

from our viewpoint...

# Storms, tornadoes show radar's value

Recent storms show the value of modern weather radar, the storm spotter network and the entire warning system which protects Kansas from tornadoes.

Loss of life has been minimal compared to the damage, and the populated areas struck, by some severe twisters. The loss of even one person is tragic, as the family of Crystal Bishop, a young woman with relatives here, would tell you.

But it's impossible to estimate the lives which might have been lost without the work of so many people who watch and track storms, and the technology which makes it all possible.

The 1942 storm which struck Oberlin, for instance, killed 15 people at farm homes though it did not touch the town. It struck at night, with little warning. There were no spotters, no radio station, no radar.

In contrast, the Greensburg tornado last year, actually a smaller storm, killed only 11 though it leveled the town. Spotters gave the town time to get to shelter, though not everyone made it.

Doppler weather radar allows forecasters to issue timely warnings today, where in 1948 radar was primitive and not used for weather observation. Newer radar sometimes can spot storms capable of dropping a tornado before spotters see one.

This year and last in Kansas, spotters gave towns warning before storms struck. That accounts for a lot of the lives saved, for in just a few minutes, most of us can scurry to safety.

Spotters, mostly volunteers, include fire fighters, weather enthusiasts, off-duty forecasters and even professional storm chasers with training to identify dangerous clouds. They are worth their weight in gold, and the more in the field, the better.

Law officers often join the spotters, and they, too, help spot storms before they strike.

The National Weather Service has put a lot of effort into growing the spotter corps, with beginner and advanced classes each year before the tornado season opens.

Nearly every town has a tornado siren these days, and local officials take this system seriously. Most have worked well when storms appear.

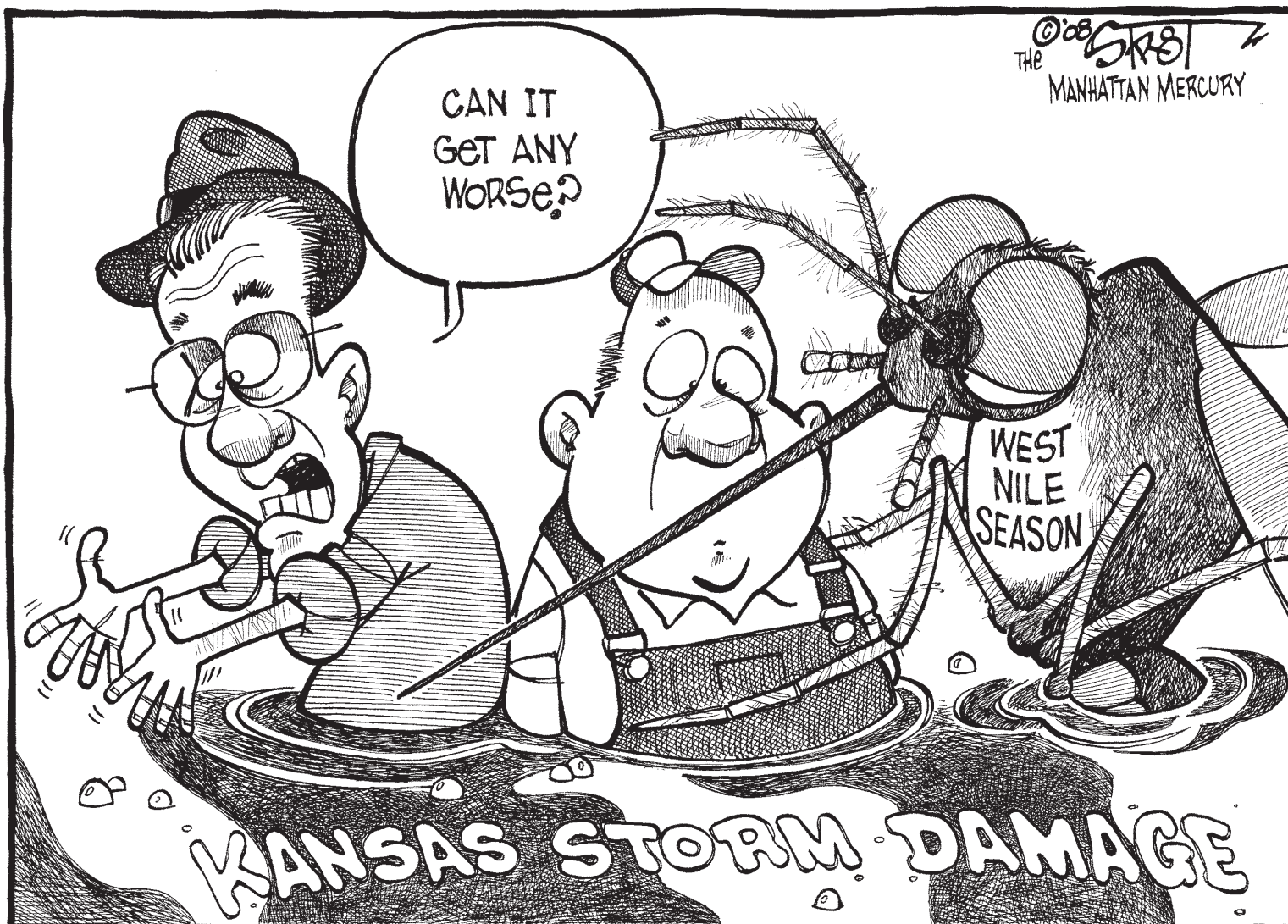
Sirens should be tested throughout the year, because tornadoes appear in Kansas as late as Thanksgiving and as early as February. They're not common in the winter, but we need to be ready to blow the sirens whenever a storm strikes. It costs little to test them, even at Christmas.

