

# Opinion

## Open Letter

### Why wasn't highway closed?

To: Kansas Dept. of Transportation and Kansas legislative members:

I am writing a letter of concern over the recent and past issues with interstate traffic when weather conditions are in very dangerous conditions. I am unhappy with myself for waiting to write a letter for a "wake-up" call to those in administration capacity. My concern arises over the recent death of Sen. Stan Clark of Oakley. This is just another case of what I deem as negligence on the state's part in not closing highways when visibility reaches unsafe distances whether it is from snow, rain or dust.

Sen. Clark's death to me seems inexcusable when a dirt storm of this magnitude comes and people report, and the news reports, the seriousness of this weather condition. This could or may have been prevented had officials taken seriously the risk and danger of 70+ mile-per-hour winds and blackout visual conditions from blowing dirt. I just attended Senator Clark's funeral where hundreds of friends and family along with several hundred "legislators" attended and I did mention this to some of them and I will be aggressively addressing this point after today.

Since it seems to be common that most people have never been directly in a raging blizzard of snow or a full blown dirt storm in western Kansas I am telling you that it not only puts the life of those on the roads in danger but it puts our emergency medical and police officers working for safety at a very, very dangerous risk of injury or even death. My first concern is that when conditions on visibility are less than that of a safe stopping distance for the speed allowed you need to take action and shutdown "all" traffic. I have worked and visited with several EMT's, firefighters and police who become very concerned over the situations we put these people in for no apparent reason when accidents occur and injury or death are a direct result of poor weather conditions.

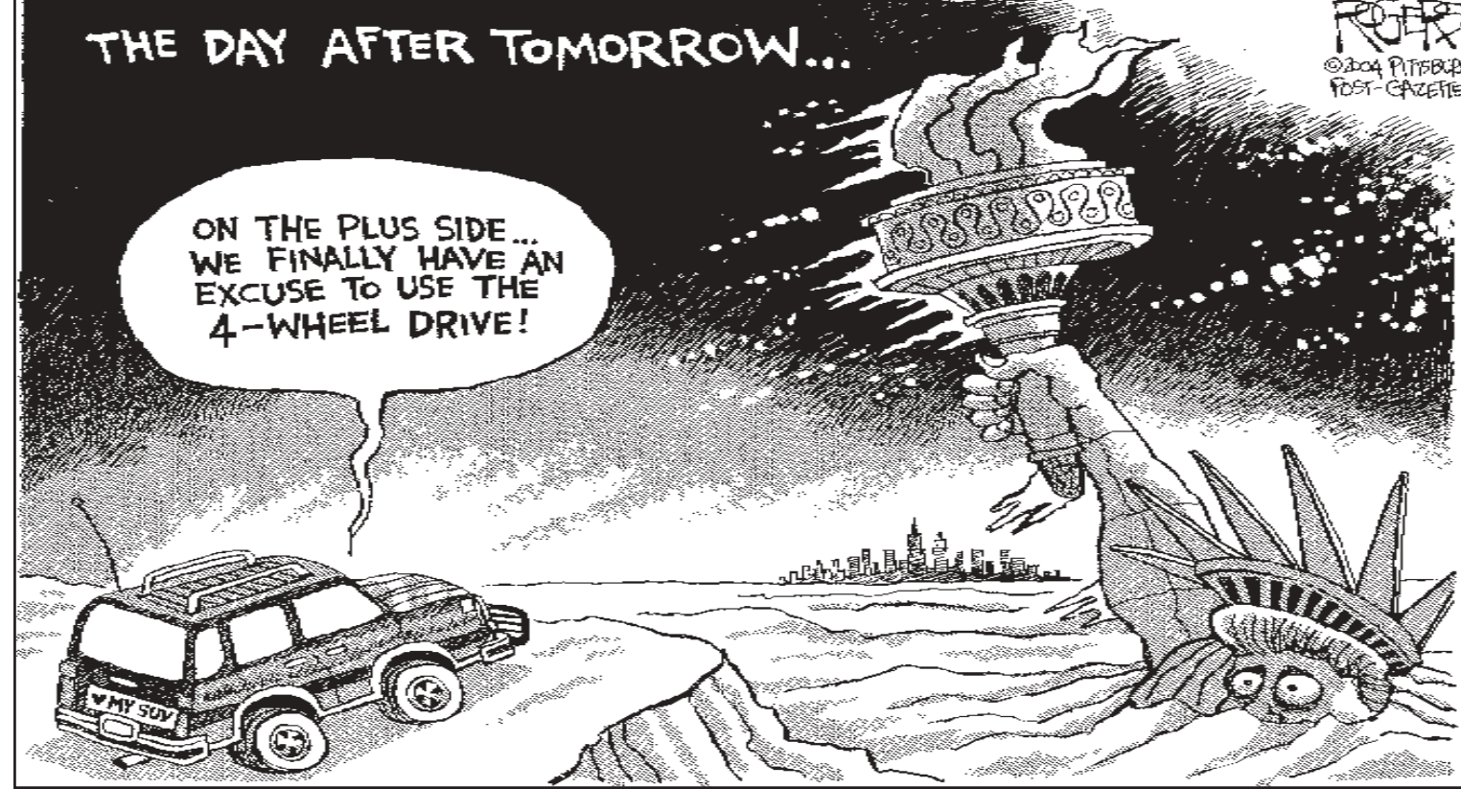
I know some think that they have to go and keep on schedule but if it was your life you would think twice. On Saturday May 29 I took shelter in a farm 10 miles north of Brewster for the duration of the dirt storm strictly because of the fear of this storm and the dirt I could see coming at a very rapid speed. I just a few weeks earlier was in a similar situation in the same area where when I entered the dirt blowing across the highway which was bigger than expected. I could not see more than 5 ft., I slowed down and still could not see, then slowly went unknowingly into the left and then right ditch unable to see and too scared to stop.

