



Tragic accident shows an every day danger

The tragic rail accident, explosion and fire in Canada last week gives us a glimpse of just how much danger passes through our towns every day.

The disaster in Lac-Megantic, Quebec, wiped out the historic downtown district, killing up to 50 people, some of whom have not yet been recovered. It happened when a 72-car train loaded with crude oil broke loose and ran downhill until it derailed on a curve in Lac-Megantic.

The ensuing fire and explosions were horrific, but the incident is far from isolated. Similar trains of oil, alcohol, dry fertilizer and random hazardous materials criss-cross our area, and the entire continent, each week. Oil is being loaded here and moved through each county.

Other shipments involve one or a few cars of chemicals, or single trucks moving on the highways. Nearly every town is visited, usually without notice. Until something goes wrong.

In Canada, the head of the railroad first blamed fire fighters who had put out a small blaze in one of the train's engines earlier that night. Before they left, they shut the engine down. A few days after the accident, someone asked whether the train's hand brakes had been set.

The answer was uncertain. The engineer and conductor should have set hand brakes on the

engines and up to 11 cars, but no one could say if that had been done. If it was not, then after the engines were shut down, it was only a matter of time before the train's air brakes failed – and it rolled away.

It's against railroad rules to leave a train standing with air brakes only, because eventually through leakage, they "bleed off." When that happens, there's nothing to hold a train except hand brakes, set by cranking a wheel on each car or engine.

Perhaps the Quebec accident will lead to better regulations and better training for crews. Perhaps the governments in the U.S. and Canada, which share a single unified rail network, will only invent some meaningless new paperwork for crews to fill out.

We hope for the former. There is too much hazardous material running up and down our roads and railroads to be comfortable with slipshod safety procedures.

If you don't believe that, go down to the nearest rail yard or highway intersection and count the number of "diamond"-shaped placards that mark hazardous loads. Be sure to write down the numbers; you can look them up on the Internet.

You'll see how lethal our transportation network can be.

— Steve Haynes



Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick

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As if more evidence was needed to show we live in a nutty world...there is a mystifying trend out of the Asian country of Thailand.

In Bangkok young people are having their pictures taken as they pose beside cartoon effigies of Adolph Hitler.

In what is being termed "Hitler Chic," the youth of the country that was mostly untouched by the Second World War are finding humor in the man who was responsible for the deaths of 12 million Holocaust victims.

In what started with T-shirts with the dictator's face progressed to SS type bike helmets. Also temporary swastika tattoos could be purchased along with photos of teddy bears posed in the Nazi salute. His caricature has also been combined with American restaurant icons like Ronald McDonald and Colonel Sanders.

The cause for this lack of understanding is being blamed on the Thai educational system which apparently does not cover W.W.II in history classes. In fact

most teachers are oblivious to the terror caused by that war.

Like it or not, we are becoming more and more of a Global society. The importance of history, if for nothing else, can provide an awareness of man's cruelty to each other.

But then we might not have such a crazy world.

The Gardener

By Kay Melia



Most gardeners opt out of planting watermelon in their gardens these days. Most gardeners will tell you that their garden is too small to handle those rambling vines.

Watermelons have been a very notable part of my gardening life. But not lately. I have the space but lack the interest. But when I was a second grader back in the depression year of 1937, watermelons were big...literally.

My family installed an irrigation system on the south bank of the Arkansas River just north of Bucklin in southwest Kansas where they owned a small plot of river bottom land. They did that to assure that they would raise a feed crop for the cattle to eat in the winter, and during the 30's, there was very little rain and no feed crop to speak of. But the water poured out of the river on to that 40 acre field of Atlas Sorgo, a rather coarse but sweet sorghum with huge heads of white grain.

But Atlas Sorgo was far from the

mind of this 7 year old, because my dad would plant a few rows of watermelon from end to end of the field. There would also be a row of cantaloupe there, and my brother and I would utilize our sharp hoes to keep everything weed free.

There were three varieties of watermelon my dad chose to plant each year. There was the big striped Crimson Sweet, the dark green Black Diamond, and the light green Charleston Gray. All of those varieties are still available in seed form today. Unfortunately, at least in my opinion, those who plant watermelon today seem to favor the small seedless varieties, for the good reason that the small ones fit in small gardens

We raised hundreds of melons (and tons of Atlas Sorgo) in those days. We would haul them to town to the sale barn on Saturdays and sell them there in the parking lot. They would appear at church socials and club meetings and most everyone's picnic Kids would eventually locate

the field down by the river and help themselves. But nobody cared because there were plenty to go around.

But the fun was short lived. In the spring of 1942, the old Arkansas flooded, and the irrigation system was washed away. Floods were seemingly regular events in those days, until the John Martin dam and reservoir was built in eastern Colorado near La Junta. Almost unbelievably, the Arkansas River has been bone dry for many years all the way from somewhere in eastern Colorado to somewhere southwest of Great Bend.

Today, the small watermelon is King. They seem to be available at the Supermarket year around. Shell out about \$3.50 or more and take home a watermelon that fits easily in the fridge. They must be pretty good. They seem to fly off the grocery shelves!

Reader enjoyed the great Fourth of July Celebration

Letter to the Editor:

We had great July 4th celebration due to the efforts of many people. The Neitzel brother's patriotism was the start. The program at the Old County Church was inspiring. The contests were fun. The avenue of flags was unique. We would not want to miss anyone who helped

Letter to the Editor

in any way. The weather was great for watching the beautiful display of fireworks. Our country's birthday was successfully

celebrated!

Sincerely,
Marie Holzworth
St. Francis

GOD SAYS

Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My Flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

Psalm 73:25-26

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The Saint Francis Herald

(USPS 475-960)

A Century of Service to Cheyenne County

P.O. Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050
Published each Thursday by Haynes Publishing Co., 310 W. Washington, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050. Entered as periodicals matter at the post office at St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050, and at additional offices.

Official newspaper of Cheyenne County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year \$38 (tax included) in Cheyenne and adjacent counties; \$42 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$48 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions: \$28 extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050



Nor'West Newspapers

8:30 a.m.-noon - 1:00-5:00 p.m.
Monday - Friday
(785) 332-3162 Fax - (785) 332-3001
E-mail - sf.herald@nwkansan.com

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