

Weather's behavior hard to explain

Some meteorologists are calling the current weather pattern abnormal. That's probably about a 30 percent accurate description.

After viewing the tornado destruction inflicted on four counties in Florida over the weekend (yes, Florida), we are wondering. The death toll, unfortunately, was set at 20. The tornado came through the affected area around 3:00 in the morning. Weather experts now say that three tornadoes swept through those four counties.

When you talk tornado you generally think of *Tornado Alley*, of which Kansas is a part. Rarely does the state of Florida enter into tornado chatter, although we learned this weekend that tornadoes do rip through that state.

Timing might have had much to do with the loss of life. People were sound asleep. However, reports indicated there were no sirens to sound and no basements in which to seek shelter. Basements at that level would just add to the chaos. At least one on-camera worker thought a daytime tornado might have had the same result, reference to the fatalities.

Snow in areas that rarely see the white stuff, rainfall in areas that should see snowfall, severe ice storms, unbelievably strong winds, warm temperatures where frigid readings should be occurring. Something's amiss. Global warming? No, many voices say. Some experts point, however, to El Nino, which periodically has a handle on how weather behaves. It's been behaving like a spoiled brat.

Death and property damage are the unfortunate consequences of these eruptive patterns. There is little we can do about it. But, as we move closer to what we call the *tornado season* it would be a good time now to make sure your shelter has the supplies needed in case you are in the path of one of those sucking, roaring, nasty malfunctions of Mother Nature, and forced to take cover.

Then pray that you don't end up a statistic.

—Tom Dreiling

Senate passes a number of measures

SB 14 ~ Methamphetamine Registry: The bill requires offenders convicted of unlawful manufacture or attempted manufacture of methamphetamine, distribution or trafficking of methamphetamine, and offenders convicted of possession of the chemicals used to produce meth with the intent to use the product to manufacture methamphetamine, to register. The bill also would require the offender to pay a fee for registration on the Kansas offender registry and clarifies the money collected from the statutory fee would remain in the sheriff's office in the county in which it was collected to offset costs of the office registering the offenders. SB 14 passed the Senate 39 to 0.

SB 65 ~ Satellite Voting for all Counties: Currently, law restricts satellite voting places to counties with populations exceeding 250,000 (Sedgwick and Johnson counties). This bill would expand to all counties the ability to designate places other than the central county elections office as satellite advance voting site. SB 65 passed the Senate 40 to 0.

SB 18 ~ Uniform Child Abduction Prevention Act: Enacts the Uniform Child Abduction Prevention Act (UCAPA) and provides the courts with guidelines to follow during custody disputes and divorce proceedings. The main purpose is to help courts identify families which have children who are at risk for abduction and provide measures to help prevent their kidnap. These measures include travel restrictions, a prohibition against removing the child from this state, restrictions on the child's passport, and restrictions on custody or visitation. If a judge finds a credible risk of imminent abduction, the court may issue a warrant to take physical custody of the child. SB

Senate Doings Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer



18 passed the Senate 40 to 0.

SB 66 ~ Extension of Lottery: Extends the lottery in perpetuity and does away with the sunset clause eliminating the need for legislators to have to act to continue its existence. Also, because games are electronically connected to the Kansas Lottery, the need to attain and display the lottery retail certificate was also eliminated. SB 66 passed the Senate 36 to 4.

SB 69 ~ School Finance Fix: Specifically, the bill would lower the maximum percentage of Local Option Budget (LOB), required in order for school districts to access the cost-of-living weighting or the declining enrollment weighting, to 25.0 percent. SB 69 passed the Senate 39 to 1.

Out of committee:
SB 37 ~ Smoking Ban: The Senate Judiciary passed out of committee without recommendation, a proposed smoking ban. An additional amendment allows county commissioners to opt out of the smoking ban, subject to a protest petition for 30 days. If a county does opt out, a municipality within that county can enact a smoking ban if their regulations are more stringent than the state law. Also included in the areas exempt from the ban are freight and passenger trains and commercial trucks.

(Email ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us)

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

Office hours:

8 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (785) 877-3361
Fax: (785) 877-3732

E-mail: telegram@nwkansas.com

STAFF

Tom Dreiling editor and publisher
Lisa Marie Henderson advertising
Veronica Monier staff reporter
Dick Boyd Blue Jay sports
Carolyn Plotts society editor
Sherry Hickman bookkeeping/circulation
Vicki Henderson computer production

Nor'West Newspapers

Dick and Mary Beth Boyd
Publishers, 1970-2002
Incorporating the Norton County Champion
Marion R. Krehbiel, editor



We're long distance grandparents

A picture confirmed my worst fears: Baby Ani is growing up. Our daughter, Jennifer, e-mailed us a picture last week of six-month-old Aniston sitting up. Sitting up. I can't believe it. The last time we saw her, she was only three months old. Practically, a newborn.

"She'll be in college before I see her again," I lamented. "There, there, G'ma," Jennifer said in a consoling voice. It didn't help.