I now am thankful that I was not another statistic of death on Kansas roadways. Please respond back and I am forwarding this on to legislative members for clarification and hopefully we can change a system that is outdated because of technology in tracking weather. You can't change the past but we can protect others from this type of negligence. We do not need any more uncalled for deaths.

Respectfully submitted,

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(Letter #44)

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail td@nwkansas.com.



## A few words about Sen. Clark

**NICE GUY.** That best describes Sen. Stan Clark, who, at age 49, lost his life in a vehicle accident on Interstate-70 last Saturday evening, just a few miles from home — home being Oakley.

Nice guy.  
Decent.  
Religious.  
Even-tempered.  
Knowledgeable.  
Husband.  
Father.  
Photographer.  
Politician.  
He pretty much had it all.

Ten years in the Senate Chamber at Topeka. Knew the ropes. Used them to the benefit of the people he so loved and represented so well.

Republican, by choice.  
Democrats. Independents. His 40th Senatorial District contained them all.

And when the leadership of his party might not have embraced some of his decisions, our good senator reminded them that he was doing what was best for his people. He was, in the true sense of the word, a "people's" senator.

Not flashy. No time for that.  
Down to earth.  
Dedicated, as some might say, to a fault. But it was a fault Stan could temper with his way of life.

The esteem in which he was held was evident at his funeral service Thursday morning at Oakley High School, resulting in probably one of the largest funerals, if not the largest ever, in northwest Kansas.

Dignitaries in attendance included the Governor of this great state, Kathleen Sebelius. Leadership on both sides of the political aisle. His fellow senators. A large House delegation.

And then there were the people — the sole reason he picked up his conservative baggage, hit the campaign trail and earned a seat in the Kansas State Senate, with repeat successes.

Stan Clark, according to those who keep a watchful eye on political activity, saw him as



**Tom Dreiling**

• My Turn

perhaps President of the Senate in 2005. A dust storm on that fateful Saturday evening of a week past ended that possibility, a very real possibility.

Stan the man had a good handle on the issues that affected his northwest Kansas constituency. He wanted badly to do the right thing for the folks back home — home being a district that has more acreage than any other in the state.

And he traveled untold miles all those years to listen to the concerns of his people. To offer encouragement. Hope.

And yes, as with all politicians, there were those who were not in his camp. Even some from his own party. But that goes with holding political office. But in the end, those elected to represent the people can best be measured by the number of people who come to bid that final farewell. And using that as the yardstick of one's success, Sen. Stan Clark was at the head of the class.

The tears flowed Thursday morning. Sympathy was extended in many ways. Comfort was given to those who needed it most.

And there they were — wife Ruthie, and son Will. Doing it in the best tradition of their beloved husband and father. With dignity. Grace. And courage.

The 40th Senatorial District has lost a very capable leader.

The State of Kansas has lost one of its quieter, but influential stars on the political stage.

But we are all richer, from one end of this state to the other, because of the service given by a nice guy — Sen. Stan Clark.

**WHEN** former President Bill Clinton spoke on the campus of Kansas University a week ago, the crowd was estimated at 12,000. And I would suspect that among those 12,000 were a few Republicans. Matter of fact, lots of them. I think Republicans outnumber Democrats in our state something like 1,000-1. And because the popularity of President Clinton took it in the knees during the Monica thing, many in this state despised him. But when it was revealed that former Senator Bob Dole invited Clinton to be the first speaker in the Dole Lecture Series, the tickets were grabbed up like cash falling to the floor in a Las Vegas casino.

