



# Storms Of Uncertainty

BY KELLY HERTZ  
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In these last days of 2012, one of the biggest impressions that I have of the year is actually a lie. As I think back across the past 12 months from a journalistic perspective, it somehow feels like it was a slow year in some respects because we never had any major weather incidents to punctuate our news cycles. Weather events are very common things for us, but not so this year, it seemed. Last winter, there were never any blizzards to screw things up. In the spring and summer, there weren't any major thunderstorms or tornadoes that summoned us into action. And obviously, there were no flooding emergencies similar to what dominated life last year. So, it seemed like all was quiet in 2012, meteorologically speaking.

And that, as we all know, isn't true at all. What we endured instead was something more subtle and less dramatic, but just as devastating. A drought, such as the one we are stuck in now, is really about the LACK of something happening. This nothingness grinds on and on, accumulating its misery in gradual doses. It's a war of attrition; it's a death by a thousand cuts.

Last winter seemed like a blessing, as we set warmth records in the very first days of January. As I recall, Yankton was never under a winter storm warning or even a watch. While there were many great benefits from such weather, the downside now seems clear.

Throughout the spring and summer, there were no thunderstorm outbreaks for which we had to mobilize. I don't recall many storm warnings. Of course, none of us recall very much rain, either.

Now, the drought, which is the top storyline of 2012, is nowhere near finished as 2013 dawns. We remain achingly dry, and meteorologists don't see much change on the horizon.

This past year was also terribly hot at times, which certainly helped feed the drought. Starting on the first



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day of April, Yankton saw 56 days of temperatures hitting at least 90 degrees — with nine of those days climbing into triple digits. In recent years, Yankton has typically seen about one day a year at 100 degrees; in some years, we never even got there. So the prospect of nine such days was a yardstick for misery, although I actually got used to it by mid-August. I think it's called surrendering ...

Anyway, this past year wasn't all about our uncertain weather, but it was filled with thunderstorms of uncertainty.

There was a national election that seemed like a momentous tossup, but the postmortem now suggests it really wasn't as close as it felt or as we were told.

There is self-inflicted fiscal chaos in Washington and, as a result, economic uncertainty across the land.

We vow to wind things down in Afghanistan, but we are still unsure of the best way to do it.

Education funding in South Dakota remained muddled, and not much seems to be in focus as the new legislative session looms in less than two weeks.

And now, there are dead children in Connecticut, and there is apparently no clear resolve on our part about what to do about it.

We leave 2012 practically groping for a clear path forward.

At this moment, I can't offer you any practical answers that could take care of all this.

But speaking metaphorically and literally, I think a good rainstorm every now and again would help matters a lot. It wouldn't solve most of these issues in one shot and we'll need more rain thereafter. But it would be a start and a reminder that good things can fall upon us every once in a while. It would provide some hope — and with hope, anything seems possible.

Here's to a very hopeful 2013.

You can follow Kelly Hertz on Twitter at [twitter.com/kelly\\_hertz](https://twitter.com/kelly_hertz)

# Things Better Left Unsaid

BY KATHLEEN PARKER  
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WASHINGTON — 'Tis the season when columnists write mea culpas, make predictions and list their resolutions.

Since my culpas are too vast for this tiny space, my predictions best in retrospect and my resolutions inevitably ignored, I thought I'd list a few resolutions for the rest of the world. These, too, are likely to be ignored, but I'll feel better getting a few things off my chest.

Herewith, what annoys me most:

• **"Hot."**

Can we please shelve this awful word as used by adults to refer to others? What happened to "attractive" or "fascinating"? If you're 18 or younger, I suppose one can be forgiven for recognizing a person of interest in terms of hotness, but nothing is less attractive than adult men and women appraising others as "hot" (or not) at a certain age, which should be about the time one is old enough to vote.

Hotness, as I understand it, essentially refers to another's worthiness to bed. This is not, in the world I prefer to live in, subject matter for dinner conversation.

In a related matter, let's not ...

• **"Man up."**

How many times during recent elections have we heard candidates refer to others' need to "man up"? This was especially jarring when women used the term to refer to their male opponents, as when Nevada Republican Sharron Angle told Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to man up during a debate.

Sarah Palin, who wasn't running for anything, nevertheless questioned President Obama's manhood, saying that Arizona Republican Gov. Jan Brewer, thanks to her tough immigration bill, "has the cojones that our president does not have." Classy.

In an ad, Colorado Republican Sen. Cory Gardner, her primary opponent for the U.S. Senate, Ken Buck, should be "man enough" to do his own campaign dirty work.

And so on.

What comparable insult might men bestow on women? "Woman up" has no parallel meaning, but one can imagine that challenging a woman's "womanhood," whatever that might mean (fertility? femininity?), would not go over well.

Buck did manage to produce a weak rejoinder, urging voters to choose him because "I don't wear high heels."

OK, well, this is cutting right to the core of voter con-



Kathleen  
**PARKER**

cerns. A manly Buck versus a stiletto-ed femme. It is little wonder that Coloradoans decided to legalize pot. How else to get through such mind-boggling debate? Whatever voters had in mind when they elected Buck, they can't have felt elevated by their choices.

• And little wonder young Americans end all their sentences with **question marks**. No list would be complete without mention of the annoying habit of the young to state declarative sentences as queries. Though not new, this tic has become so commonplace that one worries it may have become permanently entrenched in the language.

Simple grammar: A declarative statement ends with a period. The voice does not rise as with a question, punctuated with a question mark. Yet several times a day, a young person speaks to me in question marks.

"So, I ran into Jeff? And he was, like, wow, you cut your hair? And I was, like, I know, right?"

The only alternative to the persistent query is the occasional exclamation: "OMG. He is so hot!"

