



Opinion

Experts predict the 'big one' every other year

Like the boy who cried wolf, the epidemiologists may have spoke one time too many.

Since they learned how to decode virus DNA, the disease experts have been predicting the next "Big One" every other year for a couple of decades.

Each mutation of the influenza genetic code has been heralded as the progenitor of the next 1918-style outbreak.

A couple of years ago, it was the Asian bird flu that would sweep the world with deadly effect. The forces of the medical world mobilized, but nothing happened. The new strain just seemed to fade away.

Before that, half a dozen others. At the same time, new strains of equine encephalitis (including the West Nile virus) were said to be poised to produce the next great mosquito-borne plague. That never happened, either.

And unless you happened to know one of the unfortunates who fell victim to West Nile (and some of us did), the virus passed without so much as a ripple.

It's not the epidemiologists are not good people trying to perform a public service. They fear the worst, and in their business, the worst could be very bad indeed. The 1918 "Spanish" influenza outbreak sickened as many as 50 million people worldwide and killed millions. It seemed to have been the result of a "perfect storm" involving a newly mutated virus, a world population with few immunities and a time when global travel was on the rise.

Today, of course, with round-the-world airline service a commonplace, disease can move as quickly as we can. The latest "swine flu" has hopped continents more quickly than its predecessors ever could have. It truly had wings.

There are several other truths about this situation:

• The advice the disease control people give us is elementary: wash your hands, stay out of crowds, stay home if you are sick. It's the same thing we hear every year when cold and flu season approaches. Good counsel, but minimally effective against an epidemic.

• Drugs and other treatments offer little comfort beyond "take two aspirin and call me in the morning." There's not much medical science can do to lessen the impact of a virus once contracted, even today.

• This kind of panic involves a self-fulfilling prophesy. The epidemiologists will keep predicting the next "Big One" until it actually comes. Then they will tell us, "See. We were right all along."

The Cassandra's who predict earthquakes to ruin California operate on the same principle, and history and science tell us they, too, will be "right" one day.

• The danger and cost of overreacting could be as great – or greater – than the actual danger of the flu. Closed businesses and schools have cost the world economy billions already. Nations such as Mexico that can ill afford the setbacks.

The jury is still out on this mutation. When it did not spread as fast or as far as predicted, "experts" noted that the 1918 outbreak "summered over" before it blossomed into a true killer the next winter.

That might happen again. It might not.

Whatever comes this time, the Chicken Littles of Atlanta and New York will be on the parapet, crying out the danger. Some day, their most dire predictions may even come true.

Meantime, go wash your hands again.

— Steve Haynes



News From the Past

5 years ago - 2004

Roger Jensen announced at the May 4 City Council meeting that the city should be receiving a check from a grant for \$4,500 for the concrete poured at the recycling center.

Lutheran men volunteers have painted the St. Francis Senior Center building.

Four St. Francis seniors, Toni Rice, Dillon Zwegardt, Jona-

than Roelfs and Kyle Buffington, were recognized as Kansas Honor Scholars by the University of Kansas.

Thirty-seven high school seniors will graduate from St. Francis Community High School on Sunday, May 24. The group of seniors will receive \$89,185 in scholarships during the ceremony. Kyle Buffington is the senior class president and Alysee

Lampe is the vice president.

35 years ago - 1974

The Board of Education of U.S.D. 297 has awarded the contract for the new high school addition to Brice-Crider Construction Company of Wray.

The Wheel Inn Pancake House in Wheeler is now open for business. Jim Felzien of St. Francis is the operator of the new facility.

Reader appreciates his hometown

Letter to the Editor:

Thank you!
I've been lucky enough in the last three years to work for a great company, US Bank, that encourages it's employees to volunteer in the community.

Over the last year, I've been able to go into a few different Denver public schools and speak to students, kindergarten through sixth grade. Most of the schools the bank asks us to speak at are considered low-income household families. This means that nearly 94 percent of the kids have some kind of government aid to just provide the bare essentials for school lunches and supplies.

Many of the teachers care about their students just as much as any teacher in St. Francis. They do the

Letters to the Editor

best they can with the resources that have been provided for them by the school district.

That being said, the resources and community support that they receive is minimal over the school year. The kids give a 100 percent every time I've been able to go in and talk, and they have all the hopes and dreams any kid would have in life.

You could compare their chances of making it to college as a "Long shot." Some will hit the jackpot but those are few and far between.

So I guess that the reason I wrote this letter was simply a "thank you," to the community, for all the great work over

the years. This goes from every community member that shows up for every Friday night sporting event, on down the line to every teacher and administrators that have given many years to making a great school system. You've produced hundreds upon hundreds of great people, not just students. It takes a community to do this and, every year, St. Francis start another class in the right direction on life.

I think the saying goes, "Give credit where credit is due." Thank you for all you've done and will continue to do for our schools.

Tyler Lampe
Denver, Colo.

