

Other Viewpoints

Lessons, memories linger in dusty days

Decades later, horrific storms still bring important lessons. Memories of the nightmare known as the Dust Bowl still linger.

Local residents interested in learning more about the storms are invited to a showing of "The Dust Bowl," a new documentary to be presented in two parts on Tuesday and today at the Finney County Historical Museum.

The Public Broadcast Service production by Ken Burns chronicles what some would call the worst man-made, ecological disaster in American history - one created by farming methods that failed to control and prevent wind erosion.

At the same time, the documentary also promises to present a tale of amazing human perseverance in Kansas and other affected places.

The trouble started brewing in the 1930s when a mix of drought, searing heat and strong wind - not unlike weather conditions of late - combined to produce devastating black blizzards of dust.

People suffered from suffocation, pneumonia and other life-threatening conditions.

Many in the path of the storms put wet sheets on windows to keep out the dust during those miserable days. Others gave up and fled.

Decades later, the so-called "Dirty Thirties" continue to deliver a sobering reminder of what happened to produce such a disaster, while also driving home the importance of good stewardship of our land.

Lessons learned in the 1930s led to practices intended to reduce vulnerability of affected regions to future droughts. Conservation programs designed to protect soil and water sources were launched, along with other strategies to preserve natural habitat in rural areas.

Drought and other weather uncertainties still pose a threat today, making pursuit of additional strategies essential. Crafting more effective ways to conserve a dwindling water supply would be but one critical area of concern.

Short of such significant change, it won't take dust storms to spur the kind of economic setbacks that could leave this region and others to dry up and blow away.

- The Garden City Telegram, via the Associated Press

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U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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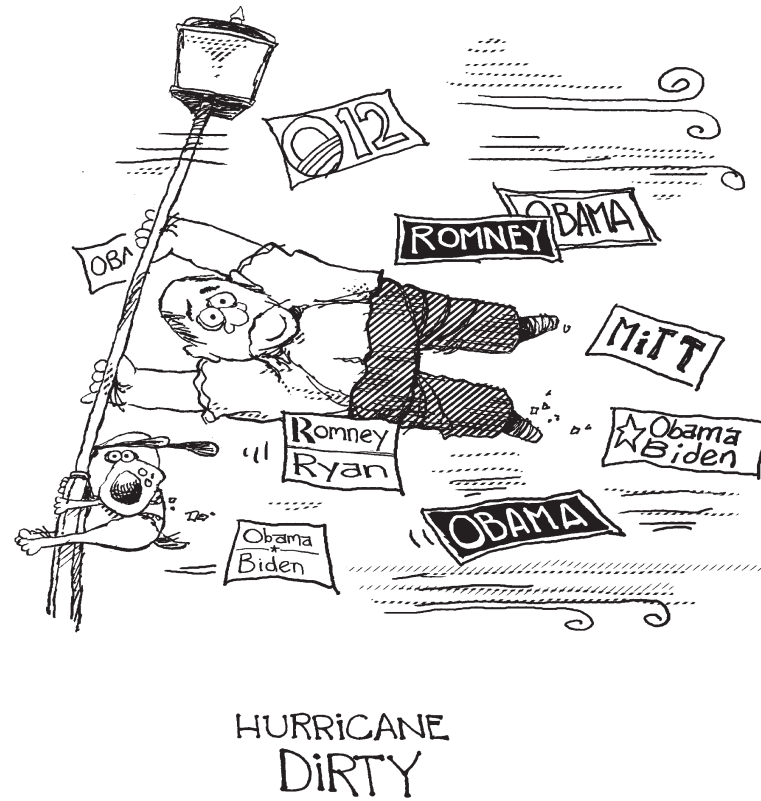
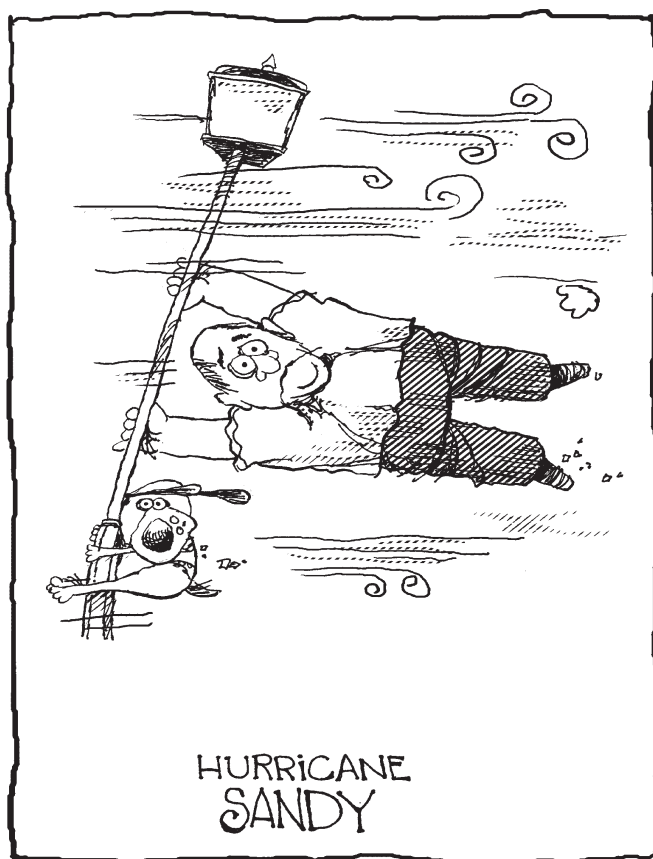
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DISASTERS 2012



