

## Keep federal money for real emergencies

While the jury is out on performance after “superstorm” Sandy, one thing for sure is that the much-maligned Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, needs to realign its priorities and pull back from trying to help every time the wind comes up a little.

If you don’t think the agency has grown bloated and lost its sense of purpose, consider the fact that last year, right here in northwest Kansas, one of our counties suffered a disaster. Yes. Six inches of water running over a gravel road.

The commissioners, with straight faces, reminded the road boss to get someone out there to take pictures and assess the damage “so we can get some FEMA money.”

Every time it snows, every time there’s ice, every little local flood now, public officials try to record everything because there might be some federal money.

What ever happened to doing things for ourselves?

Well, if there’s federal money out there, officials are going to try to get it. It’s only human nature. Still, you’d think we had some pride.

The genesis of the problem, we suspect, goes back to the Bush year. Congress and a president who’d been burned badly when Hurricane Katrina all but washed New Orleans away, just threw money at Emergency Management. Standards were lowered; they had to spend it.

So counties and cities began to add up the cost of little storms.

Katrina and Sandy are the kinds of events that this agency was designed to battle, yet oddly enough, these are the hardest to prepare for. In a real emergency, it’s usual that no one

is in charge, no one gets much done at first and confusion reigns.

Go back through history, you’ll find that’s always been the case. It was as true a century ago in San Francisco as it was in New Orleans.

In both cases, order wasn’t restored until the Army arrived. It’s not that the civilian authorities weren’t properly prepared. Events like those are impossible to be prepared for. The Army, for all its bureaucratic faults, is trained to deal with chaos. They call it combat.

We need an agency to deal with disasters, true emergencies. But if the one we have is ill prepared or spends its time and money replacing gravel washed away by a thunderstorm, we’re in trouble.

Emergency Management needs to refocus and remember what the real priorities are: being ready to respond when nature turns right ugly.

Let the cities, states and counties take care of the little problems, even the big ones. Federal aid should be reserved for when it’s really needed, not frittered away on minor problems.

And with the need to cut federal spending, the bloat in this agency ought to be a prime target. We’re not talking about Sandy or money held for the next superstorm. Those rightly are federal issues.

But plowing snow, grading and graveling roads, fixing things up after a big wind, those are things a federal agency should never hear about — let alone pay for with money the government has to borrow.

Let’s rein this agency in and point it at its real mission. — Steve Haynes

## Time just got away from him

I woke up last Sunday the same time I had been. About 7:30, I thought. Maybe 8.

Everyone else was up, but that’s not unusual.

Cynthia almost always gets up before I do, no matter when that is. I can count on my fingers the number of times in 42 years I’ve been up before her, made the coffee and gotten the papers.

It’s even more rare for her to go to bed after I do. And if I do get there first, I can’t get to sleep, no matter how tired I am.

And I have to be pretty tired to crawl in bed ahead of her.

Anyway, we were staying with Merle and Mary, and they get up before either of us. Mary sometimes goes to work at 5:30, and Merle, while he might sleep a little later, likes to go for a long bike ride before he goes to work. Ten, 20 miles uphill, something just to get his day started.

What surprised me — I’m sure you’ve figured this out by now — is that for the first time I can remember, I’d forgotten the switch from Daylight Saving Time, the annual “fall back” day.

Not the first time I’d forgotten the time change, mind you.

I remember I was in Kansas City one Saturday in April. The next morning, I got up on Standard Time — and missed my flight back to Colorado.

There’d have been heck to pay,



### Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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but in those days, the airlines were cutthroat competitive between a lot of city pairs, Kansas City-Denver included.

United employees had been known to search the computer, then page Continental passengers and try to get them to switch to an earlier flight — on their airline.

And a lot of other tricks. So, I took my United ticket over to the Continental gates and, sure, they’d take me to Denver on an earlier flight, by hours, than the competition.

The company wouldn’t get paid, but heck, they had empty seats anyway.

And in those days, you even got lunch.

Just try that today.

Competition today means trying to figure out who can charge the most for an overweight bag (\$90 on Delta) or overbook flights the most, leaving more people behind.

Or have the highest fee for changing flights.

Customers are just something

to cram into the back of the coach cabin.

But don’t let me get on an airline rant. This column is about time changes.

Generally, and unlike everyone else at the breakfast table last Sunday, I don’t like to get up in the dark, so I like Daylight Time.

The longer the better. Normally I like more than a good excuse to sleep in.

