

Keep government away from oil, fuel and FEMA

It's as American as anything to want the government to do something about things the government can't—or shouldn't—do anything about.

Farmers want government to raise prices and lift acreage limits. Anyone who uses a government program wants more money. Employees always want bigger paychecks, and don't we deserve them?

Taxpayers want lower taxes. With more service and better roads, and a nice refund, thank you.

All the usual.

But here are some things the government should stay away from:

• Fuel prices.

The market regulates fuel prices quite nicely, thank you.

When there's scarcity, prices go up and people drive less.

When the emergency's over, prices go back down.

Everyone has enough gas. There are no lines, no hoarding.

People calling for an investigation of post-hurricane prices have forgotten what happens when the government did get involved.

Prices go up anyway, supply goes down and lines form at gas stations.

Just a myth? Hardly. It happened when President Nixon tried to control gasoline prices during the "first" energy crisis of the 1970s.

• Oil company profits.

Investors put their money in oil companies hoping to make some money. If we want the companies to find more oil, they need money to pay for the search.

Profits are not bad.

They go to find and refine more oil or to pay

investors, which today is all of us. Most oil stock is owned by our pension plans.

Oil company profits are not a bad thing. They're good for the economy and good for us.

Any investigation will be mostly window dressing. We hope.

• A "better" FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency).

It's not going to happen. This agency is a disaster waiting to happen. When it has nothing to do, it does not much. When it's needed, it's not ready.

Want action? Put the Army in charge. It worked in New Orleans.

It's always worked.

A Kansan, Gen. Fred Funston, was in charge of the Army garrison in San Francisco in 1905. One historian describes him as "a swaggering bully," but when the earthquake and fire leveled the city, Fred Funston took charge.

With no communication and no orders from Washington, he and the mayor organized relief, rescue and fire breaks, averting further loss of lives. Relief trains began arriving from the south the next day and from the east shortly thereafter.

The Army may be inefficient and bureaucratic in time of peace, but when you need action ... they know what to do. Private relief generally performs better than FEMA.

• More federal spending in place of tax cuts. Are you kidding? With a war going on and billions in hurricane damage?

It's time to limit spending and hold the line on taxes. The economic recovery is far too delicate to be hit with a tax hike.

No, President Bush. No more tax cuts.

But no increase, either.

— Steve Haynes

Sleeping space at a premium

Thanksgiving in Texas was great. Lots of food. Lots of laughs. Lots of shopping.

We took a special outing to a little town for the opening of the Christmas season. Vendors lined the streets and quaint little stores were open for holiday shoppers. Jim spotted a stand selling funnel cakes and announced to the grandkids he was buying one.

As they ripped off powdered sugar-covered pieces, 6-year-old Taylor lifted her hands heavenward and said, "Thank the Lord you're here today, PaPa."

It was hard to say good-bye, but we left early enough Sunday morning to have plenty of time for a relaxing evening at home before beginning our work week on Monday.

Our trip home was supposed to be uneventful, but Mother Nature had other plans. We hit rain and high winds around Salina. By the time we were west of Hays the sleet started, and by WaKeeney, we knew we were in a full-fledged blizzard. It made driving that tense, straining-to-see-the-road kind of effort. At one point, we even slipped off the road on a steep embankment. Some fancy driving got us back up on the road and the grace of God kept us on it.

The lights of our little hometown looked mighty good to us. That meant electricity was still on and we



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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would have heat. We were safe, warm and had plenty of food.

Little did we know that circumstances were unfolding to make for an interesting evening.

Despite our strong objections, Jennifer was determined to go on to her home. A short distance from our house, she encountered travelers who were bound for Colorado Springs. She knew the road on west was closed and advised them to turn around.

A quick call to us assured them they had a place to stay. She led them back to our house and soon three adults, four children and two dogs came straggling through the blinding snow.

As they peeled off jackets and wet shoes, we were introduced to Camie, her husband Jared, and their four children, Breannah, 10; Mehkenzie, 9; Gavin, 5; and Hallee, 22 months; Jared's brother, Nick; and two Sheltie dogs, Thunder and Cheyenne.

It was already late and everyone, ourselves included, was exhausted. The first order of business was to get a place for everyone to sleep.

Floor space is at a premium in our little house, but an air mattress, the extrabed, a foam mat, two recliners and the sofa soon found everyone bedded down for the night.

They had been in Iowa with family for Thanksgiving and were on their way home to Colorado. Nick is a personal trainer, Jared is a Schwan's man, and Camie is a stay-at-home mom. The men called their employers and told them they would be there when they get there.

The wind was still howling on Monday and road reports don't look encouraging for them to leave even on Tuesday.

There was nothing moving in town on Monday. No one was even tempted to go out.

That was OK, though. We had plenty of food, plenty of fuel and plenty of time.

NEWS ITEM KANSANS COPE WITH AFTERMATH OF UNUSUAL WINTER STORM CONSISTING OF SNOW AND TORNADES...



Never too late to gobble turkey

It was a bad week for turkeys. I suppose you could say that Thanksgiving is always a bad week for turkeys, but in this case, I'm just talking about cooking them, not about turkey life in general.

It started out when the Goodland office wanted to have a food day with turkey and all the trimmings.

