one color on half the plate and the other on the other. Yum.

Growing up in Kansas, I was innocent of green chili until we moved to southern Colorado some 31 years ago. I grew to love the green, which can be mild or hot, with varied ingredients as noted. But nearly always good.

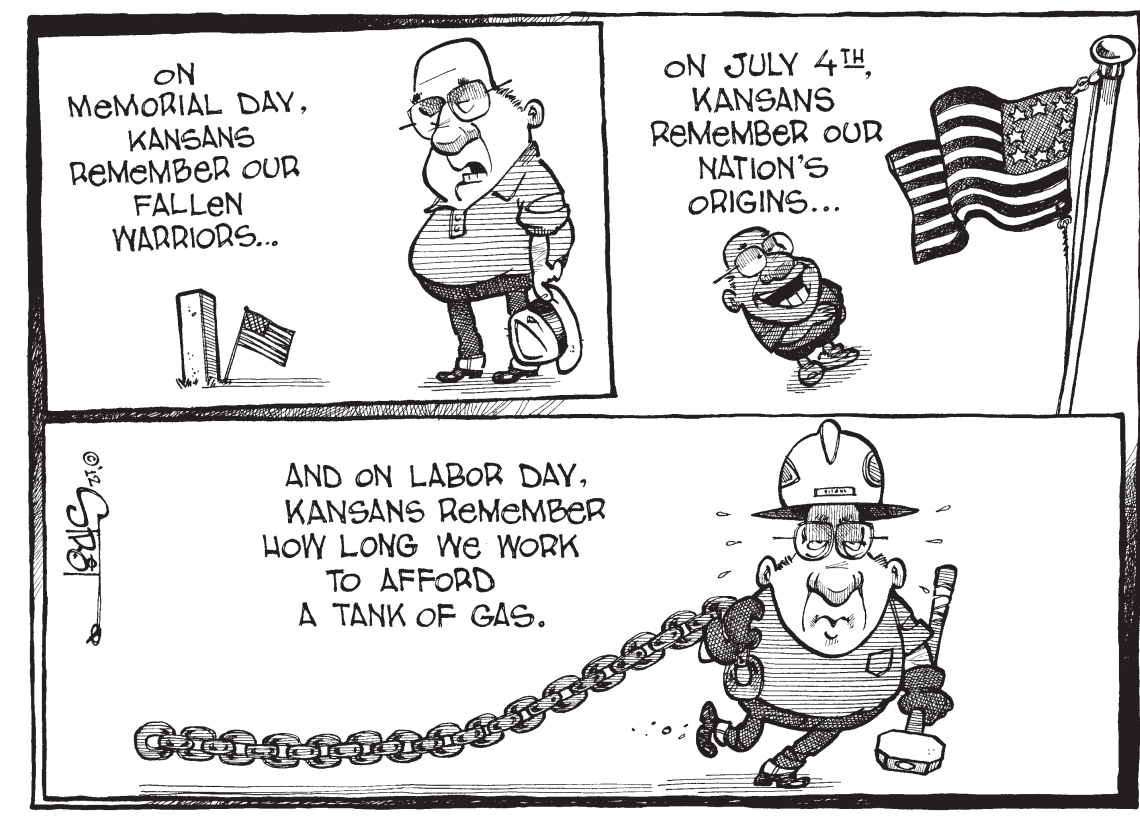
In New Mexico, it's pretty much the state food.

And the Firefly Line? In most of Kansas, kids wait for warm summer nights when they can chase and capture those fascinating little glowing creatures. Not in Denver, or most of the mountain West.

The Firefly Line runs somewhere between Atwood and St. Francis, it seems. West of there, they are rare or wholly absent. Oberlin and Hoxie seem to have plenty, while Colby and Atwood have a few.

'Tis a pity children of the West are deprived of this simple pleasure, but they seem to find other things to do.

Like eat green chili and drink unsweet tea.



Play offers presidential tidbits

We got to watch a new play about the U.S. presidents, and it was both great fun and a good education on our executive branch.

The play, appropriately named "The Presidents!," went through every chief executive we've had since George Washington in under an hour with song, dance and interesting tidbits about each man to hold our highest office.

The play was written and produced by members of our favorite company, the Creede Repertory Theater, in Colorado.

While it's technically a children's play, the day we attended was a weekday at the end of August, and there was only one child in the mostly full theater.

The first thing we learned, or relearned, was that although we've had 44 presidents, only 43 men have held the office. Fun fact: Grover Cleveland, the first president to get married while in office, was both our 22nd and 24th president. Benjamin Harrison, grandson of No. 9 William Henry Harrison, was the 23rd president.