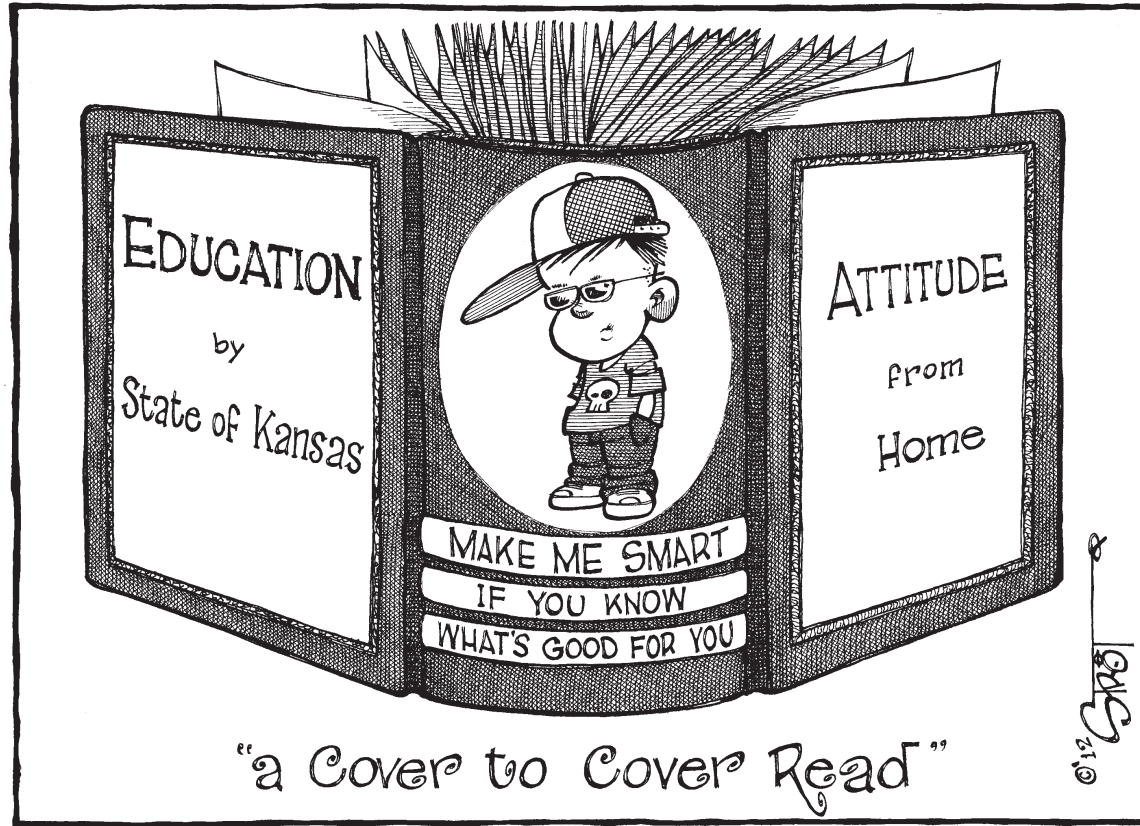
But still, I couldn’t believe I’d forgotten the time change. I blamed it on being away from home, and not having to set all the clocks before going to bed.

But I hadn’t even set my own watch.

Not like I hadn’t read about it. Usually, I’m the one who remembers.

Anyway, we had lots of time to talk about things that morning. Lots of time. And still got to dawdle over eggs and toast before we went home.

Maybe by March, I’ll be ready to spring back.



## Southern visit just wonderful

From its great plantations to the harbor that gave it birth and prosperity, Charleston, S.C., is a fascinating city.

Steve and I got to visit this belle of the South last month during the annual National Newspaper Association convention.

This was not our first visit to Charleston, which is just about three hours from Augusta, Ga., where both our daughters live. During the many visits we’ve made to the South, we’ve gotten to see many of her gracious, old cities, including New Orleans, Birmingham, Savannah, Ga., Columbia, S.C., Nashville and Chattanooga, Tenn., and of course, Charleston.

But, this visit was longer and more intense, with tours by horse-drawn carriage and boat of the waterfront area and a visit to a working plantation.

We also got to tour a historic home, built in 1808 for the fantastic sum of \$80,000.

Out in the harbor sits Fort Sumter, where the Civil War began. The Union garrison refused to surrender the fort, hoisting a huge U.S. flag. Southern forces astounded by this affront bombarded the brick fortress for 34 hours. When reinforcements and the expected supplies failed to materialize, the garrison surrendered. No one was killed in the battle.

Broad Street is one of the main thoroughfares downtown. Anything on the south side of the street is near the waterfront and considered top-notch property. SOB is a popular designation for those business and people living South of Broad.

At the fancy restaurants South of Broad, we found fried green tomatoes, grits, collard greens and crab cakes on every menu. I think Steve tried them all. He dove into



### Open Season

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the myriad of seafood available in a coastal city.

Personally, I kept looking for a hamburger.

What I came up with was a low-country boil. It’s sort of like our cream-can dinners, only with corn, potatoes, sausage and shrimp. This is where Steve is very useful — he eats the shrimp and I get the sausage.

