



## Other Viewpoints

# Volatile weather likely to increase

Drought has long been a problem in southwest Kansas. Unfortunately, the painful fallout of that unwelcome situation and other weather extremes promise to exact an even greater toll until the nation gets serious about global warming. That's the take of a group of Iowa scientists who believe increasing instability in weather patterns will lead to more extremes during wet and dry years. The Iowa Climate Statement, signed by 138 scientists and researchers from 27 Iowa colleges and universities, was released in the wake of the costly 2012 drought that destroyed crops all across the nation's Grain Belt, from South Dakota to Indiana. The study becomes all the more noteworthy considering Iowa's experience with weather extremes. The top U.S. grain-growing state also recently endured devastating flooding, with an estimated \$10 billion in damage in 2008 – the worst disaster in the state's history.

Many factors contribute to weather conditions, as researchers involved in the study noted. They added, however, that scientists who study global warming have correctly predicted increasingly volatile weather patterns, and view the harsh drought and other recent severe weather developments as a sign of things to come.

In the Iowa Climate Statement, scientists called for greater consideration of changes that could be made to reduce the economic impact of extreme weather trends. Not surprisingly, they recommended ways to combat global warming – namely steering toward more renewable energy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Still, some experts dismiss the link between weather volatility and a warming climate. Critics also argue that doing more to address global warming in the United States would accomplish little as such countries as China and India continue to emit increasing amounts of pollutants that contribute to global warming, with little interest in change.

But that's no reason for the United States to shortchange efforts to reverse the trend.

While the recent study out of America's heartland offered important food for thought, weather volatility and its impact on economies and natural resources alone should be more than enough to further conversation among policymakers on strategies to minimize the wrath of the worst Mother Nature has to offer.

– The Garden City Telegram, via the Associated Press

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Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72.



# Don't miss what you overlook

Have you ever noticed what you fail to notice? Yes, that's a contradiction in terms, but you know what I mean.

The other day, I noticed a number of things that usually get overlooked as I'm hurrying around town. Maybe the angle of the sunlight made them more visible. Maybe the temperature – cool but pleasant at 38° – made me more aware.

At any rate, a short catalog includes a house roof with a flower pattern in the shingles, a series of houses with multiple gables all close together (made me think of Nathaniel Hawthorne and "The House of the Seven Gables") and the flat roof and round window tops of the Presbyterian Church.

Architectural ornaments are something I learned to take note of when I had an office in the upper story of a hundred-year-old bank building, complete with 15-foot ceilings. It's fascinating to see the attention to detail in fancy brickwork, even including the name of the business or organization. Colby and the surrounding towns have a lot of these buildings, just waiting to be spotted on a sunny day.



## Marian Ballard

### • Collection Connections

Then came the "Duck Crossing" sign at Puddle Duck Preschool and the brick paving as I approached downtown.

Brick paving always gives me a charge, though I don't know why. It's slick when icy and bumpy when it's not. But somehow it appeals to the kid in me that someone would lay bricks for a street, just like they do for a wall.

Speaking of brick walls, a friend with a background in building gave me quite an in-depth analysis of brick walls once when we were having lunch in a restaurant where we could look out and see a free-standing brick wall next to a driveway. I've never quite thought of bricks the same way since. Suffice it to say that if they are already horizontal, as the surface of

a street, they aren't at risk of falling over.

Paving bricks are not made the same as building bricks, either. They are solid, rather than hollow. When I was a kid, we had a stack of them in our backyard which got used for all sorts of things – from a walkway and fireplace to sandbox construction.

Anyway, those are a few of the things I noticed when I drove back from lunch last week.

I mentioned the sunlight earlier, and it's worth a second look. Winter sunlight has always seemed like a special gift to me. It shone in our big south-facing window and made a toasty spot from which to look out on the cold, sparkling snow. Then I could go out and play until I was cold, come in and warm up with hot cocoa, and color a picture in my big, new coloring book.

Snow, especially sparkling snow, seems far away just now. But the light is right, so it's a beautiful day.

Marian Ballard has collected careers as counselor, librarian, pastor, and now copy editor for the Colby Free Press. She collects ideas, which are more portable than other stuff.

