

Maybe we need a new disaster plan

A telling comment the other day: In a report on how Hurricane Katrina evacuees were faring, the speaker noted that "FEMA has turned care of the refugees over to the Red Cross, and things are starting to happen."

Imagine that. Government falters. Private charity has to step in and make sense out of the situation.

Time after time, people are saying, "The government has let us down. The government has failed."

Troops take days to move because governors and colonels need to sign paperwork. A Red Cross convoy is turned around because city officials are not ready to supervise them.

Michael Brown, the deposed disaster chief, trying to explain why he failed to help people at the New Orleans Convention Center: "No one told me they were there."

The list goes on. Of course, the response will be, "We need better leaders. We need to spend more money."

As if doing more of the same is the answer. Instead, maybe we need to take a look at how we handle disasters.

FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, has proven it can't manage anything, certainly not a major disaster.

The agency is run by political hacks and petty bureaucrats. It's not capable.

That's not saying that all government agencies are incompetent. Our military has aquatinted itself well on this mission: The Coast Guard, National Guard and the regular Army, all topnotch, despite the old saw about "military efficiency." These units are competent and capable. They are pretty much in charge now. The Army may be bureaucratic in peace, but under fire, it's a different story.

The Corps of Engineers warned that the levies needed work. Listen to Mayor Ray Nagin blaming the feds for his city's problems.

Contrast his bleeping performance with Rudy Giuliani in New York just four years ago.

Contrast his city's feeble, unstructured response with New York's.

New Orleans, and Louisiana, may be facing their own crisis of leadership.

Since when is it the federal government's job to get them ready for a local disaster?

When this is said and done, we need to rebuild our posture for handling the next disaster, at the hands of Mother Nature or some terrorist sect.

Maybe we ought to give the Red Cross a lot more say, and the political hacks and bureaucrats a lot less. Maybe we should scrap the FEMA bureaucracy and build lean, mobile leadership teams with good communications and decision-making ability, ready to move at a moment's notice.

That's not all the answer. This is not just a federal problem. Every state and every city should be ready for the next disaster — fire, mudslide, tornado, bombing, hurricane or earthquake.

Every state, every city should have trained people ready to take over and plans for how to proceed. Then it won't matter so much if the feds are incompetent.

The real question, though, is "Why are we surprised?" It's the government, after all. They're here to help.

— Steve Haynes

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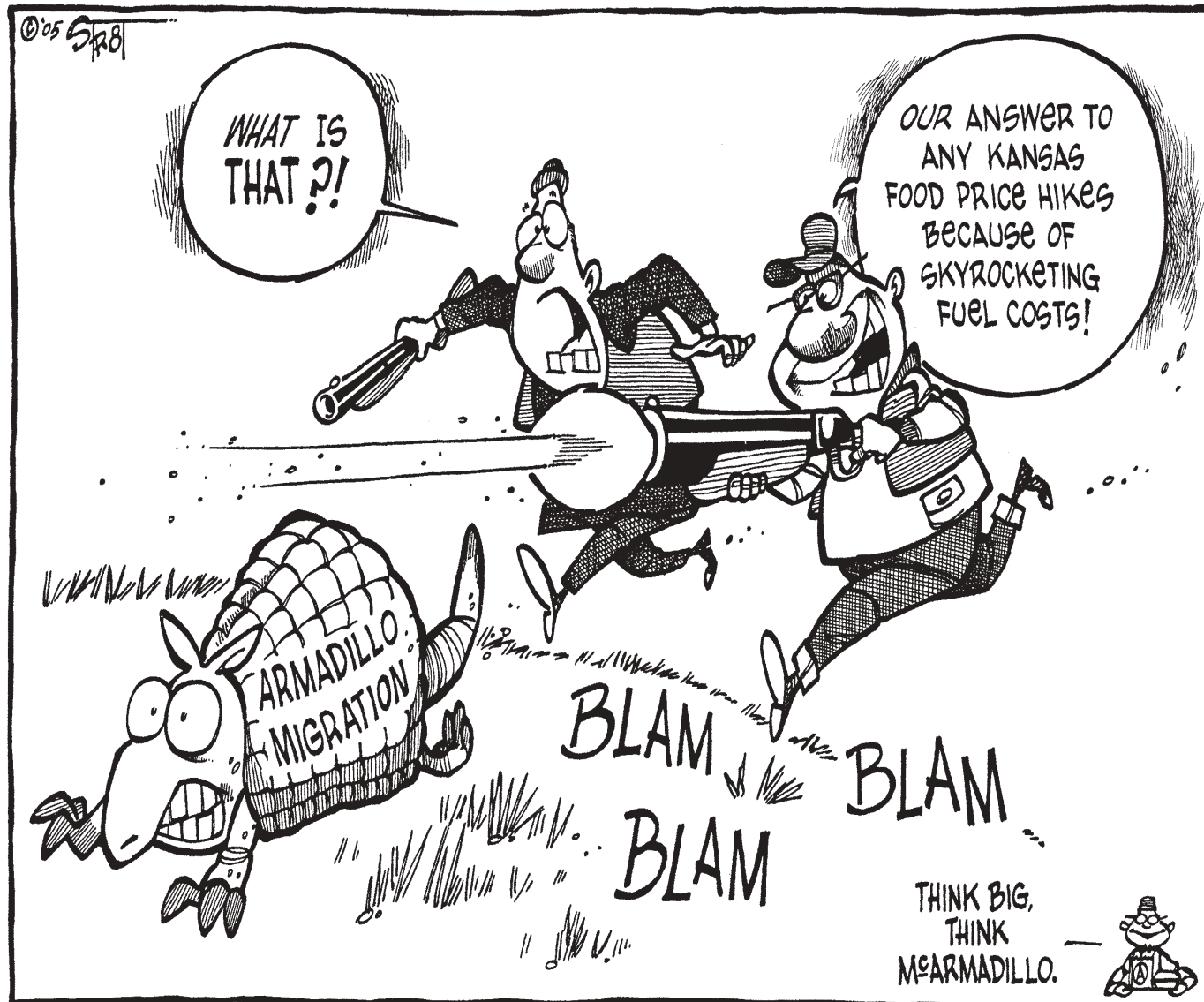
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The summer's bounty is being saved

There's something satisfying about jars of canned food lined up on your countertop.