Our tour of Boone Hall Plantation was a visit back in time. The plantation is still a working farm. The land was given to Maj. John Boone in the 1680s. It produced cotton and bricks in the pre-Civil War days. Was a major pecan farm for many years until hurricanes destroyed most of the trees.

Today it exists on tourism and tourist-related agriculture, like pick-your-own strawberries and peaches and hay rides in the fall.

Beside the big house, where we saw a wedding party getting pictures taken on the front steps, there is a row of small brick buildings — the old slave cabins. I was a little surprised that they were brick, a sturdier building material than you would think would be used, but since that was manufactured on the plantation in the early days, I suppose it was cheap.

The cabins have been turned into a series of museum rooms, each telling a story of slavery and plantation life including a list of

the price of merchandise — horses, cattle, corn, whiskey, men, women and children. It was both fascinating and chilling.

Our entertainment for the evening was a storyteller, a woman who told us about the Gullah, a language and culture created by the slaves in the low country, as this area along the coast is called.

I know we just scratched the surface of this wonderful city and I’m hoping to go back again some day. There are more homes, churches, gardens and the aquarium to explore. I want to visit some of the islands and go crabbing.

Maybe next time. Our girls still live just three hours away.

### From the Bible

Tell us, when shall these things be and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? And Jesus answering them began to say, “Take heed lest any man deceive you: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must need be; but the end shall not be yet.”

— Mark 13:4-7

## New cat’s looking for home

Tomas, the new cat, is doing well. Notice, I did not say “our new cat.” I am not ready to add his name to the family roster.

His whereabouts have been advertised in our little town’s newsletter, and I truly hope his previous owners want him back. He is just too lovable not to have been someone’s pet.

He’s got a little meat on his bones now and his wheezing and coughing are gone.

It’s me. He’s ready to move on. I just can’t bring myself to put him outside with winter practically here.

He would see the other cats going into the nice, warm house and he would be banned to suffer the harsh elements.

Speaking of the other cats. They took a vote, and Tomas didn’t win the popular or the electoral. They don’t want him.

He’s still segregated in the dining room, but they know he’s there.

I must find Tomas a home. And fast!

—ob—

Almost 47 years ago, Jim graduated from a brand new preaching school in Lubbock, Texas.

The school celebrated its 50th anniversary with a Homecoming Reunion last week.

Even though I wasn’t part of Jim’s life during that time in his, I had a great time at the reunion. I sat and listened as former schoolmates recalled the time they \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank).

Preachers are people, too. There were pranksters and cut-ups amongst their numbers, just like any other group.

You knew you were in a special group, though, when instead of talking about climbing the corporate ladder or regaling us with tales of their last vacation, these people shared about what mission field they had been sent to or what congregation they helped plant.



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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The closest thing to an off-color joke was when an instructor told a story on one of his students who was nervous about preaching his first sermon.

Seems the young man kept mispronouncing “fornication,” instead substituting “fortification.”

I have always marveled at Jim’s ability to quote scripture and verse right off the top of his head. I can sort of paraphrase, but except for John 3:16 and a couple others verses, I’m pretty inept.

Now I know how he does it. At this school, they were expected to memorize entire chapters in the Bible.

It was only a two-year course, so to say it was fast-paced would be an understatement. One man said he was almost afraid to attend because he had heard you would be two weeks behind if you dropped your pencil.

It was a lot of fun, and I’m glad we went.

—ob—

On our way home from Texas, I wanted some good Mexican food. Driving through Amarillo, we spotted a Mexican grocery.

A young couple was preparing chicken and beef on a barrel grill out front, and we decided to get a carry-out order before we left.

First, though, we wanted to do a little shopping. Jim smelled hot, home-made tortillas and I spotted corn husks for the tamales I want to learn how to make.

We bought a fresh mango, some prickly-pears cactus leaves, ba-

nanas and several bottles of made-in-Mexico Coca-Cola.

I stowed our groceries in the van while Jim ordered lunch. We sat in the parking lot, filling our tortillas with meat and sauces.

Here’s a word of caution. When a Mexican says, “Oh, eats no hot,” don’t believe him.

I bit into my tortilla and instantly, my mouth was on fire. That green stuff I thought was guacamole was, actually green chili sauce. I couldn’t drink enough water to quench the burn.

Finally, I was able to continue, but with tortillas wrapped around plain beef; none of the trimmings.

Moral of this story is, “Be careful what you wish for; you just might get it.”

### In the U.S.A.

“Yesterday, the greatest question was decided which ever was debated in America; and a greater perhaps never was, nor will be, decided among men. A resolution was passed without one dissenting colony, that those united Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States.”

John Adams,  
second U.S. president  
March 4, 1797 - July 4, 1826

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