The take-cover should be reserved for killer winds, not hail. Dispatchers have to sound the alert often enough when no storm actually appears. It's not good to have people too used to the sirens, or they won't take them seriously.

The storm alert system, fallible as it is, is saving lots of lives. We can't know how many, but the figures suggest it's dozens every year, if not hundreds.

Here's a round of thanks to everyone — spotters, forecasters, firemen, police and sheriffs, storm chasers and citizens — who keep us safe when weather threatens.

Keep it up, guys. — Steve Haynes



# Enjoying the Land of Enchantment

The City Different in the Land of Enchantment — We've just spent most of a week visiting Santa Fe in sunny New Mexico.

In Santa Fe, where the zoning code requires traditional adobe-type construction, limits the height of new buildings to the height of the cathedral spires. Where, while you can hear almost any language, Spanish is as common as English and has been for nearly 400 years.

The heart of the city is the Square, or Plaza, a large city park is surrounded by commercial and government buildings. On the east, west and south are shops and restaurants. On the north is the Palace of the Governors, the oldest continuously occupied public building in the county, dating back to 1610.

In front of the palace, now a museum, sit the Indian craftsmen and women with their wares spread out on blankets. There are 50 to 60 spaces and every morning, tribal members have a lottery to decide who gets the valuable spots. They say about twice as many vendors show up as there are places. Vendors must be Native Americans from New Mexico and they or their immediate family must have



**cynthia haynes**

• open season

made all the items for sale.

Almost every weekend during the summer, there's some sort of festival or ceremony going on in the square. This week, we were attending meetings and visiting the sights around town and the surrounding areas.

While Steve was in a meeting, I took a bus tour of the city, past the grand cathedral built by Bishop Lamy in 1869; the Chapel of Loretto with its "miraculous" staircase built of wood without nails or center support; Canyon Road, where art galleries sell paintings and sculpture worth more than I've ever made in my life; and through neighborhoods built at the same time the Pilgrims were trying to make a go of it in Plymouth.

The next day, we took a bus tour out to Abiquiu to see where painter Georgia O'Keefe spent the last four decades of her life paint-

ing the desert mountains and landscapes. We visited Taos Pueblo, where the Corn Dance ceremony was just about to start and where some of the buildings are almost as old as the dirt they're made from. The thousand-year-old pueblo has no electricity or indoor plumbing — just gas lights and heat — but still about 100 people live there year around.

Back on the road, we stopped at the Santuario de Chimayo. The church, site of a state-wide pilgrimage at Easter, and the surrounding area are considered sacred by many Hispanic Catholics, and people gather up the dirt to take home with them. I resisted the temptation to take home anymore dirt but a friend — he's a Polish Catholic — gathered up a bagful.

