

Kansas goes Kremlin with arrests, secrecy

You and your spouse are sitting in your living room watching *Laverne and Shirley* re-runs some night when all of a sudden you hear a window break and something that looks like a jelly jar lands on the floor nearby.

Before you can get up to see what happened, the stun grenade detonates, the flash blinds you for a few seconds, the ringing in your ears has you completely disoriented. In a little more than a second, you and your wife are face down on the carpet with a SWAT team member's knee on the backs of your necks, handcuffed and arrested.

Hours later, when the mess is sorted out, they let you out of jail with an apology. Ooops. Sorry. You weren't who we were looking for. Just a big misunderstanding. You're free to go.

Like most people, you want to know "why?" What in the world made the cops think you were a dangerous drug suspect? What led them to treat you like this and where did it come from?

The answer – the information the police and prosecutor submitted to the judge to get your arrest warrant – is listed in a court document called a "probable cause affidavit." In any other state, you can make a public-records request, get a copy of that affidavit and find out just why you were arrested.

But not in Kansas. Our Legislature keeps it secret, even if you are the victim. Think I'm kidding? The scenario above is pretty close to what happened to Robert and Adlynn Harte in Johnson County.

After a year in court and \$25,000 of their own money paid in legal fees to unseal an affidavit, these two former CIA agents – people with security clearances – found out Robert's trip to a hydroponics store for his indoor tomato garden and some tea leaves Adlynn threw out in the trash were all that cops and prosecutors needed to send a SWAT team to their front door early one morning. The cops didn't find an indoor marijuana-growing operation – or any other drugs, for that matter. For the Hartes to get answers was expensive indeed – not to mention the humiliation.

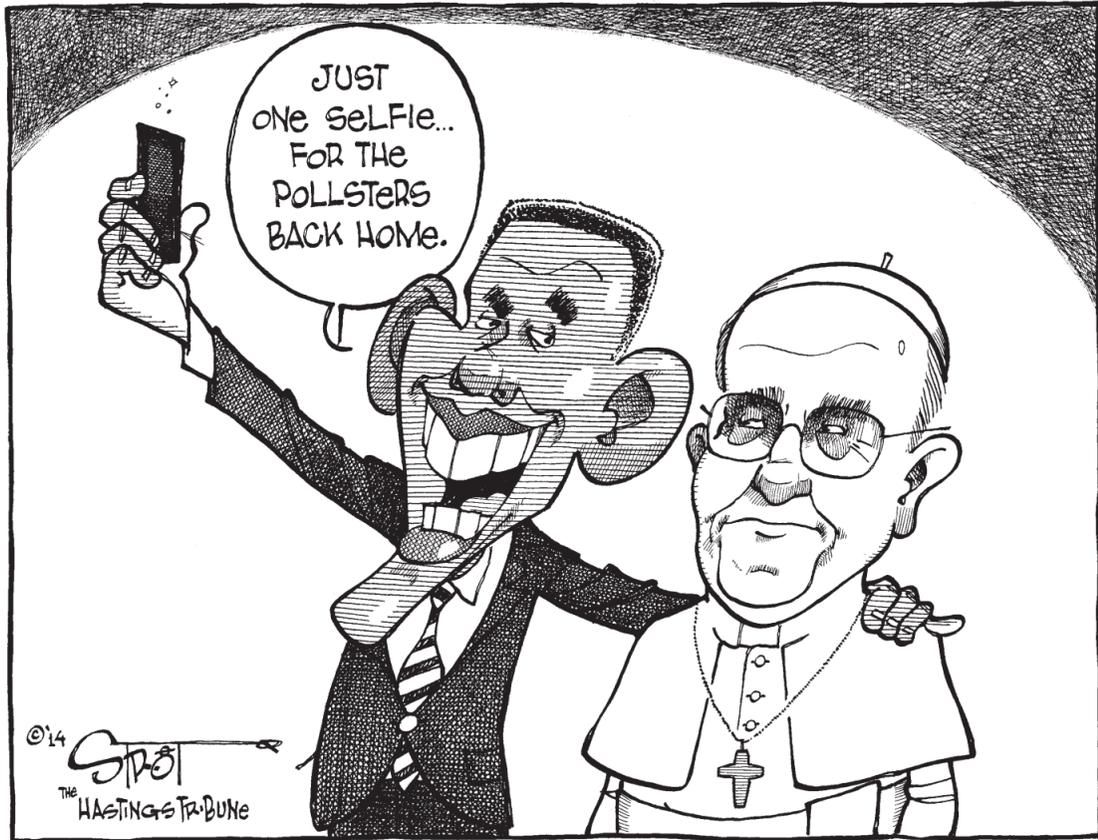
A bill that came out of the Kansas House this session would have changed that, but thanks to the Senate Judiciary Committee, headed by Republican Sen. Jeff King from Independence, it was gutted and the important provisions regarding arrests deleted. King even seconded the motion on the neutered bill when no one else on his committee would. As of this writing, unless the bill is put back into its original form, Kansans can still be deprived of their freedom, treated like criminals, and never know the reasoning of the cops, the prosecutor and the judge who did it to them.

