

'Unusualness' tops discussions of weather and growing season

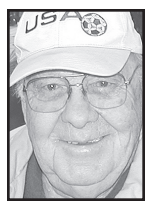
It's the time of the year that we gardeners are discussing how unusual the spring season has been so far.

This year, the word unusual doesn't even begin to describe the unusualness of the weather. Even the word ridiculous falls short of expressing our true feelings about the earliness of the season and the fact that we seem to be two to three weeks ahead of what might be termed a normal season.

Farmers in northwest and northern Kansas are talking about the possibility of cutting wheat by June 15, or earlier.

And so you again hear the words "global warming" and "climate change" being banded about. Others remind us that it's just another cycle in the history of weather occurrences and that this, too, shall pass.

As a gardener, I will do my best to live with whatever Mother Na-



Kay Melia

• The Gardener

ture provides. I was not one of those who saw this coming and proceeded to plant my tomatoes in early April. Those that did try to outguess normalcy are probably going to harvest some of those big red beauties about the 4th of July. A friend of mine fully expects to enjoy a few ears of sweet corn in early July, and that just doesn't happen in extreme northwest Kansas. But it might this year.

I just keep plodding along, doing the things I usually do at this time of year, ever mindful of the fact that the average last frost date in my backyard is about May 6. I always place heavy emphasis on the word average. Depending

on the season, the temperature therefore could possibly drop below freezing. Ask a few farmers around the area if they remember May 26, 1992, when the temperature dropped to a record 25 degrees and devastated the wheat crop, not to mention the backyard gardens all over the High Plains. Talk about unusual. I am also reminded that the coldest temperature ever recorded in Goodland in the month of May was the morning of May 1, 1967, when the thermometer dropped to 21 degrees.

And hear this: On June 2, 1951, Goodland recorded a 31-degree reading, a record that still stands as the latest date of a freezing temperature in Sherman County.

In the 1970s, there were years when the folks were talking about "late seasons" and wondering if, indeed, the atmosphere was actually beginning to cool down, causing average last frost dates to be

several days later than they are now.

My tomato plants will all be out by the end of the week. The cucumbers were planted on May 3, the same day as last year. I'll try to get the beans planted by next weekend. The cantaloupes should be in the ground by May 13. The early planted crops of peas, spinach, onions, radishes, lettuce and potatoes are all looking good, and we are enjoying fresh garden salads each day. Who could possibly have guessed that we could have been enjoying some of those things almost a month ago, based on the earliness of the season this year?

I'm happy with my garden so far. But it will be a little unnerving watching a few of my friends eating fresh tomatoes and sweet corn on the 4th of July!

Deaths

Gracia 'G.G.' Long

Gracia "G.G." Long, 73, Overland Park, formerly of Colby, died Tuesday, April 10, 2012.

She was born May 17, 1938, in Hays, to Bazzil Albert and Alma H. (Gotsch) Turner and was raised in Colby, graduating from Colby High School in 1956.

Following her marriage to Michael S. Gottschalk, she moved away from Colby, though the family always considered it home. Before retiring, she was an executive for a subsidiary of the Kansas City engineering firm, Black & Veatch.

Preceding her in death were her parents, a sister, Rosa Lee Vaughn; three brothers, Terrance B. Turner, Hulan "Hugh" Turner and Terrell

Turner; and a brother-in-law, William Donelan.

Survivors include three children, Kim Wisdom and Erin Bailey of Kansas City and Shawn Gottschalk, of Hutchinson; a sister, Mara De "Pat" Donelan, Denver; three sisters-in-law, Lee Turner, Chicago; Nancy Turner and Ernestine Turner, Colorado; seven grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

No public services will be held. The family suggests memorial contributions to Kansas City Hospice and Palliative care at www.kansascityhospice.org/donate or at 9221 Ward Parkway, Suite 100, Kansas City, Mo., 64114.



G.G. Long

Colby Rotary Club

Colby Rotary Club met Tuesday at the McCarty Dairy with 31 members and guests Vernon Hurd, Kathie Peyton, Bob Renner, Gary Sloan, Sharon Steele, Jacob Sweat, Chuck Thomas, Dr. Larry Washburn, Yvonne Wingard and Leroy and Joan Ziegler attending.

A Subway sandwich meal was provided by Rotary for members, and a variety of Dannon yogurt products were provided by the dairy.

Following the meal, Clay, Ken and Judy McCarty took members on a tour of their new processing plant. The state-of-the art plant has many procedures in place to prevent contamination of milk products as they are processed.

The lab within the plant is state approved and the processed products are trucked to the Dallas-Fort Worth area on a daily basis.

The plant uses milk from McCarty's sites at Rexford, Bird City and Scott City to supply the plant; no other dairy is under contract.

Next came a full tour of the dairy facility from the milking barn to the herd pens to the calf pens and even the birthing barn where they found a newly-born heifer calf being tended to by its mother.

Colby Rotary meets on Tuesdays at the college student union, in room 106.

- Relda Galli

Standardized test scores 'suspicious'

ATLANTA (AP) - Dozens of schools that won a prestigious national award in the past three years exhibit extreme test-score increases or other factors that suggest cheating, according to an investigation by *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

Begun in 1982, the National Blue Ribbons Schools Awards honor consistent high performance and improvement by chronically failing schools. They can boost the careers of superintendents, principals and teachers and give schools permanent cachet.