There are four presidents carved into Mount Rushmore — No. 1 George Washington; No. 3 Thomas Jefferson, first governor and first secretary of state to become president; No. 26 Theodore Roosevelt, first president to ride in a car, airplane and submarine; and No. 16 Abraham Lincoln, first president born outside the original 13 colonies.

The youngster in the audience



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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was told that, while it's a little confusing for some people, Benjamin Franklin, one of the most prominent of our Founding Fathers, was never president.

As most of us know, the teddy bear was named after Theodore Roosevelt, a great sportsman and outdoor enthusiast. The story goes that while on a bear hunt, some of the hunting party caught an animal and tied it to a tree, then brought Teddy over to finish it off. Roosevelt refused to kill the wounded animal, saying it wasn't sporting, and instead had it tended to and released.

The story got out and a toy maker renamed his stuffed bears for the president.

Other fun facts: While Cleveland was the first president to get married in office, No. 15 James Buchanan, was the only president to never be married.

William McKinley, No. 25, was the first president of the 20th century. He was also the last one to have served in the Civil War. Dwight Eisenhower, No. 34, was our only president to serve in both World Wars I and II.

Jimmy Carter, No. 39, was the first to be born in a hospital and also the first president to admit to a UFO sighting.

Andrew Johnson, No. 17, who followed Lincoln, was the first president to be impeached, but Richard Nixon No. 37 was the first to resign.

Others to leave office suddenly include Lincoln, No. 35; John Kennedy, No. 25; McKinley; and No. 20, James Garfield, who were all shot, and William Henry Harrison No. 9, who died of pneumonia just 31 days after taking office; Warren Harding No. 29, who had a heart attack; Zachary Taylor No. 12, who died of gastroenteritis; and Franklin Roosevelt No. 32, who suffered a cerebral hemorrhage just after he was elected for the fourth time. Or he still might be in the White House today.

The play was fun, the songs were good and the acting — by two guys who played Secret Service agents — superb. And that little kid down in the front row and I both learned a few things.

Chick moves to hen house

Labor Day was graduation day at our house. Our chick, Henny Penny, the sole survivor from our second hatching this year, was "graduated" from her coop to a condo in the big girls' pen.

Until we know how she will be accepted by the others, we'll keep her in a wire cage inside the chicken house. Let everyone kind of get used to each other.

Next, we moved the eight chicks from the third batch out of their box in the bathtub to the coop vacated by Henny Penny. When Jim transferred them from the box to the coop, they acted like they were stunned by all the space around them. They did not move for a few minutes. Later in the day, though, they looked pretty comfortable. One brave little chick was perched on top of the water jug. They have a heat lamp in their inner sanctum, so they are warm and cozy.

This is all good, because in less than a month, I hope to have a few more chicks. Yes. I set 25 more eggs. I am determined to raise enough to replace the old ladies. They have been steadfast and reliable, but their time is just about up. They know it. I know it, and they know I know it.

Jim called from the grocery and said bratwurst and beef roasts were on sale; he would buy some to bring home and did I want some Hamburger Helper?



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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Now, he knows I don't like Hamburger Helper and don't use the stuff. I lashed back at him, "Don't you dare buy any Hamburger Helper."

He started laughing. "That was for Ray and Ruth's benefit," he said.

Seems friends of ours were in the same check-out line as Jim and he let them in on our conversation.

"Don't worry," he said. "I told them you ain't never gonna use any Hamburger Helper."

"Oh, no," I wailed. "I hope you didn't say, 'I ain't going to use Hamburger Helper.' If you're going to quote me; at least quote me correctly."

I don't always use perfect grammar, but I don't use "ain't."

"I would rather they think I use Hamburger Helper," I said, "than that I said ain't."

Well, the last laugh's on Jim. The next morning, I asked where he had put the meat. He jumped up,

jammed his feet into his shoes and dashed out the door saying, "Oh, my gosh! I left it in the back of the truck."

Our neighborhood is overrun with cats. Ours and the neighbors. Mighty hunters that they are, the smell of fresh meat lured them in. Jim found that nice roast had been dragged through the dirt and gnawed beyond recognition. What's left will go to the chickens.

At least somebody will eat well.

From the Bible

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

— James 1: 2-4

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Senior residents support new pool

To the Editor:
As senior citizens, we support the new swimming pool.

The adult swim schedule provides the opportunity for adults to swim at a regular time. We both take advantage of this opportunity, along with a number of other seniors.

Our current pool is not handicapped accessible or efficient in its use of water or heating.

Swimming is an excellent form of exercise for all ages. The design of the new pool will be safer for all ages. It will include a zero-depth entrance, with wheel chair ramp and hand rails.

We would like to encourage seniors to join us in support of this

Letter to the Editor

Please join us in voting YES for a new swimming pool on Tuesday, Nov. 6.

Gaylord and Shirley Shields, Oberlin

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 those on topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.