How can Republicans like Sen. King – stalwarts of the party that supposedly will stand up for open government and individual rights – still hold to a policy that seems more like it came from the Kremlin than the Sunflower State? That's a question Chairman King and his cohorts should answer.

Opponents of openness say they fear pretrial publicity will taint a case if too much of that information is available. But the fact is that no criminal conviction in Kansas has ever been overturned due to pretrial publicity. Some may have been overturned because cops, prosecutors or judges are later found to have screwed up – but never because a newspaper or television station ran a news story. Never.

The public should be able to see those affidavits. The work of police, prosecutors and judges should be subject to the same scrutiny as the work of any other public official, especially when it can deprive Kansans of their freedom and the sanctity of their homes.

Kansas deserves better than this. *Dane Hicks*
Dane Hicks, is president of Garnett Publishing Inc. and editor and publisher of the Anderson County Review.



Chicken sitter fail while in Mexico

"I'd like to report a murder, please. Actually nine murders, if you don't mind."

"And what makes you so sure there have been nine murders?"

"Well, for one thing, I found most of the bodies buried in the yard. And for another, they are all gone. Kaput. History."

"I see. What are – excuse me – what were their names?"

"Let's see now. There was Henny Penny, and Miss Clucky, Rollie Rooster, and Chick'in Lick'in and, and oh, there were just feathers everywhere."

Wait. Don't call the authorities. The bodies I found were our chickens that some marauding dog killed while we were in Mexico.

Our neighbor, Jimmie, volunteered to feed the chickens and the outside cats while we were gone. I know he hated to make that phone call to tell us what had happened. But during the snow storm and high winds, the chicken house door had blown open allowing some blood thirsty dog to enter and kill every one. Jimmie removed the bodies he found the next day inside the coop. When we returned a close inspection of the mur-

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



der scene found more bodies buried outside in the open air pen. That confirmed to me it was a dog. A fox would have killed one and taken it back to its den to feed its family. A dog killed for the fun of it and then tried to hide the evidence.

We assured Jimmie that this would have happened even if we would have been there. Our being gone had nothing to do with the wind blowing open the door. It had more to do with our negligence in not making sure the door had a proper latch. I still had to tease him though and said, "Some chicken-sitter you are."

But, life goes on and we still wanted our own homegrown eggs. An inquiry found year-old, just beginning to lay hens for sale. We figured six hens, no rooster, would keep us in eggs, so four Rhode Island Reds and two Barred

Rocks came home to roost. One of the Rocks promptly flew the coop and the rest got their wings clipped. But five hens equal three to five eggs a day and that is plenty for us. Just so I have enough to make deviled eggs every now and then.

-ob-

There is so much yard work to do, I hardly know where to begin. But the first thing that absolutely has to be done is get the bucket of iris and tall decorative grass transplanted that we brought back from Texas. They are all still OK in the water, but they need to get in the ground. My problem is... where to plant them.

We've wanted to make an iris bed for a couple of years. Now may be the time to get Jim's grandmother's yellow iris, the purple iris that smells like grape Kool-Aid and these new iris in a bed all their own.

That still leaves the tulips that need to be separated, the naked ladies that need to be moved, rose bushes that need to be pruned, leaves raked, edging installed, mulch applied and the list goes on and on.

Yes, Spring is here. Am I glad of it? Yes. Ready for it? No so much.

