



Winter solstice has occurred ushering in longer days

It started when I got to wondering what day the winter solstice fell on this year.

Being, in the modern way, too lazy to get up and look at a calendar, I just Googled it. What I found included some interesting facts, a bunch of misinformation and a lot of really sloppy writing.

First, some of the facts. The solstice, the time when Earth's northern hemisphere is as far away from the sun as it gets all year, came at 11:11 a.m. Saturday. The solstice, which scientists describe as a "singular event," just happens; the sun appears to be moving farther south and lower in the sky each day until it stops and starts, ever so slowly, to go the other way.

This happens because the Earth's rotational axis is tilted about 23 degrees. In the summer, the northern hemisphere is tilted toward the sun, in the winter, away. The equinoxes are the instants when the relative movement reverses.

One article I found (names are being omitted to protect the guilty) calls the equinox "the official beginning of winter." That's bull, as a couple of others point out. Firstly, winter does not recognize any "official" status; it comes when it will.

And meteorologists generally define winter, in terms of weather, as roughly Dec. 1 to March 1. Dec. 21 (or sometimes, Dec. 22) may be the shortest day of the year, but it's seldom the coldest. That happens, the National Weather Service says, because even though days start to get longer, the Earth is losing more heat than it gains for some weeks before things start to warm up. The "middle" of winter still comes some time in January.

Writers seem to have a lot of trouble accurately describing what happens. Saturday, a couple of articles report, we had about 9 hours, 32 minutes of daylight in the "continental U.S." Of course, the actual time varies from south to north. Go far enough north in Alaska, and there was no sunrise

at all. Closer to the equator, the length of days is more constant.

Oh, and in this area, the calculated times Saturday were 8 a.m. and 5:20 p.m., 9 hours and 40 minutes of daylight.

Several describe the sun as "moving south" or "turning around in the sky" until it is "straight overhead," but of course, we know the sun is not moving relative to earth. Galileo figured that out a few centuries ago. It's the Earth that moves relative to the sun. From here, it just looks like the sun "moves."

That's because, as the Earth revolves in its orbit around the sun, the axis continues to point the same direction, exposing the northern or southern hemispheres to more or less light and heat in each season. If the axis stayed constant in relation to the sun, one half might have winter all year and the other a long, hot summer.

As it is, we get variety in our weather in the temperate zones, everything north and south of the tropics. It's a nice thing, though I personally could use a little more summer and a little less winter. With global warming, that may be coming, and it might not be so nice, but I'm willing to give it a try.

Oh, and one more little fact. While the days may be getting longer, the sun won't start coming up any earlier for a while. Sunrise will continue to be later for a month while sunsets come later still. That will change in early January, but sunrise won't get back before 8 a.m. until Jan. 21, a full month later, at least out here.

Me, I'm just glad the days will be a little longer for the next six months. I can't wait for the spring equinox, when day and night finally are equal and spring officially begins. OK, that's not true; spring weather usually starts about March 1 - if you remember that March is a spring month as November is a fall month.

Still, I'll be ready by then. - Steve Haynes



Casey's Comments

Put trust in God, not humans

By Casey McCormick

mccormickcasey@rocketmail.com

By Casey McCormick
mccormickcasey@rocketmail.com

There is good reason why our country's currency states, "In God we trust."

The best argument for it is that God is a bit more dependable than man.

Too often folks depend on our government to provide answers and care for them. This would probably work well except for one

problem. That would be the human beings running the show.

Despite our politician's good intentions, the power that goes with the position often leads them to cater to not what is best for the whole but rather whatever special interests that are able to pull them toward their direction. Service to the voters, as well as others in general, goes to the wayside.

It pains me to see the current

trend of taking God out of the system, when the founding fathers saw fit to build our government with the hope that the Higher Power would bless and be a part of it.

My hopes are that we will continue to allow the good Lord to guide our nation, rather than the fallible humans who seem to know better.

Moments With Mila

Test your home for radon

By Mila Bandel

County Health Nurse

The Cheyenne County Health Department encourages Cheyenne County residents to test for radon gas by offering free test kits.

