

Free Press Viewpoint

Flying accidents rare but spectacular

The crash of Air France flight 447 on a transatlantic flight from Brazil carrying 228 people remains unknown, and in truth, may always be a mystery.

While airline crashes are rare, especially involving U.S. and European airlines, they do happen. And when they do, they almost always are spectacular.

That leads many people to fear flying, though modern airline travel is among the safest forms of transportation. Still, investigators, airline experts and manufacturers want to know what happened anytime something goes wrong. There's blame to assess, sure, but everyone wants to be sure that whatever happened does not happen again.

Finding out what happened to the Air France flight will be difficult, though, since the flight recorders are thought to lie 20,000 to 26,000 feet under the surface of the Atlantic, in an inhospitable region where big storms constantly sweep the sea.

French and Brazilian navy personnel are looking for wreckage and bodies, and finding enough of both to eventually offer some answers. While speculation has focused on bad weather and perhaps faulty instruments, which might have set the Airbus A330 on the wrong course or speed, no one has ruled out any cause, from human error to foul play.

The U.S. Navy is sending high-tech acoustic seekers designed to find the flight recorders, known as "black boxes" though they usually are painted bright orange. With modern technology, who knows? They might just be able to bring them up.

Even the floating debris might offer some answers, especially if there had been an explosion or another catastrophic event in midair. Experts say the bodies may have a story to tell as well.

Everyone will want to know the answer. It may take months, even years to get one. We may never know the whole truth.

Weather, equipment failure, human error?

It's something to think about next time you fly, but not for long.

After you clear security and stow your carry-on, the worst part of any airline trip likely is over. The truth is a lot less interesting than speculation on what happened out there over the ocean.

For by the time any of us starts out on a commercial airline trip, the most dangerous part of the journey is past.

It's the drive to the airport that is most likely to kill or injure us, not the flight. Yet, probably because most of us get behind the wheel each day and think little of it, few people fear driving.

Fly again? Sure. The airline industry and the airplane builders will do everything they can to make you safe.

Just be careful on the freeway.

— Steve Haynes

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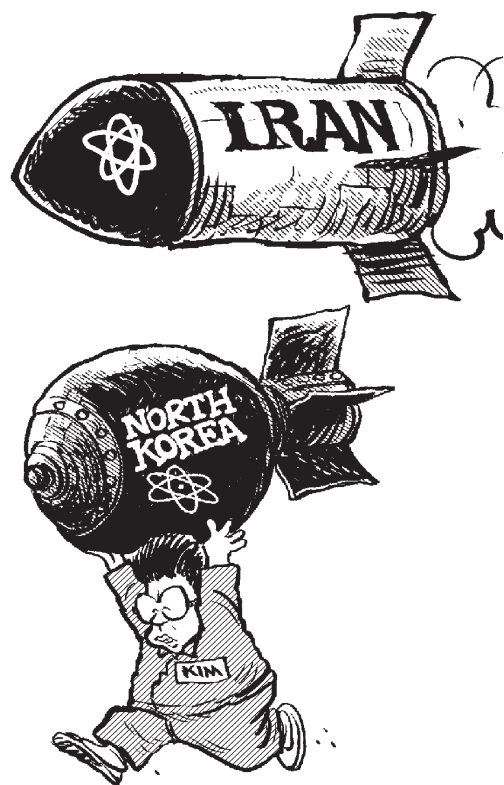
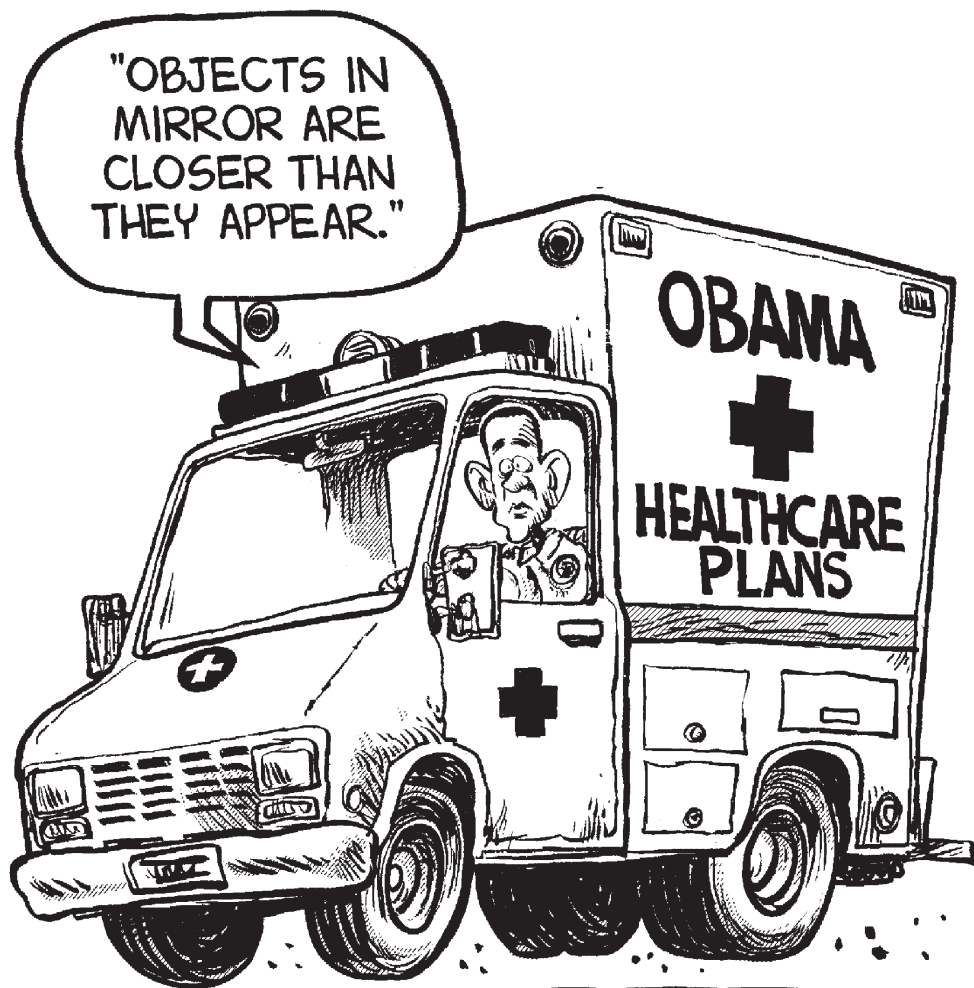
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First big harvest of the year came early