I have no idea what the statement-question reveals, but it seems to be connected to some desire to not be judgmental. And this seems to be tied to the generational proclivity to perceive all things as relative. As in, I am so totally not, like, committed to anything that could possibly be construed as slightly offensive to anyone anywhere that I will say even obviously true things so as to indicate my willingness to be persuaded, like, otherwise?

• **"No problem."**

Which is, I promise, my last nit. "No problem" seems now to be the customary reply to "thank you." As opposed to the previously accepted "You're welcome" or "My pleasure."

"Thanks so much for the excellent service," I say to the waiter. "No problem," he says.

What does this mean? That it wasn't all that much trouble? Or, that service is a problem to be solved?

Doing something for someone in the line of duty or out of the goodness of one's heart is not a problem solved. It is a gift, a gesture, a sentiment. And when someone expresses gratitude for that gesture, it is customary to acknowledge that you were happy to extend the pleasure, not that it wasn't too bad for you.

Which is to say, you're welcome.

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their firearm in an aggressively malicious way, causing yet another tragedy?

For this issue, the logical endpoints are either that everyone is armed or that we (as a society) try to restrict the availability of firearms. I favor progressing toward the second endpoint, as progressing toward the first endpoint will certainly lead to many more tragedies.

# The Press & Dakotan

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## OPINION | WE SAY

### Granted



the demand for visits has soared this year. The increase could be attributed to more difficult family situations or more awareness of the center. Either way, the Venture Grant should prove a greatly-needed boost in meeting the rising requests.

### Donation



needed items purchased in the meantime. The entire school district took part, and the items were delivered by Bon Homme High School juniors Ali Vicek, Megan Burbach, Brenda Walloch, Mariah Kostal, David Tycz, Billy Minow, Ty Radack, Scott Wieseler, Christine Pinkelman, Hannah Buchholz, Emily Pechous, Tyra Patzlaff, Shawna Rezac and Danielle Tycz. The Bon Homme pantry also received donations for 100 hams and 100 pounds of butter, along with 100 fruitcakes — both regular and diabetic-friendly — made by the local Catholic youth group.

### Hard Times



well continue into the future. It's certainly not a bright picture, and draws attention to the challenges the workforce will be facing for years to come.

### Last Hurrah



Emmy and had garnered a Tony nomination. He'd also played memorable characters on film ("Twelve Angry Men" and "The Days of Wine and Roses") and television (ask any "Twilight Zone" fan). The loss of Klugman, as well as the wonderful Charles Durning the same day, have deprived us of two great character actors who will be dearly missed but long cherished.

## ONLINE OPINION

The results of the most recent Internet poll on the *Press & Dakotan's* Web site are as follows:

### LATEST RESULTS:

<b>Would you support legalizing marijuana for recreational use?</b>	
No	.57%
Yes	.41%
Not sure	.2%
<b>TOTAL VOTES CAST</b>	
<b>572</b>	
<i>The Press &amp; Dakotan Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.</i>	

### CURRENT QUESTION:

**Should the City of Yankton impose its own ban on texting while driving?**

To vote in the *Press & Dakotan's* Internet poll, log on to our website at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).

## TODAY IN HISTORY

### By The Associated Press

Today is Friday, Dec. 28, the 363rd day of 2012. There are three days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On Dec. 28, 1912, San Francisco's Municipal Railway began operations with Mayor James Rolph Jr. at the controls of Streetcar No. 1 as 50,000 spectators looked on.

**On this date:** In 1612, Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei observed the planet Neptune, but mistook it for a star. (Neptune wasn't officially discovered until 1846 by Johann Gottfried Galle.)

In 1832, John C. Calhoun became the first vice president of the United States to resign, stepping down because of differences with President Andrew Jackson.

In 1846, Iowa became the 29th state to be admitted to the Union.

In 1856, the 28th president of the United States, Thomas Woodrow Wilson, was born in Staunton, Va.

In 1897, the play "Cyrano de Bergerac," by Edmond Rostand, premiered in Paris.

In 1917, the *New York Evening Mail* published "A Neglected Anniversary," a facetious, as well as fictitious, essay by H.L. Mencken recounting the history of bathtubs in America.

In 1937, composer Maurice Ravel died in Paris at age 62.

In 1945, Congress officially recognized the Pledge of Allegiance.

In 1961, the Tennessee Williams play "Night of the Iguana" opened on Broadway. Former first lady Edith Bolling Galt Wilson, the second wife of President Woodrow Wilson, died in Washington at age 89.

In 1972, Kim Il Sung, the premier of North Korea, was named the country's president under a new constitution.

In 1982, Nevell Johnson Jr., a black man, was mortally wounded by a police officer in a Miami video arcade, setting off three days of race-related disturbances that left another man dead.

In 1987, a mass killing came to light as the bodies of 14 relatives of Ronald Gene Simmons were found at his home near Dover, Ark., after Simmons shot and killed two other people in Russellville. (Simmons was executed in 1990.)

**Ten years ago:** The U.N. nuclear watchdog decided to pull its inspectors out of North Korea by New Year's Eve, a step demanded by the North. Mwai Kibaki and his opposition alliance won a landslide victory in Kenyan elections, breaking the ruling party's 39-year grip on power.

## FROM THE BIBLE

*Then David said to all the assembly, "Bless the LORD your God." And all the assembly blessed the LORD, the God of their fathers, and bowed their heads and paid homage to the LORD.* 1 Chronicles 29:20. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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## YOUR LETTERS

### Guns In Schools

Jim Sorenson, Yankton

I don't think most people have thought through the idea that in-school personnel (teachers, administrators, custodians) should be allowed to bring firearms to schools.

What will the reaction be when one of those school employees (somewhere in the country) uses