This is the season. Gardens are maybe just a little past their peak, but homemakers are trying to utilize every bit of their bounty. They are canning everything in sight, though the weatherman is already predicting the first frost.

Me? I'm just trying to do something with the excess from other people's gardens, since mine sure didn't do anything. Last night about midnight, I finished "putting up" a box of tomatoes my friend Melba gave me. They look so pretty on the shelf. This winter they will be good in chili or goulash or Swiss steak.

The tomatoes are right next to the elderberry syrup. It was supposed to be jelly, but it didn't jell.

I told Jim he would be enjoying gourmet elderberry syrup on his pancakes this winter.

I suppose that whole canning thing has to do with the story about the ant and the grasshopper. The ant gathered food and stored it away for the long, cold winter

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



while the grasshopper fiddled his time away, always saying, "I'll do it tomorrow."

The difference between "us" and the ant is if our neighbor was hungry, even if it was his own fault, we would share what we had.

Since Hurricane Katrina hit the southern coast, we have seen that displayed over and over: Volunteers leaving the comfort of their own homes to go help others. Children donating their teddy bears so other little kids can have something to hang on to. Citizens by the thousands digging into their wallets to help out.

The worst of times brings out the best

in people.

—ob—

I know nothing about the game of soccer, except what I've learned watching "Wide World of Sports" and seeing the girl on the American team take off her shirt after winning the gold medal at the Olympics a few years ago.

My 6-year-old Texas granddaughter, Taylor, is in a soccer league. I called their house Saturday morning to say "Hi," and Taylor answered. She sounded so grown up. I asked if it was Kara.

"No, Grandma, it's Taylor," she said. Of course, caller ID.

Without taking a breath, she immediately said, "Guess what." Not waiting for my reply, she went on, "Today is my first soccer game."

After the perfunctory oohs and aahs, I asked, "What position do you play? Are you the right wing, the left wing or the goalie?"

"Gra-a-a-ndma-a-a," she said, as only a 6-year-old can say it, "I don't play a position. I just play."

There are a lot of memories in a name

When I was young we had a neighbor named Katrina. She was an old maid who lived out her days with her brother, Clair.

I remember her so fondly. She wrote the news for our neighborhood. On Sunday night she would call and ask my mom what we had been up to. Then we got our names in the Lenora News. When you are 6 or so it seems like you are famous.

Katrina had pure white cats. Once she brought us two beautiful kittens. She had tied a ribbon around each neck, one pink and one blue. We named them Pinkle Purr and Bluebelle. I don't know what happened to Bluebelle but Pinkle Purr grew into quite a patriarch.

Perhaps because of his name he thought he had something to prove. As toms will do he would wander the area and come back, often the worse for the wear.

We would clean him up and nurse him back to health. He bore many scars. But he was prolific. We had lots of white or mostly white cats. I was probably in my 20s before I realized how rare white cats are. They are still my favorite.

Katrina had the cutest little house. It was probably just a little four-square to start with but it was perched on a side hill and had enclosed porches all around. Everything about it seemed so quaint. It was how I pictured a fairy cottage.

I loved Katrina and her house and her cats. Katrina was my favorite name. I

Back Home Nancy Hagman



wanted to have a little girl named Katrina some day. Alas, the hubby did not like the name so we got Kate. It was close enough.

The Katrina in the news this past week is the antithesis of the Katrina I so admired as a child.

Hardly a sweet little old lady wearing a broad brimmed hat (because ladies do not get sunburned) and carrying a basket of kittens with ribbons around their necks.

Names are so important.

I'm sure we all have an aversion to a certain name because it reminds us of someone we once knew that we did not like. Or perhaps we knew someone with a certain characteristic and then tend to attribute to everyone with the name. And, we end up being surprised to meet a Connie without red hair, for instance.

I know Pinkle Purr did not know his name was maybe a little sissy for the leader of a pride, but I do think people sometimes have problems with their names.

My mother-in-law's name is Eulonda.

I like her name and I think she does too. But once, when we heard of the birth of a child with a rather exotic name spelled in an unusual fashion, she turned to me and said, "She'll spend the rest of her life telling people how to spell it."

My mom said she tried to keep our names simple because before she had children a preschooler niece proudly showed her how she could write her name, "Kay".

When mom complimented her fine work she sighed and replied, "Just wait until I get started on Brandyberry."

As Shakespeare said "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

Would a hurricane by any other name be as destructive?

Kudos to all those working so hard to help the people effected by Katrina. As time goes on I believe we are going to see that all of us will be effected and I fear in mostly negative ways. For those of us not directly in the path of the hurricane our response is going to tell us a lot about who we are as individuals and as a nation.

The Katrina of my childhood had at least one other sibling that I knew. It strikes me as a little ironic in light of the present situation but her name was Grace.

Think of all that name means. I hope we soon start acting with a little "grace" as we recover from this national disaster, don't you?

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