

from our viewpoint...

## Tornado wakes up many communities

The Greensburg tornado may have been a wake-up call for many Kansas communities, prompting action on emergency plans that federal and state law, hurricanes, snowstorms and even "free" federal money haven't accomplished.

About time, huh?

Sherman County has a committee working on a updated plan, which is required by federal law. The planning group, which met this week, needs to get the document together, and then the county should plan and execute another disaster exercise.

How else will people know what they are supposed to do? You can read a plan, but only when you set out to do the tasks involved will most people learn how difficult they really are.

Most of us learn by making mistakes, and during an exercise, at least no one will die from them, designated casualties aside.

All groups involved in a potential disaster — city and county law enforcement and fire fighters, health care agencies, the hospital and clinic, the newspaper and radio station, city and county commissioners, public works crews, you name it — need to work together on a joint plan, tied together so when a tornado or other disaster does strike, everyone will be on the same page. Officials in outlying towns ought to be involved as well.

It's not likely a major event will strike solely within city limits. And in a real disaster, even Goodland will need the county's help. Smaller towns depend on the county for emergency services, so county officials will be involved if anything happens in one of them.

Many things must be planned: who's in charge, where coordinators will work, who does what, where do you call for help. Everyone from the police to the electric crew to the street department, plus firemen, cops and deputies, will need to know where to gather and what to do. Citizens need to know, too.

Planning needs to cover the obvious, such as how to handle the injured and how to secure the area, to the not-so-obvious. Someone will have to issue curfew and damaged-area passes, checking credentials and identification.

Outside rescuers, state and national reporters, television crews, helpers and volunteers all would need some kind of pass. People who live in the damage zone will need passes to get back to their property. One Kansas city used blank printed utility bills, difficult to forge quickly and unique, to make up passes.

Most importantly, everyone will need to know who is in charge. In an emergency, there'll be no time to decide if the sheriff or police chief gives the orders to law enforcement, or whether county commissioners or the mayor take overall command.

All of that mitigates for a unified county plan agreed to by everyone. Then comes the really hard part:

The plan needs to be publicized and distributed to everyone who has a stake in it, and that is pretty much all of us. Federal law not only requires states and counties to have emergency plans, it requires them to be open for public inspection, and with good reason.

If a plan requires evacuation or blocking off a damaged area, or any one of a million other things, we all need to know. The whole county deserves to know how the plan reads, how it will work and how it proves out in an exercise, because it's our lives, our property and our towns that will be at stake.

A good base has been created by the city and the county, but more needs to be done, because tornado season is upon us.

— Steve Haynes



## We take time out to enjoy baseball

Take me out to the ball game.

Take me out with the crowd.

Buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jack.

I don't care if I never go back.

Steve and I just got back from most of two weeks in Georgia, and that included three baseball games.

We watched the Atlanta Braves beat up on the Los Angeles Dodgers on a Friday night and Sunday afternoon, and the Augusta Greenjackets get their tails kicked by the visiting Columbus (Ga.) Catfish on Wednesday.

Over the past couple of years, we've made it a point when we travel to major-league cities to see if their baseball team is in town. If they are, we try to go to a game.

So we've watched the Brewers beat the Braves in Milwaukee, the Nationals overcome the New York Mets in Washington and the Rockies get trounced in Denver by just about everyone. (Hey, our American League team is the Royals, and they were 12-25 after Sunday's game.)

Going to the Braves games was great fun. We got to watch good baseball with friends from Texas on Friday, and we enjoyed another round with our daughters and their guys on Sunday. We had planned to go on Saturday with the



**cynthia haynes**

• open season

children but couldn't get tickets since it was Cinco de Mayo. Since the visitors whupped the home team, 4-0, on Saturday, that turned out to be a good deal.

We never did like the Dodgers.

We ended up at the Georgia Aquarium on Saturday and enjoyed a fishy good time despite the fact that everyone else in Atlanta — at least those who weren't at the baseball game — decided to visit the aquarium and bring their 1.4 children each.

After Atlanta, where we got to yell for the home team and do the "Tomahawk Chop" whenever there was a player in scoring position, we moved on to Augusta, two hours and a couple of million people to the east.

Wednesday, May 9, was oldest daughter's 33rd birthday and her sister had planned for us and a few friends to go out to the ballpark for the Greenjackets game.

The idea got picked up by a co-worker and snowballed to more than 30 people, so the crew

rented a party area where for \$18 a ticket you got to watch the game from right behind the bullpen; eat a buffet of hamburgers, hot dogs, cole slaw, potato salad, watermelon and pop; and wear a nifty free team cap. We got a visit from Auggie, the Greenjackets' mascot, who looks like a wasp who just won the Masters golf tournament.