Kansas Governor Sam Brownback and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) have proclaimed January "Kansas Radon Action Month" to help educate Kansans about the dangers of radon exposure and encourage actions to identify and address radon problems in the home. Radon is a tasteless, odorless, colorless, naturally occurring radioactive gas which comes from the breakdown of uranium found in nearly all soils. Radon gas moves from the ground under and around your home through cracks and other holes in the foundation.

For Kansas Radon Action Month, the Cheyenne County Health Department will offer free home test kits at the Cheyenne County Health Department at 221 W. First in St. Francis. For more information, go to www.kdheks.gov and follow the Radon Action Month link.

About one out of every three radon measurements performed in Kansas are elevated, being above 4 pCi/l (picoCuries per liter).

Some areas have higher levels than others, though elevated levels of radon have been detected in every county in the state. As many as one in 15 homes across the U.S. have elevated radon levels that often go undetected.

Topeka, Manhattan, Lawrence and Salina building codes require new homes to be built using radon-resistant techniques, and additional cities in Kansas are considering this modification to their building codes.

Inexpensive radon test kits are available year round at local hardware and builder's supply stores and at your Kansas county extension office. Those tests that reveal high levels can be fixed with sim-

ple venting techniques completed by a licensed professional. Homeowners should talk with a certified radon contractor if levels of 4 pCi/l or above are detected.

A list of certified radon contractors is available by calling the Kansas Radon Hotline at 800-693-KDHE (800-693-5343). Additional information about radon can be obtained at www.kansasradonprogram.org and at www.epa.gov/radon.

For more information or to obtain a free radon test kit call the Cheyenne County Health Department at 785-332-2381.

Kansas water plan needs vision

Looking back through history, some generations have become known for key achievements, traits and ideals. Stereotypes are broadly applied across the United States but what about us? What will this generation of Kansans be remembered for?

It could be for putting personal politics and differences aside, rolling up our sleeves and working together to ensure future generations of Kansans have a reliable source of water to fuel our state's economy.

In calling for the development of a 50-Year Vision for the Future of Water in Kansas, Gov. Sam Brownback put it best when he said, "Water and the Kansas economy are directly linked. Water is a finite resource and without further planning and

action, we will no longer be able to meet our state's current needs, let alone growth."

He's right. The writing is on the wall and if we don't act today, our future is bleak.

The Ogallala Aquifer is declining faster than it is recharging. Reservoirs, which are critical water storage structures for much of our state, are filling with sediment. At this rate, with no changes in the next 50 years, the Ogallala will be 70 percent depleted and our reservoirs will be 40 percent filled with mud.

The drought over the past three years has brought water issues to the forefront; we must plan for the future now.

That is what the Kansas Water Of-

fice, Kansas Department of Agriculture and Kansas Water Authority are doing. A Visioning Team has been established and is embarking on a one-year mission to seek input from water users, compile data, conduct research and chart a path forward.

It will not be easy. Some believe it's too late to save the Ogallala. There are differing ideas about how to better manage reservoirs and surface water.

We need to develop plans to ensure a reliable water supply for all Kansans, improve water quality, reduce our vulnerability to extreme events, like floods and drought, develop and maintain water infrastructure and improve recreational opportunities.

We need your help and advice in this process. Give us your feedback and ideas during town-hall meetings and other events. Be a part of the solution.

If we are successful, future generations will look back on the work we do this year and say that's the generation of Kansans that worked together to protect and conserve the state's water resources today and for the future.

To submit your comments or get more information about the Governor's Call to Action-50-Year Vision, go to www.kwo.org.

The 50-Year Water Visioning Team

Contact:
Katie Ingels 785-296-3185
Kansas Water Office
katie.ingels@kwo.ks.gov
Beth Riffel, 785-296-2653
Kansas Department of Agriculture
media@kda.ks.gov