Jim and I share the fate of other long-distance grandparents. Only seeing our grandchildren two or three times a year. If your grandchildren live close to you, don't miss a moment. And, please don't, take the privilege for granted.

Grandparents fill an important role in their grandchildren's lives. Usually, grandparents are non-judgmental and accept their grandchildren for what they are. That's an important relationship to have with grandchildren.

Especially, as they go into their teen

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



years and try new things. Like haircuts/colors, earrings (maybe noserings), fashions and music. Grandparents can usually see through all those trappings and see the real person emerging from those youthful follies.

I remember my dad had a real hard time accepting long hair on boys. But, when it came to his grandsons, all he would say was, "When are you going to cut that hair?" They would laugh and say, "Oh, Grandpa."

My theory, whether it's your children or grandchildren, is to take plenty of pictures. The weirder their outfits or out-

geous their hair, take pictures. Lots of pictures. Then, when they grow up and have children of their own, they can't say a thing about their children's outlandish outfits, because you've got the evidence. Those pictures that prove the next generation will grow out of it, just like they did. And, turn into pretty decent human beings, just like they did.

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We helped with our local telethon again this year. I am one of the emcees, so all I have to do is show up on time, try not to trip over the furniture, smile a lot and talk.

But, I chaired that committee for several years and I know how much hard work goes on behind the scenes long before the cameras ever roll.

Lots of deserving organizations will receive much-needed funding because of the money raised during the telethon. So, to everyone who operated a camera, manned a telephone, sang a song or made a sandwich I say, "Good job!"

Spell check alone can't get it done

Back Home Nancy Hagman



Kids today do not see a reason to learn to spell, we are told, because they can just run spell check. Many of the things I read these days make me think their parents are similarly deluded and have decided because the combination of grammar and spell check there is also no reason to proof read. I hate to be the bearer of bad news but it doesn't catch everything! Before the MCL tournament we read in *The Pioneer* that Smith Center was in charge of the "hospital" room this year. I found myself torn between hoping they did a good job and praying there was no need for their services.

This past week in the sports pages of a larger area newspaper, I was skimming a story and was stunned to see that some athletes have "addition" problems. Many of us may have struggled with balancing our checkbooks, but it seemed a little unfair to be outing these professional players. Anyway, don't they have business managers to take care of that?

After a more careful rereading of the story, I realized the story was about addiction. Spell check will catch misspelled words. However, if you use the wrong word and spell it correctly the only way to catch it is by proof reading.

Another sports story told us that Texas University superstar, Kevin Durant, jokingly said that when he goes to the NBA

he will buy a new shot clock for The Erwin Center, where the Longhorns play their home games, as it had been malfunctioning. The writer wondered if he might also pony up for some spelling lessons for the staff of The Erwin Center because on the marquee that night it said "Texas vs Balyor".

Spelling and grammar checks do a lot of funny things. It is difficult to write things with names because spell check does not recognize lots of names. For instance, try putting Hagman in the text of something you are writing. The computer will suggest you use hangman.

Last year Jay Leno had a sports program on his "Headlines" segment. The program explained that players were wearing black armbands to honor someone who had died.

However, the printer's grammar check program would not allow the word "black" to be used because it is politically

incorrect. So the players were wearing "Afro-American" armbands. Nothing offensive about that, I guess.

On the bulletin board in our local store I notice a flyer for child care proudly advertising the care-giver was licensed "threw" the state of Kansas.

A lot of confusion about spelling exists because English is a complicated language. I try to cut people some slack. Lynne Truss' book about language usage "Eats, Shoots and Leaves", while amusing on some levels, was way too uptight for me. But she freely admits she is a "stickler".

Daughter Kate is rather a stickler, too. She is always correcting my writing. She thinks I run on and often misuse punctuation. My defense, "neither the grammar check nor the person proof reading at the paper caught it."

My grammar check often tells me I use sentence fragments. Sometimes it tells me to do things that don't even make sense. There is a difference between correct usage and common usage.

Only in the world of computers are things so black and white. Or would that be "A matter of Afro-American and Anglo-Saxon"?

And, even if kids don't think they need to learn spelling and grammar they are still going to have to get "threw" twelve years of English!

Child Passenger Safety Awareness Week needs support

To The Telegram Editor,

The week of February 11-17 is National Child Passenger Safety Awareness Week. During this time frame, the Kansas Highway Patrol, in conjunction with local enforcement agencies will conduct numerous activities to educate Kansans in the area of occupant protection.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children ages 3-14. Statistics for 2006 reflect an alarming trend in the area of child restraint usage for ages

LETTER

14 and younger. In the age category of 0-4, the compliance rate is 83 percent.

In the age group of 5-9, the compliance rate drops drastically to 53 percent.

The compliance rate continues to drop in the 10-14 age group to 48 percent.

The slumping trend in compliance computes to more children's lives lost. As responsible adults and drivers, we must take a stand to reverse this trend — our children's future hangs in the balance.

We challenge everyone to be responsible and lead by example — **Buckle Up!**

Lt. Douglas C. Griffiths
Kansas Highway Patrol
Troop D, Norton