On the bus back to Santa Fe, I figured that after stops at the pueblo chapel and Chimayo, the others on the trip have probably learned more about Catholicism in four days than most Protestants get in a lifetime.

Protestant, Catholic or Jew, we all came away with a little bit more feeling for the spirit of God and an appreciation for this vast, sun-baked land.

# Obama enjoys support of new generation

Younger Christian leaders are picking new causes; many are joining the Obama bandwagon as it crosses America, and their elders are not impressed.

"Who in the next generation will be willing to take the heat, when it's so much safer and more comfortable to avoid controversial subjects?" asked James Dobson of Focus on the Family at the National Religious Broadcasters conference.

With the evangelical leaders who fought against abortion — and for protection of the institution of marriage — now retiring and dying, a void is beginning to appear. Just like a little wooden boat floating downstream, many evangelical Christians are adrift in new swift currents of a "social gospel."

Respected researcher Berit Kjos aptly explains the changes: "God calls us to serve the poor and fills our hearts with love for the needy. That's why His true followers around the world have willingly given their lives to share His truth and love in perilous places. But today's world-centered church illustrates a different kind of service. Designed to please man rather than God, it trains its servers to hide the 'offensive' truths of the gospel."

"Like Rick Warren," Kjos says, "it uses the Bible to validate its purposes but emphasizes organizational behavior rather than Biblical beliefs — in short, deeds instead of creeds. Behind its noble appearance hides a post-modern version of the century-old 'Christian Socialism.'"

Evidence of this is the emphasis on problems in Africa/AIDS and the virtual abandoning of the more controversial right-to-life issues. A seismic shift is occurring, from battling the secular culture to seeking safe ground from difficult issues. These younger evangelical leaders crave "respectability" and they seek approval from wider society and secular media. They are heading for much safer territory where one is less likely to step on toes or cause offense for speaking the truth.

Liberal writer Tom Krattenmaker likes the change. Krattenmaker, a self-described "non-evangelical progressive religion writer from the People's Republic of Portland (OR)" was pleasantly surprised when visiting the evangelical sports ministry Athletes in Action. AIA is a division of Campus Crusade for Christ, founded by conservative Bill Bright, who died in 2003.

Krattenmaker wrote: "If a larger pattern can be drawn from my recent perception-changing journey to one of the great bastions of conser-



**floyd, mary brown**

• commentary

vative evangelicalism, the walls of division are not as formidable as culture warriors might like us to believe. They might even be shrinking."

Krattenmaker sees a trend "across the religious and political landscape" where more evangelicals are moving toward the center — or "common hope" as Barack Obama is given to calling it," he said. The "emerging church" is not being "bound by the old Christian right's playing style," he said. Plus, "more and more born-again believers are emphasizing their religious calling to care for the planet and the poor."

Judy Naegeli, 25, says her generation is worried about social justice. "Each generation chooses their cause, and ours is AIDS in Africa, or poverty or social justice," she said.

But 24-year-old Nathan Johnson thinks differently. "Once the primary is over, and we get into a head-to-head contest, Obama's voting record will come to light. Then there will be conservative voters who won't be able to tolerate what he's stood for in terms of abortion and other socially conservative values."

Both Obama and Clinton espouse this social gospel. In November Hillary Clinton spoke at

Pastor Rick Warren's fourth annual AIDS conference. Warren is the author of "The Purpose Driven Life." Clinton pledged if elected president, she would spend \$50 billion on prevention, treatment and care for HIV/AIDS globally by 2013.

Obama spoke in 2006, sparking many protests because of his strong pro-abortion beliefs. "While we will never see eye to eye on all issues, surely we can come together with one voice to honor the entirety of Christ's teachings by working to eradicate the scourge of AIDS, poverty and other challenges we all can agree must be met," he said.

While the Bible has always addressed caring for the poor and oppressed, it advocates personal charity as opposed to the leftist view of directing large amounts of government funding to ease social ills. Conservatives are not against helping the sick and needy. However, they also will not abandon the defenseless unborn to the grinder of modern secular abortion mills. The abortion fight takes guts and because of that, the most vulnerable (the unborn) are deserted.

Obama's talk about "social justice" is just another way of saying socialism. It may sound more amenable to the public, but it is the same thing. To paraphrase Shakespeare: A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

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