

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

The best and worst

By Steve Six

Kansas Attorney General

During the past two years, Kansas has suffered loss of life and major destruction due to Mother Nature. Last year, Greensburg was devastated by a tornado and later the Southeast region of our state was damaged by severe flooding.

This year, Kansas has been hit with severe storms and dangerous tornados repeatedly. Manhattan was pummeled by softball sized hail two weeks ago and just last week hit by a tornado. Chapman was nearly destroyed by another tornado, while other small towns and rural areas faced damage as well.

These tragic events bring out the best of Kansans' spirit. Regular people risk their lives to help strangers. Neighbors work together to clean up the devastation. And Kansas towns—against all odds—rebuild.

Unfortunately, these devastating events also bring out the worst in some people. I encourage Kansans to be wary as they begin the clean-up and rebuilding process following the recent severe weather.

The storms and destruction create an opportunity for con artists and scams. My office has visited Chapman and Manhattan and provided information about potential scams to storm survivors. We will be watching the situation very carefully during the rebuilding process. My office will do everything we can to protect consumers and prevent scams, like price gouging.

I encourage all Kansans to be careful when hiring help to assist with the clean-up and rebuilding process. If you believe a business is acting improperly or you have questions about possible scams, please contact my Consumer Protection Division at (800) 432-2310.

Once again, Kansans will roll up their sleeves and rebuild their communities. As we work together to recover from these storms, my office stands ready to prevent criminals from further harming our already damaged communities.

About those letters . . .

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The mind is a mystery



John Van Nostrand

• Line in the Dust

I can remember falling asleep while Tom Hanks' "Turner and Hooch" was on a hospital television during a lengthy doctor's appointment for my then-pregnant wife.

I can remember the Rockies played the Padres the night before my wedding.

I can remember Halloween my freshman year in high school. The overcast sky looked like steel - all day. My beloved Hawkeyes beat Indiana, in a game they weren't supposed to win. That night, my best friend and I escaped egg-throwing hooligans by anxiously knocking on the nearby front door of a girl's house who I had a massive crush on. (She and her parents were home. They didn't mind. I didn't either.)

I may retell all those stories again one day, and not fully understand that I'm doing it. Or why.

Earlier this month a person who lives on the same street as I do was taken to a health-care facility near Wichita. (Out of respect for the family, I'll leave the name out.) She was found outside her home. She was confused. It was unknown how long she had been outside, but based on her condition when discovered, the estimate was several hours and partially during the night. We were not home at the time she was found.

Because of her condition, her family members decided she needed regular care, rather than to live at home on her own.

This person was a regular at our house. If wife Jennifer was out watering the flowers or the kids were pedaling their bikes along the driveway, she'd notice and come over to chat. She usually brought candy or cookies for the kids. The conversation was usual, neighbor talk, but sometimes she'd mentioned something from her past. She told the story about

how she got to dance with Lawrence Welk decades ago when he was in McCook, Neb.

I had no reason to question the story. Welk was the kind of guy who would reach out, literally, to his fans. But as the visits with the neighbor went by, so did the number of times she told the Welk story, or other ones. I'm no doctor, but wondered how people can tell if others are experiencing some form or severity of dementia.

I've seen dementia before. My wife's Jennifer's grandmother had it leading up to her death. I saw my 90-year-old great-grandmother in her home days after I got married. Months later, her life came to an end in a nursing home with dementia.

Last summer, my grandfather had symptoms. He told others in his hospital room stories thinking he and the country were still in World War II. He was proud of serving his country and loved to talk about it before his health declined.

I never had enough conviction or courage to tell relatives of my neighbor of my concern. I didn't think I had to, really. Her son was a daily visitor to her house. I just assumed he had everything taken care of and would know his mother's condition.

She kept visiting and she kept re-telling stories.

I kept wondering.

I've read where some relatives of those suffering from severe dementia say the ailment can be worse than death. The person, either a spouse, relative or longtime friend, slowly doesn't know the other people in the room or the relationships and history they have with those people. But they still need to eat three meals, put on their shoes and watch the sunsets.