We had a lot of fun chowing down and talking and didn't spend much time watching the game. And, since the Catfish swarmed all over the Greenjackets, 4-0, that was just as well.

We did get several foul balls tossed to us from the bullpen. Miscellaneous little boys got most of them, but both daughters and Steve took home official South Atlantic League baseballs.

I love the names of these minor league, class A teams. Besides the Greenjackets and Catfish, they include the Asheville (N.C.) Tourists; Charleston (S.C.) RiverDogs; Salisbury (Md.) Delmarva Shorebirds; Greensboro (N.C.) Grasshoppers; Hickory (N.C.) Crawdads; Kannapolis (N.C.) Intimidators; Lakewood (N.J.) BlueClaws; and, best for last, the Savannah (Ga.) Sand Gnats.

Our next baseball foray will be to Denver to watch the Rockies take on the Royals. Seeing the Greenjackets in action should have been good practice for that.

## Where are our storm shelters?

To the Editor:

Many people here in Goodland have told me they don't know where a safe storm shelter is located.

Officials at formerly designated places people have gone to say they know nothing about this problem. People have been turned away from public locations that in the past were

considered safe.

Would it be possible to give a location on the radio when they issue the weather reports? Could shelters have a prominent sign on the door? Are they handicapped accessible?

Elaine Cross Ellison  
Goodland



from our readers

• to the editor

## Needed — stereo console

It sat in my parents' dining room for 30 years or more: an old oak stereo console with large speakers concealed by green fabric. It filled my childhood with a harmony and clarity we could use lots more of about now.

Sundays after supper, the sweet smell of coffee and pot roast and pineapple upside-down cake still in the air, my father (the Big Guy) loved to play his favorite albums on it. He liked Barbra Streisand in those days. He loved Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass. And he'd go nuts when he played "The Stars and Stripes Forever!" by John Philip Sousa.

He'd turn the volume high and begin marching through our small house, lifting his legs and arms high and making exaggerated faces the way comedian Red Skelton did with his Clem Kadiddlehopper character. We'd jump from the table and follow behind him, marching and laughing until tears filled our eyes.



**tom purcell**

• commentary

That old console played nonstop during the Christmas season. Our stack of records usually began with the "Holiday Sing-Along with Mitch Miller" followed by "Christmas with the Chipmunks." Then came "Snoopy vs. the Red Baron" and Bing Crosby. As soon as Bing finished, we restacked the albums and played them again.

My mother used the stereo more than anyone. She loved to listen to it while working around the house. She loved to whistle, too, a habit she learned from her father (and one she passed along to me).

Hers was a high-pitched whistle — the sound of a happy robin singing on a sunny spring morning — and she could harmonize with most tunes. Sometimes she tuned in to an AM station that played Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin. Other times she'd play her Doris Day album. I still can hear her whistling to "Que Sera, Sera."

I've been thinking about the old stereo console lately. I've been longing for the sweet, simple music that it brought into our home — a simple harmony and clarity for which the world is in desperate need.

There is so much yapping and shouting on television and the radio. There is an obsession with Don Imus and Anna Nicole, and every yapper under the sun is beating both stories into the ground.

And while the experts weigh in on the idi-

otic statements uttered by Imus, few criticize the words and images on so many other channels that are 20 times more vulgar and demeaning; few are critical of so many real woes we face in a culture becoming more crass and cynical by the minute.

The shouting and hooting and hollering has gotten so loud, it's getting hard to hear anymore — it's getting hard for folks to distinguish between what is worthwhile on the tube and the radio and what is garbage. This must be the case. Why else would so many crude, silly and stupid programs litter the airwaves every night?

Some weeks — a week just like this one — I just want to escape it all. My family doesn't have the old stereo console anymore, but I did buy a new turntable recently. My mother's cousin gave me dozens of old albums she no longer listens to and I've been working my way through them.

The other night I listened to an old Sinatra album. It was wonderful to transport myself from our noisy world into one of clarity and harmony and simplicity. It was wonderful to travel back to the 1950s and 1960s.

Human nature and the world were messy then, too, but the noise level was much lower. There was no cable then — no channels to allow the yappers to yap. The average citizen was certainly a lot more civil than the average fellow is now.

Perhaps we'd all be better off if more folks started collecting old albums — if more folks tried re-creating the simple childhood memories of the old stereo consoles that once sat in their parents' dining room.

It's a start anyhow.  
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