Lock your cars and hide the key to your front door — the lettuce is here.

Here, I know, that's supposed to be reserved for zucchini season, but this year I've got the lettuce crop that ate Chicago.

I long ago discovered that you can plant lettuce and spinach in the spring. When the greens are at their prime, you plant tomato and green peppers between the rows. By the time the tomatoes and green peppers have gotten big enough to start producing, it's gotten too hot for the lettuce and spinach.

That's worked well for us for many year.

Last year, I decided to try for a second crop of greens. I planted lettuce and spinach in a scatter pattern as soon as I had removed the first block of sweet corn. I over-seeded and it came up beautifully.

I decided that worked so well that this year, instead of rows, I'd use a scatter pattern in the spring and then pull out any greens that got in the way of the tomatoes and green peppers.

That worked pretty well, and I got all my little plants in and everyone was getting along fine.



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

But, it's been cool. The lettuce just keeps growing, and I can't seem to eat it or give it away fast enough to keep it from shading out the new plants.

The spinach wasn't a problem. It got hit by a warm spell and started to flower before we had the four-inches of rain a couple of weeks ago. Once spinach flowers, in reabsorbs its leaves, and if you don't pick it really quickly, you end up with a tall, skinny, leafless flower. It doesn't even have a very good smell.

So, the spinach got picked, cleaned and eaten fairly early this year.

But the lettuce, it just keeps growing.

Every morning, I've been going out to the garden and pulling up plants by their roots.

I stuff them into plastic grocery bags and drag them to the office, the drug store, the hardware, your doorstep.

I'm sorry about that, but I'm desperate here. I supposed I could just throw it away, but I'm a child of a child of the Great Depression, and I was taught to clean my plate and use everything. I just can't toss food out.

My frig is full of lettuce and my sink is full of lettuce, my garden is still producing and my friends and neighbors are locking their doors and avoiding me.

And there are 13 zucchini plants and a dozen yellow squash plants ready to take off as soon as I get rid of the lettuce.

I could really use an intervention — or someone to leave their doors unlocked.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Mixed results mark end of session

This is my final report on the 2009 legislative session. For the first time in my years in Topeka, I will not attend Sine Die, the final day of the session.

I have committed instead to attend the 2009 Field Conference dealing with climate, energy and water consumption issues in southwest Kansas. This is an opportunity to learn about issues facing our neighbors to the south.