Former First Lady Nancy Reagan did all she could to make husband Ronald, who also suffered with the ailment, comfortable in their home. Nancy continued to be a wife.

After longtime rough-and-tough actor Charlton Heston was diagnosed with the onset of dementia, his public appearances diminished before his death in April.

I can understand the unsettling feeling of living with someone with dementia. There are plenty of unknowns. Will the next day be worse or better? What more do I have to reschedule or give up to provide care for the loved one. What happens if they find a way to get out of the house and get lost, or worse.

It's not uncommon for people with dementia to recall years gone by — they are still afloat in the South Pacific near Guadalcanal or getting ready for a child's wedding that happened some 40 years ago. I wonder if dementia is like having dreams when people are awake. Fascinating how our memory and creative portions of our brains combine?

The mind is mysterious to us all, and always will be. My great-grandmother was not all about the past in her final days, though.

"I'm going to see Jesus," she told the nurses.

I wasn't going to question that.
— John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.

Chapman reminiscent of Greensburg

By Rep. Jerry Moran

This week I delivered a speech in the House of Representatives in recognition of the 75th anniversary of the Robert J. Dole Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center. On Wednesday the House passed legislation that authorizes up to \$14.9 billion for Amtrak and high speed rail investment.

The legislation would provide capital and operating grants to Amtrak lines throughout the nation and would allow the construction of high-speed rail between heavily populated corridors across the country. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Severe Storms Hit Kansas
Kansans have already experienced several severe storms this year that have brought wind, hail, tornadoes and flooding. Last week, another storm system developed tornadoes that hit the communities of Chapman and Manhattan and other parts of the region on Wednesday night.

After learning of the storm early Thursday morning, I flew back to Kansas and was able to visit Chapman early that afternoon. On the way, I visited by phone with the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) David Paulison as well as Thomas Hall, federal coordinating officer for FEMA in Kansas, about the need for assistance from the

federal government.

I was in Chapman throughout the afternoon on Thursday and again on Friday morning to meet with local emergency and government officials and the many residents whose homes were damaged or destroyed. On Thursday, I visited with Adjutant General Tod Bunting and State Senator Jay Emler.

I also spent time with local officials including Mayor Bob Gaetz, County Commissioner Joe Nold and Dickinson County Emergency Management Director Brad Homman, who did a tremendous job coordinating search and rescue and the subsequent clean up process. All are working hard under difficult circumstances.

I also spoke to USDA Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks about temporary housing for the victims of the storms and what was available. I visited Manhattan late on Thursday for a tour of the damage with City Manager Ron Fehr and Kansas State University President Jon Wefald. Senators Sam Brownback and Pat Roberts and Congresswoman Nancy Boyda were also along for the tour.

In Chapman, damage included more than 80 percent of residences and destruction of churches and schools. In Manhattan, homes and businesses were devastated in the southwest part of the city. Two fatalities and numer-

ous critical and minor injuries have been reported from the severe weather that swept the region.

I have asked President Bush to approve any request for federal assistance that is made by the State of Kansas. Federal assistance can help with cleanup and recovery efforts for public facilities and infrastructure. It can also include assistance from federal programs including housing and small business.

The destruction from the storms very much reminds me of Greensburg. We are fortunate that entire towns were not destroyed. The loss of life is a tragedy. Neighbors and friends are already coming together to begin the clean-up and rebuilding process. Thanks to the Red Cross and Salvation Army for its support to the communities.

According to the Adjutant General's office, the City of Chapman is in need of tents, ropes, gloves and trash bags to assist in clean-up efforts. At this time, clothing is not being accepted. Donations can be taken to the checkpoint on the north side of town.

I also visited Kanopolis on Friday to view storm damage caused by strong winds, torrential rain and up to 3.5 inch hail. Trees, homes and businesses were battered. Thank you to mayor Sheri Sauers for providing a tour of the community.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