But an analysis by the Atlanta newspaper of 605 recent Blue Ribbon winners identified dozens of schools where statistically improbable increases in test scores peaked in the year before the schools submitted their successful applications for the award. In that year, the analysis found, the most suspicious gains occurred about three times more often in Blue Ribbon winners than at all schools nationwide.

Additionally, the analysis identified more than two dozen Blue Ribbon schools among that group that had the most unlikely gains. In some grades and subjects, the odds of increases occurring without an intervention such as tampering were incalculable.

"Those kinds of changes are just incomprehensible," said Jaxk

Reeves, director of the University of Georgia Statistical Consulting Center. Reeves was one of the academic experts who reviewed the AJC's analysis.

The AJC examined Blue Ribbon winners as part of a nationwide analysis of test scores. In an article last month, the newspaper identified nearly 200 school districts where test-score changes resembled those that signaled widespread cheating in Atlanta. The newspaper examined 69,000 public schools.

The newspaper's analysis of Blue Ribbon winners suggests that cheating has undermined the program's integrity while shortchanging students whose achievements have been overstated. Blue Ribbon schools are held up as models for other schools to emulate.

At two-thirds of the schools with the most unusual gains, a majority of students came from poor families. Poverty is typically among the toughest impediments for strong test achievement, researchers say. Yet in just one year, many of the schools rocketed from among the worst performers in their states to among the best.

No statistical analysis alone can prove that anyone cheated. Better instruction was the most common explanation by school officials interviewed by the AJC. But testing experts say research shows good

teaching can't shift the scores of so many students so quickly to such odds-defying degrees.

James Wollack, director of testing and evaluation services at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said many schools credit their instructional strategies for overnight success. But no changes in teaching methods, he said, are enough to account for "ridiculous, nonsensical gains."

"More often than not," Wollack said, "something other than student learning was causing those gains."

Wollack also reviewed the AJC's findings.

Federal officials say they closely review each school's application. The Department of Education, however, solicits schools that give the appearance of overcoming economic and demographic obstacles - schools that the department says "beat the odds."

Originally, only schools that were longtime top performers could win the award. In the No Child Left Behind era, though, a school can qualify if 40 percent of its students come from poor families and test scores are among the fastest-rising in its state.

The program's critics say federal officials rely too heavily on information that originates from the schools.

"I would not just take their

word for it," said Tom Loveless, who has studied the Blue Ribbon program for more than a decade at the Brookings Institution, a non-partisan research group in Washington. "It tends to reward self-promotion."

The Department of Education says it expects states to verify test scores before endorsing schools' applications.

"If there is a significant jump in the improvement level, we check in the school's application to see if they have supporting documentation," Aba Kumi, director of the Blue Ribbon program, said in an interview. "If it's questionable, we go back to the states to verify the data. If the state affirms, or stands behind the school's scores, we accept their judgment."

"If it's a little too good to be true and they don't have sufficient information ... we have to return the nomination back to the state."

Such cases, she said, are rare.

Markets

Quotes as of close of previous business day

Hi-Plains Co-op	
Wheat (bushel)	\$5.97
Corn (bushel)	\$6.03
Milo (hundredweight)	\$10.36
Soybeans (bushel)	\$13.48

Honor society adds members

Andrew Broeckelman, a senior in biological systems engineering from Selden, is among the newest members of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation's oldest, largest and most selective all-discipline honor society, at Kansas State University.

The new initiates are second semester juniors in the upper 7.5 percent of their class, seniors in the upper 10 percent of their class, or outstanding graduate students in the top 10 percent of their class.

Corrections

The Colby Free Press wants to maintain an accurate record of our town. Please report any error or lack of clarity in a news story to us at 462-3963.

Lordy, look who's **40!**
Happy Birthday Jennifer
Love, Mom and Dad

Happy Mother's Day

{ One of a kind gifts for a one of a kind Mom! }

goulosh
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Make a Difference **RECYCLE**

You're Invited!

Citizens Medical Center, Inc. of Colby invites the public to share in their Business After 5 and 30th Anniversary celebration on Thursday, May 10 from 5:00PM until 7:00PM on the hospital campus. We are very pleased to honor the Founders of Citizens Medical Center at a Founders Celebration at 6:00PM in the hospital conference room. Activities, food, and tours will take place at Family Center for Health Care, Citizens Medical Center, and Prairie Senior Living Complex.

If you have any questions, please call Tama Unger at Citizens Foundation (785) 460-1214.

Family Center for Health Care 5:00 - 7:00

- Non-alcoholic drinks and finger foods
- Tour of FCHC facility
- Discuss expansion/Capital Campaign (FCHC basement)

Citizens Medical Center 5:00 - 7:00

- Cookies and drinks in cafeteria
- Displays of last thirty years of service
- Tours of Physical Therapy, laundry and the latest addition

6:00

- Founders Celebration at CMC Conference Room

Prairie Senior Living Center 5:15 or 6:30

- Tour Bus departs from CMCI to PSLC