Honor Roll

New and renewed Herald subscriptions: Robert Zwegardt, St. Francis; Bill Wilger, St. Francis; Norma J. Molle, Mission; Opal Seaman, Goodland; L.A. Bunjes, St. Francis; Ella Mae Schleppe, Broomfield, Colo.; Lyle Cook, St. Francis; Lonnie Willis, Bird City; Larry and Cynthia Smull, Salina; Joyce Faulkender, St. Francis; S. Bliss, Goodland; Victor Zwegardt, St. Francis; Dan and Cathy Gleason, Anchorage, Alaska; Vernice Williams, Lakewood, Colo.; Shauna Hausback, Mount Juliet, Tenn.; Sara Schultz, Phoenix, Ariz.; Lynn Query, Bird City; David Nicklos, St. Francis; Patsy Rethke, St. Francis; Dora Mae Rose, St. Francis; Bill Pugh, Steamboat Springs, Colo.; Laura Pugh, St. Francis; Shirley Smith, St. Francis;

J.C. Hixon, Aurora, Colo.; Uplinger Farms, Great Bend; Kari and Nate Toon, Hays; Roger Douthit, St. Francis; Don Keeker, St. Francis; Reid Frohlich, Holcomb; Ruben and Bernice Bandel, St. Francis; Michael McCormick, Lakewood, Colo.; Robert McCormick, Westminster, Colo.; Mike Bandel, St. Francis; David Stephens, St. Francis; Tina Sager, Bird City; Vernie Combelick, Littleton, Colo.; Dixie and Aisa Burr, Brighton, Colo.; Patricia Ferguson, Brush, Colo.; Bonnie Doggett, St. Francis; Norma Orsborn-Stanley, Blue Rapids; Forrest Crum, St. Francis; Kent Kechter, St. Francis; Travis Ketcher, Meridian, Idaho; Allen Knodel, Kanorado; Gary Neilan, Las Cruces, N.M.; B. June Smith, Portland, Ore.

The Saint Francis Herald

(USPS 475-960)

A Century of Service to Cheyenne County

P.O. Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050

Published each Thursday by Haynes Publishing Co., 310 W. Washington, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050. Entered as periodicals matter at the post office at St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050, and at additional offices.

Official newspaper of Cheyenne County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year \$38 (tax included) in Cheyenne and adjacent counties; \$42 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$48 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$28 extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050



Nor'West Newspapers

8:30 a.m.-noon - 1:00-5:00 p.m.

Monday - Friday

(785) 332-3162 Fax - (785) 332-3001

E-mail - sf.herald@nwkansas.com

STAFF

Karen Krien Editor/Publisher
Doug Sloper Sports Editor
Tim Burr Advertising Manager
Amanda Miller News Writer
Doug Sloper Office Manager
Casey McCormick Columnist



<p>Church of Christ 332-2380, Pars. 332-3424 502 W. Spencer Norman Morrow - Minister Bible Class 9 a.m. Morning Worship 10 a.m.</p>	<p>St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church 625 S. River • 332-2680 Fr. Carlos Ruiz Santos 1st Sunday of the month Morning Mass 8:30 a.m. Sunday Mass 10:30 a.m. Weekday Mass 8:00 a.m. Confessions Sat. 4-4:30</p>	<p>First Baptist Church 2nd & Scott • 332-3921 J.W. Glidewell, Pastor Sunday School 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:30 a.m. Sunday Evening Service 6:30 p.m., Wed. AWANA Club 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.</p>
<p>United Methodist Church Office 332-2292, Church 332-2254, 512 S. Scott Pastor Warren Cico Early Bird Service 8:30 a.m. Sunday School 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:30 a.m.</p>	<p>Salem Lutheran Church 332-3002 Pastor Chris Farmer Morning Worship 11:00 a.m. Communion 3rd Sunday</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Seventh-Day Adventist Church 423-650-5663 • 3rd & Adams Pastor James McCurdy Sabbath School 9:30 Morning Worship 10:45</p>	<p>Solid Rock Baptist Church 412 S. Denison Welcomes You! Pastor Allen Coon Sunday School 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:30 Prayer Meeting, Wed 7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>Peace Lutheran Church, AFLC 202 N. College Pastor Randy Nelson Church 332-2928 Parsonage 332-2312 Worship 9:30 a.m. Communion 1st Sunday</p>
<p>First Christian Church Pastor Jeff Landers 332-2956 • 118 E. Webster Bible Fellowship 9:15 a.m. Church Service 10:15 a.m.</p>	<p>St. Francis Equity</p>	<p>St. Francis Herald</p>