

A little high water won't invoke national disaster

It started as just another Washington budget crisis: The Federal Emergency Management Agency, fondly known as FEMA, claimed that with hurricanes and floods, it's disaster fund would drop below \$1 billion and it might not be able to help everyone.

Democratic senators called for billions more, then claimed Republicans were "playing politics" when they insisted on following budget rules and cutting something else. The Republicans noted that the House had already passed a FEMA appropriation with more money.

Then the agency "found" \$40 million which it said would tide it over until the new fiscal year began Oct. 1. Why it needed "billions" more when \$40 million would do, no one could say.

Now, the controversy has faded. Hurricane damage is getting repaired. The floods are receding; roads and bridges are being rebuilt.

And this would be a good time to ask just what we expect of the federal government during times of disaster. For more than a century, the government has been involved in flood control and disaster relief. That was an issue in the 1928 presidential campaign, for instance.

But in recent years, the flood of money to Emergency Management — indeed, to all Department of Homeland Security agencies — has been immense. And no one seems to have kept count of where it all went.

Every fire department in the country apparently needed a grant to buy equipment, most of which would have been paid for out of local budgets — or just put off — in previous years. It's not that new breathing apparatus, radios

and turnout gear aren't a good thing, just that they're hardly a federal responsibility.

While that money seems to have dried up some, Emergency Management continues to pump out dollars. Time was when a "disaster" meant something big: a blizzard, a hurricane, a massive tornado, statewide flooding, something truly beyond the local budget.

Not anymore. A few inches of water over gravel roads seems to qualify today. One area county sent people out to take pictures when water flowed over one of its roads last year so it could "get some of the federal money."

Years ago, the commissioners would have dealt with the issue without state or federal help, even if they had to cut somewhere else.

Today, why, if there's federal money out there, might as well get some.

We think those days are coming to an end, and rightly so.

The federal government doesn't have any money to spend, Congress is tied up trying to balance the budget and big cuts loom. It's a great time to look at all these federal programs and ask, "What must we really depend on Uncle Sam to do?"

We suggest the answer is, "To help in time of true need." States, cities and counties should handle their own bills the rest of the time and look to the feds only when they really need the help.

That should not be often. Besides, FEMA has a terrible reputation for messing up its efforts: bad trailers, big delays, poor response, unhelpful attitude. How can you depend on an agency that can't get it right?

— Steve Haynes



She just can't stop counting

I've been on the road a lot lately traveling 1 between Garden City and Oberlin, Oberlin and 2 Colby, Kansas and Nebraska and Colorado and New Mexico.

As I go along, I watch the 3 sunset, cars and trucks go by, the 4 crops, farmers working in the fields and the wildlife 5.

And 6, I've become sort of obsessive about 7 square counting the number 8 of hay and/or straw trucks heading south 9, 10.

Now, the question is — why and when did farmers in our area switch from small square bales to large round ones?

Bales in Colorado and New Mexico are mostly large and square, but here in Kansas and Nebraska, they are large and round.

Now and then, you'll see some small square bales, the kind they use for hay rides — although those are mostly straw instead of hay these days.

I went to Garden City at night, so I could not see what I was passing that well. I could tell if the vehicle was a car or a truck, if it was a pickup or an over-the-road semi. But, other



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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than that, I couldn't tell you if it was a cattle truck or a refrigerated truck full of oranges.

On the way, however, 11, it was light and I could see everything coming at me, 12 square.

Steve was editing 13 copy on his laptop as I drove northward 14, 15.

Earlier in the week, I had been to Colby and on 16 small square (wow you don't see many of those anymore) the way home I had noticed farmers mowing and baling the right of way. One guy was so close to his corn that I thought 17 there might be a few ears in the next bale.

So on the two-plus hour trip from Garden City to Oberlin, I started counting 18 hay trucks.

I got up to 19 as I pulled off the highway onto Commercial Street. But then the next day on the way to McCook, I realized 20 that I couldn't stop.

They just keep coming 21 square and I just keep counting.

Help. Does anyone 22 know of a Hay Truck Counters Anonymous chapter out there?

I can 23 only hope that the drought in Texas and the Southwest 24 is over soon so the trucks will stop going south.

In the meantime, we'll make hay, with or without corn in it, here, and I'll 25 count the trucks moving south.

Shelves bare, but need great

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

Throughout this year, your Decatur County Ministerial Association has been trying to help meet the needs of people who have found themselves unable to pay utility bills, or buy groceries, or pay for gasoline.

Many people came through town needing help while on their way to somewhere. The needs have varied, but it's been extensive. The association has spent well over \$3,000 since last October trying to help meet the requests, but that didn't even come close.

Our churches are small. We don't have the financial resources to meet the needs individually, so we work together, but that's still not enough. It's tough to say "no" to someone in need, but that's the reality. Our resources have largely been used up.

Much of the food at the food pantry comes through the association, and the pantry shelves are nearly empty. It's been a tough year. All over the world, people are suffering because of the worldwide economic downturn.

The people of northwest Kansas have not been among those who expect the government to "take care of us." We take care of each other. We are neighbors in the true sense of the word.

The government, state or federal, does not have the resources to help anyway, so we must do what we have always done, take care of our neighbors. We are not drawing any denominational walls. The challenge is upon each citizen of our community, each church in Decatur County, every person who calls themselves "Christian" to be Christ to our community and sacrifice to make sure no person goes to bed hungry, goes through the night without a warm home and does not get to a doctor for lack of fuel.