Boy Scout archives typical of times

The Boy Scouts of America must be chagrined by the publication of their so-called "perversion files," secret archives showing that many who abused kids in their care were quietly banned from the organization - but seldom prosecuted - during most of the 20th century.

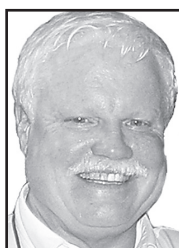
The venerable youth group has suffered great embarrassment, but it will survive. Its files were only part of a massive coverup which was endemic in American society through most of that era.

At least the Scouts did not send an offending scoutmaster out for rehabilitation, then allow him to again associate with boys. The avowed purpose of these Scout files was to ensure that pedophiles would not work in the organization again.

It was bad publicity the Scouts, like the church, feared.

But this did not make either institution unusual in the America of the 1950s or the 1970s. Across the nation, businesses, government and civic institutions alike chose to sweep these problems under the rug.

Sexual abuse? Churches and school boards alike would ignore or dispose of any embar-



Steve Haynes

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raising issue. Often, those in charge simply did not want to hear accusations against a popular coach or teacher. Instead, they'd accuse the whistleblower of being a troublemaker.

This happened to a friend of ours. Only through great perseverance and personal strength did she finally see the coach exposed, fired and prosecuted, and her name vindicated.

White-collar crime? Banks especially seem loath to admit they hired someone who would steal from their accounts. Worse yet, they often kept a double standard.

None of this was good for society. It taught child abusers, criminals and cheats that you might get caught, but you often could get away

with your crime if you went along.

Many, including priests and embezzlers alike, played the sympathy card when caught. They still do. That's because these people are con artists. That's how they get away with their crimes for as long as they do.

They are nice guys, regular joes, good workers, your best friends. They prey on the innocent and the unsuspecting, and when caught, they make out like it's the rest of the world that has it wrong.

That we, as a society, have moved to confront many of these crimes can be painful. There's a reason most organizations once avoided exposure of these flaws. But in the long run, we'll be a stronger society when we face up to the con artists among us and denounce them for what they are: traitors, criminals, perverts and thieves.

I am all for forgiving their sin, but later, after they've done some time.

For some of them - Coach Jerry Sandusky comes to mind - a good, long stretch.