Hangin' With Marge

By Margaret Bucholtz



Yard

margeb@cityofstfrancis.net

Just like a student that is ready for school to be out, I am really ready for yard work to begin. I always start out like I am killing snakes. Every year I never know which project that I want to start with first.

At the beginning of spring I even went out with my coat, gloves and stocking cap on and then I decided it would be more fun if I waited until it warmed up.

Kurt helped me and we enlarged the vegetable garden. This year I didn't want to have the weird cucumbers crossing with

the cantaloupe. Last year I had these 12-inch yellow giant things with stripes growing and couldn't figure out what they were. I didn't know that just because you planted two things close to each other they would cross breed.

With that done, I started to mow the grass and the push mower quit. Kurt tried to work on it, but to no avail, so he took it to Wheeler.

With that mower gone, I hopped on the big mower. Got the outside parts mowed and decided that I needed to mow around all the machinery. When I looked at that spot I knew it would look

so much better if I mowed even more of what used to be a little pasture.

I took off and it wasn't long before I hit something and broke the mower. To make a long story short, Kurt got really good at taking that mower apart and putting it back together again. Even after the fourth time, he was still encouraging me to get it mowed.

I really think it was because he would rather work on the machinery than do some other projects that I want some help with.

Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



scmcormick@nwkansan.com

I never tire of seeing how the "American Dream" works. Our country lost two native sons last week. Both coming from the most humble of beginnings to make names for themselves. Two Italian-Americans with the same first name: Dom DeLuise and Dom DiMaggio.

Each were born to poor immigrants from Italy. DeLuise's parents lived in Brooklyn, N.Y. His father was a trash collector and mother a homemaker. DiMaggio's family came from Sicily and settled on the other side of the nation, in San Francisco, Calif. His father was a fisherman and mother a teacher.

Most folks know about Dom DeLuise, for he played a comic buffoon on television and in movies. But Dom DiMaggio lived in

the shadows of his more famous brother and team-mate.

Three of the DiMaggio boys made it big, playing professional baseball; Dominick with the Boston Red Sox, Vince for 10 years with five different National League teams and the best-known "Jolt'in Joe" of New York Yankee fame.

Dom had the look of a spectacle-aided accountant more than athletic center fielder like his brothers. In fact, he was nicknamed the "Little Professor." But he still managed to play solidly for Boston for 10 years. Some would argue that if he hadn't left for the war, serving in the Navy from 1943-45, he would have been inducted into the Hall of Fame.

But the man to his right in the outfield took most of the atten-

tion. All his years were played with Ted Williams. And, brother Joe is remembered for hitting in 56-straight games and several championships. Both "Upper Deck Ted" and the "Yankee Clipper" are cemented in baseball lore.

Now, this is not to say that the life of this Italian-American kid was anything less than extraordinary. For one example, he did leave his name in the Boston statistic books. Dom hit in 34 consecutive games for Boston in 1949, and still holds that team record.

I'd say both Doms gave a wealth of entertainment to their country.

Honor Roll

New and renewed Herald subscriptions: St. Francis Equity, St. Francis; Jason Gardner, Ogallala, Neb.; Justin Gardner, St. Francis; Todd Gardner, North Newton; Troy Gardner, California, Mo. Terry Morris, Culbertson, Neb.; Heidi Tice, St. Francis; Bradley-Waters, Bird City; Marvel Gleason, St. Francis;

GOD SAYS

"It is mine to avenge: I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them."

Deuteronomy 32:35

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STAFF

Karen Krien Editor/Publisher
Betty Winston Sports Editor
Casey McCormick Advertising Manager
Lezlie McCormick Production
Peggy Horinek Office Manager
Margaret Bucholtz Columnist

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Weekday Mass 8 a.m.
Confessions Sat. 4-4:30

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Worship 10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Service 6:30 p.m.,
Wed. AWANA Club 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

St. Francis Community Church
332-3150
204 N. Quincy Street
www.sfccfamily.com
Pastor: David Butler
Sunday School 9:15 a.m.
Worship Service 10:30 a.m.
Potluck & Communion - Every 2nd Sunday
Wednesday Bible Study 7 p.m.

Peace Lutheran Church, AFLC
202 N. College
Pastor Ken Hart
332-2928 Pars. 332-2312
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Worship 10:30 a.m.
Sunday Eve. Bible Study 7 p.m.
Communion 1st Sunday of the Month

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Church Office 332-2292,
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512 S. Scott
Pastor Morita Truman
Early Bird Service 8:30 a.m.
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Worship 10:30 a.m.

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332-3002
Pastor Chris Farmer
Sunday School 10 a.m.
Morning Worship 11 a.m.

Solid Rock Baptist Church
412 S. Denison
Welcomes You!
Pastor Allen Coon
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Worship 10:30
Prayer Meeting, Wed 7:30 p.m.

Seventh-Day Adventist Church
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Pastor Jerry Nowack
Sabbath School 9:30
Morning Worship 10:45

First Christian Church
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332-2956 • 118 E. Webster
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Praise the Lord