I was pleased to have Gov. Mark Parkinson work with the Legislature on a bipartisan Comprehensive Energy Plan, Senate Substitute for HB-2369. It allows one 897-megawatt power plant to be built by Midwest Energy near Holcomb, plus 179 megawatts of wind power development and new transmission lines. In return, Midwest will decommission two gas-fired power plants in Garden City, to name just a few of the options of this bill.

I'm pleased with the agreement and believe it should be a positive for our western Kansas economy.

An expected ending balance of \$17,500 on a \$13 billion State budget is not good policy in my opinion. The governor will no doubt have to make additional cuts to keep the budget afloat. I believe that we should have made more cuts before adjourning this session.

I am really concerned about the amount of private sector jobs being lost and additional pressure on businesses as a result of the economy. The only positive result during the last two years has been growth of government jobs.

I am pretty sure that next year's session will set a record for fixing great mistakes made these past few years. In a nutshell, the biggest issues we will face next year will be continuing to rework the transportation plan, the budget for public schools, and careful consideration for health care, including care for the disabled and the elderly.

I have served in Topeka for nine years now, and am convinced that in order to achieve pro-life reform on abortion, one thing that will have to happen is to elect a pro-life governor. Senate Bill 218 strengthens late-term abortion reporting requirements and Kansas law on partial-birth abortion. Pro-life legislators have only asked that we bring Kansas law into alignment



Ralph Ostmeyer

• State Senator

with federal laws when abortions perceived to be illegal continue to be performed.

Any advances made with a "pro-life" outcome are faced with powerful lobbying from Planned Parenthood. There are four Planned Parenthood clinics in Kansas, with only one of them performing abortions. They claim over \$1 billion in assets. I am convinced that their money is more about lobbying than protecting women as they claim. At a time when more people are pro-life than not, I am disappointed that we cannot pass laws in Kansas that will protect the unborn and women.

One accomplishment that affects our area: SB 178 Amusement Rides, exempts home-owned carnivals from inspections and operator training required by the Kansas Department of Labor. The bill defines home-owned amusement companies as operated by a nonprofit entity in a single county and run by volunteers for 12 days or less per year.

This was a major policy change to protect northwest Kansas home-owned carnivals. Many people helped pass this bill, and I can't thank Brad Schick from Goodland enough for getting them organized. We had to get the Department of Labor to release small hometown carnivals from restrictive regulations.

I am always 100 percent in support of safety when we are talking about our kids and grandkids enjoying these carnival rides, but common sense must be taken into consideration when over-the-top regulation could have shut these carnivals down.

Another bill tied to our area: county treasurers can take orders for the "In God We Trust" license plates after July 1. Those tags will begin production as soon as 1,000 prepaid request at \$40 each are filed. This concession was required, due to budget issues, to get this

bill passed. However, with over 2,000 people who have asked to be notified of this purchase date, we do not expect a long delay. We acknowledge and extend heartfelt appreciation to Francis and Geri Landry of Colby for all their time and hard work.

Again I was blessed with an excellent intern from my district, Jessica Bremer from Oberlin. The daughter of John and Dianne Bremer, she is a student at Washburn University.

One of the most enjoyable things about serving in Topeka is watching young adults mature and learn the skills that will carry them into their future. Jessica was very helpful and I appreciate all she did for me.

I was also privileged to have Gunnar Hays from Almena-Northern Valley High School serve as my shadow for a day. Gunnar's quiet observance of our activities hopefully gave him an idea of how our Legislature works. I enjoyed his company.

I always enjoy the kids who volunteer to serve as my legislative page for a day. I would like to commend them for taking time out of their busy schedules to spend a day working alongside me in Topeka. I also want to thank their parents and teachers for allowing them this opportunity.

Pages for 2009: Dayelle and Benjamin Waugh, Goodland; Jacob Brull, Plainville; Justice Wiley, Mariah Beikman, St. Francis; Trista Jenner, Hope Klitzke, Ransom; Kate Hagans, Utica; Brooke Ostmeyer, Paige Ramey, Emily Vollbracht, Grinnell; Dustyna Sprigg, Melinda Becker, Norton; Quenton and Tabor Rucker, Hoxie; and James and Allie Henn, Dresden.

This was one of the toughest sessions in my years in Topeka. Many cuts had to be made, and the effects of that will force us to look closely at programs next year. Our handicapped and elderly population will likely be one of the first priorities as we set goals next year.

I appreciate all your contacts this past year. It has been a tough year for all Kansans, and we can only hope that next year will be better as we continue to strengthen our economy.

Any questions or concerns will reach me at Box 97, Grinnell, Kan., 67738, or e-mail rostmey@ink.org.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