Steve Haynes is president of Nor'West Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be

Senate debate shows leader we need

To the Editor: I would like to encourage all voters of the 40th Senate District to view the debate between Sens. Allen Schmidt and Ralph Ostmeyer by going to www.shptv.org/index.php/events/383-kansas-candidates-2012 or watching it on KOOD (PBS) at 2 p.m. Sunday.

By watching this debate, it is clear to see that Sen. Schmidt is well educated on the issues (clearly understands the educational system in Florida that was discussed in the last legislative session) and is articulate in speaking on them. Sen. Schmidt has a genuine concern about bringing jobs and housing to our rural communities here in northwest Kansas and works on committees that are instrumental in making this happen.

It is obvious that he gained much experience in his 32 years of service and used that as an effective senator in the 36th District. He operated his third-generation dairy farm for 13 years and served as president of the Kansas Dairy Association.

I urge the voters of northwest Kansas to not vote by party only this election, but to view this debate and really know how each candidate stands on our important issues. Voting in a strong leader that will stand up for northwest Kansas, not just a person with the right initial behind their name, is the key to survival of our rural schools and communities that we know and love.

Please view this debate before placing your vote on Tuesday.

Kathy Rome, Hays

Government serves itself

To the editor: Corruption at its best - or worst?



Free Press Letter Drop

Our readers sound off

Take the Food and Drug Administration for one example. Every year, 48 million Americans get sick from the food they eat and 3,000 die from it (FDA Food Facts at www.fda.gov/food/resourcesforyou/consumers: click on Foodborne Illness: What You Need to Know about Foodborne Illness-Causing Organisms in the U.S.). What's the agency doing about it? Almost nothing!

In 2011, the agency inspected a mere 6 percent of domestic food producers and less than one-half of 1 percent of importers (www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-10-11/food-sickens-millions-as-industry-paid-inspectors-find-it-safe.html). The percent of illnesses from food rose 10 percent from 2006 to 2011. The agency has more than 11,000 people on its payroll. What are they doing to earn their pay? Not nearly enough.

The drugs on the market are another story. Some have warnings of side effects that can worsen your existing condition, cause swelling of your throat, abdominal pain, muscle pain and death. Guess what... these drugs are approved by the agency. What are they thinking? Is there even a bare minimum of intelligence requirement for employment by the government? How can 11,000 people approve drugs with these possible side effects? Now tell me the pharmaceutical companies aren't in bed with this agency.

So much for the First Amendment. Under a bill called H.R. 347, the government is given

the power to bring charges against Americans engaged in political protest anywhere in the country. This is the same government that would like us all to surrender our firearms to them. (Even though the Second Amendment allow us to bear arms specifically to protect ourselves from a corrupt government.)

Traffic laws: I totally agree with reasonable speed limits, especially in school zones. Seatbelts? Our government would like us to believe seatbelts are for our own safety. If the government is truly concerned about our safety in not wearing seat belts, why are there 40 million children riding in school buses without seat belts?

Being an old drag racer, I've always used my seatbelt, but it was my choice. The fines for not wearing seatbelts range from \$5 dollars in Idaho to \$86 in Washington. Stop lying to us about wanting to keep us safe and tell it like it is - revenue. Helmet laws - what are you thinking? Also revenue.

The Postal Service? This is just too funny. When I was growing up, I could mail a card or letter to my neighbor across the street with a 5 cent stamp and they would receive it the following day. Combine technology with our government's infinite wisdom and that same letter or card travels hundreds of miles in a truck only to be sorted and sent back for delivery to my neighbor three days later at a cost of 45 cents.

I understand a study was done on how to correct the problems with the system. Who did the study? The Postal Service, of course. Is anybody home up there? I liked it better when our government's job was to protect our shores. Now Americans have to bear arms to protect ourselves from the government.

How sad. My name is Mel Fry and I approve this message.

Mel Fry, Colby

Mallard Fillmore

Bruce Tinsley