That speech can be seen next Wednesday (June 9) on Smoky Hills Public Television from 9-10 p.m. The program will include Clinton's formal remarks, the introduction by Dole, who challenged Clinton for the presidency, and selected excerpts of post-speech questions and answers. The lecture was originally scheduled at the Lied Center near the newly-dedicated Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics on the K.U. campus, but was moved to Allen Fieldhouse to accommodate student interest. The Dole Lecture was established to bring a nationally prominent guest to the K.U. campus to speak on international policy or diplomacy each spring, on or about the date the former senator was wounded in Italy in World War II.

You will want to note the date, time and station on your calendar and be sure to watch. I didn't get a ticket, but some of my Republican friends did and told me what a great time it was. I'll be watching, but unlike those who were on hand, I'll be doing so with a bowl of popcorn and a diet Coke.

**HAVE** a good evening and a good weekend. And don't forget church.

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Tom Dreiling is publisher of the Free Press. His column appears Wednesdays and Fridays. td@nwkansas.com, 462-3963, fax 462-7749, or drop by the office.

## This one's for you, ladies

**T D**

• At Week's End

The column today deals with tips for surviving in this unpredictable and sometimes brutal society. It was written with the ladies in our reading area in mind. You might be faced some day with a situation that you will be able to handle because of it. I thank Grace for sharing. - TD

We've all heard about "street smart," maybe we need to also be "parking lot smart." You are smart enough to know these pointers but there will be some where you will go, "Hmm, I must remember that."

1. Tip from Tae Kwon Do: The elbow is the strongest point on your body. If you are close enough to use it, do!

2. This was learned from a tourist guide in New Orleans. If a robber asks for your wallet and/or purse, **do not hand it to him.** Toss it away from you....chances are that he is more interested in your wallet and/or purse than you, and he will go for the wallet/purse. **Run like mad in the other direction!**

3. If you are ever thrown into the trunk of a car, kick out the back tail lights and stick your arm out the hole and start waving like crazy. The driver won't see you, but everybody else will. This has saved lives.

4. Women have a tendency to get into their cars after shopping, eating, working, etc., and just sit (doing their checkbook, or making a list, etc.) **Don't do this!** The predator will be watching you, and this is the perfect opportunity for him to get in on the passenger side, put a gun to your head, and tell you where to go. **As soon as you get into your car, lock the doors and leave. Quickly!**

5. A few notes about getting into your car in a

parking lot, or parking garage: A.) Be aware: look around you, look into your car, at the passenger side floor, and in the back seat. B.) If you are parked next to a big van, enter your car from the passenger door. Most serial killers attack their victims by pulling them into their vans while the women are attempting to get into their cars. C.) Look at the car parked on the driver's side of your vehicle, and the passenger side. If a male is sitting alone in the seat nearest your car, you may want to walk back into the mall, or work, and get a guard/policeman to walk you back out. **It is always better to be safe than sorry.** (And better paranoid than dead.)

6. **Always** take the elevator instead of the stairs. (Stairwells are horrible places to be alone and the perfect crime spot.)

7. If the predator has a gun and you are not under his control, **always run!** The predator will only hit you (a running target) 4 in 100 times; and even then, it most likely **will not** be a vital organ. **Run!**

8. As women, you are always trying to be sympathetic: **Stop doing that!** It may get you raped, or killed. Ted Bundy, the serial killer, was a good-looking, well educated man, who **always** played on the sympathies of unsuspecting

women. He walked with a cane, or a limp, and often asked "for help" into his vehicle or with his vehicle, which is when he abducted his next victim.

9. Another safety point: Someone said that her friend heard a crying baby on her porch, and she called the police because it was late and she thought it was weird. The police told her "Whatever you do, **do not** open the door." The lady then said that it sounded like the baby had crawled near a window, and she was worried that it would crawl to the street and get run over. The policeman said, "We already have a unit on the way, whatever you do, **do not** open the door." He told her that they think a serial killer has a baby's cry recorded and uses it to coax women out of their homes thinking that someone dropped off a baby. He said they have not verified it, but have had several calls by women saying that they hear baby's cries outside their doors when they're home alone at night.

Please **do not** open the door for a crying baby. This should be taken seriously because the crying baby theory was mentioned on "America's Most Wanted" recently when they profiled a serial killer in Louisiana.

Clip this column out and forward it to all the women you know. It may save a life. A candle is not dimmed by lighting another candle. And guys, if you love your mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, etc., you may want to pass it onto them, as well.

Excellent advice!

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Got something for "At Week's End"? E-mail it to td@nwkansas.com, fax it to him at 462-7749, or mail it to him at 155 W. 5th, Colby, Kan.

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