It is that time of year again, tornado season

Tornadoes in Kansas this spring? No, but there's snow in the forecast again.

Here it is the first of April and that white stuff continues to fall from the sky. While many consider this a cruel April Fool's joke, don't become too excited about the wild weather Mother Nature serves up in our state. There's still plenty of time.

Seven short years ago on May 4, 2007, the town of Greensburg, in Kiowa County, was all but wiped off the face of the earth.

The tornado that hit the small Kansas community of 1,500 killed 11 people and injured dozens more. Ninety percent of the town was destroyed including 961 homes and businesses. Another 216 received major damage. Wind speeds of more than 200 miles per hour accompanied this storm.

Other killer tornadoes occurred that day with a death in Pratt County and another in Stafford County. Some of these monster twisters were nearly two miles wide. Eleven tornadoes occurred May 4.

The next day another 36 tornadoes were reported in Kansas, falling just short of the all-time record of 39 tornadoes in one day set in June 1992. Fourteen tornado-related fatalities were reported last year, including 82 injuries, according to the National Weather Service in Topeka. Thirteen of these fatalities occurred during the May 4-5

Insight John Schlageck



outbreak.

In stark contrast to this tornado onslaught of 2007, Kansas recorded the longest tornado drought in 24 years during 2009. Not until April 22, 2010 did the first tornado touch down in the Sunflower State. Prior to this tornado, the last twister reported in Kansas was back on Aug. 2, 2009. This resulted in 262 days without a reported tornado in Kansas.

Fifty-six tornadoes were reported in Kansas last year, while 2013 was the quietest season since 1994 when 42 tornadoes were reported. In 1976, only 14 tornadoes dropped down in Kansas – the fewest on record.

Last year's tornado season lasted 128 days, ranking it as the 7th shortest season. Forty-one of the 56 twisters (73 percent) occurred during an 11-day period in mid to late May.

Now that's the kind of quiet tornado season most Kansans like although few care for tornadoes at all. Let's hope this season remains calm as well.

Still there will be tornadoes. This is Kansas after all. You know – Dorothy,

Toto and tornadoes. When it comes to tornado safety, the bottom line remains the same: tune in, stay informed and keep an eye on the sky.

Remember pay attention when you hear a tornado watch because this means severe thunderstorms and tornadoes are possible over a wide area. Tornado warnings are issued when Doppler radar indicates tornadoes are forming or a trained weather spotter has sighted a twister. This warning will tell the location, and if possible, movement, estimated speed and the towns in the tornado path.

Seems like every year the National Weather Service provides us with ample warning when tornadoes are likely to occur. There are seven National Weather Service offices that serve portions of Kansas including Goodland, Dodge City, Wichita, Topeka, Hastings, Neb., Pleasant Hill, Mo. and Springfield, Mo.

Each office is staffed 24 hours each day, seven days a week and 365 days a year with meteorologists and technicians.

Think ahead during this upcoming severe weather season. Listen to forecasts daily, check the weather app on your smart phone and key into local weather conditions in your area. Know where your nearest shelter is and remember when a tornado threatens, immediate action may save you and your loved ones' lives.

CITY OF NORTON ELECTED OFFICIALS

Mayor: David Corns
785-202-1305
dcorns@ruraltel.net

WARD 1

Jerry Jones
785-877-2170
Harriett Gill
785-877-3051

WARD II

Roberta Ryan
785-877-2182
Donna Foley
785-877-3585
rookonmom_43@hotmail.com

WARD III

Ron Briery
785-877-3807
Jeff Urban
785-877-5535



Letters to the Editor and Thumbs Up:
e-mail dpaxton@nwkansas.com
or to write 215 S. Kansas Ave.



THE NORTON TELEGRAM

E-mail:
nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654
Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

OFFICE HOURS:
8 a.m.- 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Thur.
8 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Friday
Phone: (785) 877-3361
Fax: (785) 877-3732

STAFF

Dana Paxton..... General Manager
Advertising Director
dpaxton@nwkansas.com
Dick Boyd..... Blue Jay Sports
nortontelegram@nwkansas.com
Michael Stephens..... Reporter
Managing Editor
mstephens@nwkansas.com
Shylo Paxton..... Society Editor
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