As president of the association, I ask each person, each church to dig deep, to give up a few meals out, or a movie night, in order to help our group help those in need. We

should not have to turn people away, especially with the holiday season approaching and the cold winter months ahead.

Please, write a check to the association as soon as you can. Maybe make it a family project. Use this as a teaching opportunity with your children. The need is great, and it is here.

You can mail your contribution to the association, Box 204, Oberlin, Kan. 67749

Thank you. I feel confident that, like always, we will rise to the challenge.

Doug Mason, president
Decatur County
Ministerial Association

Legion wants to fix marker

To the Editor:

During the big windstorm this summer, one of the casualties was the Veterans Monument at the Oberlin Cemetery. At 6:30 p.m. tonight, members of the Oberlin American Legion, Legion Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion will meet to

review plans and bids to restore this monument.

We encourage all members to attend this meeting. We encourage anyone concerned about this project to come as well.

Ruth Miesner, Oberlin
American Legion Auxiliary

Middle class needs a shot in arm

To the Editor:

Wow! I received many letters throughout the country and state to my letter, "Why not tax the rich a little more?" in the Wednesday, Aug. 24, issue of *The Oberlin Herald*.

The editor's note was correct in saying that \$78 billion is still a drop in the bucket, however, if you added the proposed cuts of \$61 billion, that total would be nearly 10 percent of

the deficit. True, even this will not solve the problem.

I still think, besides higher taxes and budget cuts, the solution to a balanced budget is a healthy, working middle class.

The deindustrialization and financialization of America since 1970 have spawned an increasing downslide of the middle class, thus we have less tax revenue. Take a

look at statistics, and you can see that the standard of living for the middle class is shrinking. Our disastrous trade deals, outsourced jobs abroad, NAFTA, the World Trade Organization, and the permanent-most-favored-nation status with China must be corrected.

Lyle Black
Beverly Hills, Calif.

Nurses tired of night visits

Just when I thought it was safe to go back in the water.

It's been five months since Jim's accident. He's learned to live with the limitations of a thumb that is not entirely flexible. Life goes on.

We're at the age where danger shouldn't be lurking around every corner. But guess what? He manages to find trouble anyway.

Wednesday, while the wind was blowing like a banshee, Jim was working outside, installing tail lights on a trailer. He'd made heavy-duty steel "holders" for the lights. There were some rough welded spots that he needed to grind down.

That night, he complained of his left eye hurting, but we both attributed it to the wind and dust in the air. By noon Thursday his eye was bloodshot, and he said it really hurt to blink. He tried washing his eye — no relief. By bedtime, he was completely miserable and rest did not come. Finally, about 2:30 a.m. He said, "I can't take it anymore. Let's go to the emergency room."

As luck would have it, the same nurse was on duty who helped treat Jim the night we came in with his thumb injury. After we explained this complaint, she said to me, "We should just keep your husband in bubble-wrap."

After numbing his eye, the nurse and physician's assistant immedi-



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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ately saw the culprit: a tiny speck of metal from the grinding had embedded itself in the iris of Jim's eye. When I saw the physician assistant take what looked like a large hat pin out of the surgical tray, I excused myself from the room. I know I promised "for better and for worse," but I didn't think I was obligated to watch. It's bad enough he had to.

It was over before I could walk to the end of the hall. However, the speck had been in his eye too long and had left a "rust ring." A visit to our optometrist would be required. By this time, however, it was about 4 in the morning, and we both needed some sleep. Now that Jim was out of pain, he could sleep — and he did. Like a rock.

Friday morning, our optometrist said she would "work us in," to come on down. If I thought the "needle thing" in the emergency room was bad; the Roto-Rooter

in her office was downright gruesome. Again, she deadened his eye so Jim didn't feel a thing, but to see this "grinder" coming had to be unnerving. I wouldn't know; I couldn't watch.

The procedure was successful, and Jim is as good as new. A little more careful though, I hope. He thinks safety goggles might not be such a bad idea now. Personally, I think the nurse had the best idea, and my order of bubble-wrap should arrive Thursday.

From the Bible

But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen

— Philippians 4:19-20

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243

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Published each Wednesday by Haynes Publishing Co., 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Periodicals postage paid at Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Nor'West Newspapers

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Official newspaper of Oberlin, Jennings, Norcat, Dresden and Decatur County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association, Nebraska Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year, \$38 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$42 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$48 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$50-\$250 (in U.S. dollars only) extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243.



Photo Policy

The Oberlin Herald wants to emphasize photos of people doing things in the community. If you know of an event or news happening that we should attend, please call 475-2206.

Please be sure to allow a couple of days' notice so we can arrange to be there.

Space in the paper is limited and so is the time of our staff, so we may not be able to get to every event, but we will try.

Because space is so limited, we cannot run team or group photos, any pictures of people lined up or of people passing checks, certificates

and the like. (We will always try to make room for a story about any of these events, however.)

We do run wedding and engagement pictures and "mug" shots with stories and obituaries, when they are provided to us. Please remember that we need a clear, sharp picture. Dark or fuzzy prints will not work.

We cannot return photos unless you submit a self-addressed, stamped envelope with clear instructions for return. Other photos submitted may be picked up at our office within two weeks. After that, they will be disposed of.

Write

The Oberlin Herald encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

Mail letters to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan., 67749, or by e-mail to oberlinherald@nwkans.com.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.