# Pheasant hunt important to economy

On Nov. 17, I had the pleasure of attending the second Kansas Governor's Pheasant Hunt in Oakley. Oakley did an outstanding job of showcasing western Kansas hospitality and the excitement of pheasant hunting. The next two years, the event will be in Norton.

Pheasant hunting in Kansas is a \$4 million industry. Pheasant hunting is also a family tradition I have enjoyed all of my life. Drought conditions have hurt our pheasant population, and after opening weekend, I am afraid not many people will be traveling here to hunt. It is just one more way the Kansas economy has been hurt by our horrible weather conditions.

I was so concerned I contacted Robin Jennison, the head of Wildlife and Parks, and asked him if shortening the season and/or lowering the daily bag limit were being considered.



## Ward Cassidy

### • This week in Topeka

I received an informative letter in return, and the gist was that harvesting male pheasants has no impact on future populations: (1) female pheasants are the most important in terms of population growth and they cannot be legally harvested, (2) harvesting males has little potential to impact population change and (3) research shows it is impossible to harvest more than 75 percent of the rooster population.

The bottom line is we need wet weather for many reasons.

On a fun note, I got to hunt with the National Rifle Association lobbyist who gave me a D rating for voting against conceal carry in college dorms. I shot two pheasants out from under him at the governor's hunt, and he gave me a hat when we were done.

Today is the most important vote I will make in the next two years, for Speaker of the House. I'll let you know how that turns out.

Ward Cassidy of St. Francis, a retired school principal and teacher, is the state representative for the 120th District, covering Decatur, Cheyenne, Rawlins, Wallace and Sherman counties and the northwest part of Thomas, including Colby. Send e-mails to ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov.

# Remember pennies? Prices have changed

Until recently, I often stopped by the corner convenience store after work to treat my sweet tooth. From the time I was 4 years old and walked barefoot down to Vern Wagner's little general store, I've always enjoyed the wonderful taste of chocolate.

Today, I wind up plunking down nearly a buck and a half (\$1.50) for my favorite candy – either Reese's peanut butter cups or the mouth-watering chocolate sticks. While this treat is every bit as good as any "Denver Sandwich" or "Cherry Mash" I ate as a boy, today's bar appears to be about half the size I paid one nickel for 50 years ago.

Now that I think about it, \$1.50 is much easier to come by today than a nickel was when I was a youngster growing up in the northwestern Kansas farm community of Seguin. Back then, men worked 12- and 14-hour days on the farm for as little as \$1 an hour. Dad talked about men working for 50 cents a day during the Great Depression, when you could buy an acre of ground for about the same price you would pay for a pack of Juicy Fruit today.

For most people in this part of the country, times were rough in those days, and they were



## John Schlageck

### • Insights Kansas Farm Bureau

ready and willing to work for darn near any price, just to keep bread on the family table.

Fifty cents for a day's wages went a long way toward buying food before World War II, my dad once told me. Dad talked about bacon selling for 15 cents a pound, eggs were a dime a dozen, Ivory soap sold at five bars for a quarter, butter cost 20 cents a pound and a loaf of bread was two pennies.

Remember pennies? They're something some people toss away today because they won't buy anything. Some people still pick up these discarded relics, adhering to the old adage, "A penny saved, a penny earned."

Whether we want to admit it, or even realize it, food still remains a good buy. Today, the

average wage earner spends a much smaller percentage of his or her paycheck – approximately 10 percent – to buy food for the family. As a comparison, in 1933, this figure was more than 25 percent. Today the average family in the United States probably eats better than any time in this country's history.

Like food, clothing also cost little by today's standards. Seventy years ago, shoes sold for two bucks a pair, and you could buy a pretty nifty "go-in'-to-church-suit" for less than \$5.

Dad had a brother and brother-in-law who owned a car dealership in those days. I can remember them talking about a Model T with a sticker price of \$300 when their parents ushered in the Roaring '20s. A full tank of gas (10 gallons) sold for two dollars, a quart of oil cost three bits and air for the tires was free.

What I wouldn't give to fill my vehicle up for even \$25 a tank today.

It's fun remembering days of yesteryear and comparing them to today. While a lot has changed, my sweet tooth hasn't.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas.

## Mallard Fillmore

### • Bruce Tinsley