Why the folks in Goodland wanted turkey two days before Thanksgiving is a mystery to me. My job was not to worry about the whys but to tend to the wherefores. Steve was in charge of the turkey. Others at the office would bring the dressing, cranberry sauce, potatoes and pies.

I picked up a pair of 18-pound Butterballs at the grocery on Sunday and took them home. One went into the downstairs fridge, where according to the directions for thawing, it would be ready to cook on Thursday. The second turkey went into a cold-water bath in the sink. If you change the water every half hour, the instructions say, it will thaw in about nine hours.

That works. The turkey was thawed and in the fridge by Sunday evening. It stayed in the fridge, crowding out most of the other food, including the opened orange juice, which I stored on its side and prayed it wouldn't leak.

At 7:30 a.m. Tuesday morning, I put Mr. Turkey in my roaster to bake. The recipe said it would take two to two and one-half hours to cook. Steve would be up by 9 to keep



Open Season

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an eye on it. Then I went to work in Norton. I had a paper to put out.

About 9:30 a.m. I got a frantic call from Steve. The turkey wasn't even half done. The bird was a little too big for the roaster, and there was a gap between the lid and pan. The gap was letting the steam—and the cooking ability—out.

I suggested using foil to seal the top and bottom together. That worked, and the turkey went off, albeit a little late, to its fate.

Youngest daughter, who was here from South Carolina, and I had decided that we would hold the Thanksgiving feast at 5 p.m. Thursday. So at 2 p.m. I pulled out the second turkey.

It was frozen. Most of a week in the fridge had done almost nothing to soften up this bird.

Let's see, 2 p.m. plus nine hours in a water bath plus two hours or so to cook. We'd be eating Thanksgiving dinner on Friday at that rate.

Well, the turkey wasn't quite solid as a rock so we were able to thaw him in the cold water in about four hours. It still put supper at 9

p.m. instead of 5, but what the heck.

To add to my worries, youngest daughter had made the pies earlier in the day and the apple had spilled all over the bottom of the oven. This started to smoke and burn while the pies were cooking, and I knew that when it came time to put the dressing, sweet potatoes and green bean casserole in for their 40 minutes each at 350 degrees, we would have the smoke alarm going off.

So, I figured, the oven is self-cleaning. I started the cycle and walked off.

At 8 p.m. the cleaning was still going. When would it stop? Was there a way to stop it early?—apparently not. Would we have turkey but no trimmings except for pie?

At 8:10 the cleaning cycle stopped and I was able to pile the three side dishes into the oven. Supper was a little late, but nobody complained. There was more than enough for all and leftovers enough to feed us until we're sick of turkey.

Well, personally, I was pretty sick of turkey before the meal even started.

Smooth sailing after Kansas

There are days you should stay home, but I couldn't convince myself Sunday was one of them.

I was pretty sure Monday would be one, though, and I needed to be in Denver for an appointment.

So with snow moving in, I loaded up the car, kissed the wife and headed west.

Somewhere past St. Francis, I began to think the whole thing might be a mistake.

Traffic was heavy on U.S. 36, for one thing.

It's bad enough to be out on slick roads, but you don't need a whole bunch of idiots headed at you.

The road had been wet in Oberlin, though, and the forecast was for relatively warm weather during daylight hours and not much snow in Colorado.

The road information line in Denver assured that, while I-70 was closed due to a 25- or 30-car pileup, roads in the northeast (including U.S. 36) were dry and normal.

Sure. By Atwood, the road was a little slushy, nothing more. Same thing all the way to McDonald.

At the Cheyenne County line, though, there's a pickup on its top. The driver was gone, and the truck was history.

A littler farther on, a car in the ditch. Someone else had stopped to check on the driver.

In Bird City, a deputy sat watching the road. Somewhere west of there came the first ground blizzards.

It was nothing too bad, though, and I stopped for gas and a Coke in Sainty. I-70 closings were backed



Along the Sappa

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up into Kansas. U.S. 385 and U.S. 287 south of the freeway were closed. But 36 was open, if slushy. I pressed on.

It took 30 minutes or more to get to the state line, and where a field was bare, ground blizzards ruled. Milo, corn, brush, even tall wheat stubble blocked the snow. There were miles where the road was fine.

I followed a plow out to Colorado, with a Kansas pickup right behind me.

At least if I went off, there would be someone there to see it.

On we went, through Idalia and Joes, slogging west at 35 to 40 mph, no drifts and not much on the road, but slick enough.

Past Idalia, a big RV towing a car was in the ditch. The wind lifted me almost into the eastbound lane. I held on and steered.

On down the road, two cars had collided. A state trooper and a deputy were working the wreck. My buddy and I kept slogging.

At Cope, halfway, the highway department had a gate across the eastbound lane, but the road south to I-70 was open. Where people would go from there, I couldn't figure.

West of Cope, a little slush, then dry roads and sunshine. We cruised

on to Denver. The first half of the trip took more than three hours, the second half less than two.

Surreal: driving west into the sunset on I-70 with no eastbound traffic at all. Just empty lanes all the way to E-470.

When hotels in Limon filled up, the Colorado highway department had closed the road just east of the city. Eastbounders were still finding U.S. 36, though where they would stay in Cope was a mystery.

Denver: dry, 36, little wind. My traveling companion goes around me and disappears.

All's well that ends well, I guess. I doubt that too many cars got through behind us.

From the Bible

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

II Corinthians 5: 20, 21

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