

Storms Of Uncertainty

Kelly

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 torna-does 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.

HERTZ 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

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 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 possi-

Here's to a very hopeful 2013.

You can follow Kelly Hertz on Twitter at twitter.com/kelly_hertz

Things Better Left Unsaid

Kathleen

PARKER

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

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WASHINGTON — 'Tis the season when columnists write mea culpas, make predictions and list their resolu-

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 Repúblican Jane Norton said her primary opponent for the U.S. Senate, Ken Buck, should be "man enough" to do his own campaign dirty work.

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 concerns. 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 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,

The only alternative to the persistent query is the occasional exclamation: "OMG. Ĥe 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.'

Îhanks 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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THE DAKOTAS' OLDEST NEWSPAPER | FOUNDED 1861

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OPINION | WE SAY

Granted



 $\bf THUMBS~UP$ to the Family Visitation Center's \$4,000 Venture Grant from the United Way of Yankton. The visitation center provides a safe, neutral environment for the scheduling of visitation for non-custodial parents and their children as well as the transfer of children from one parent to the other. The Venture Grant will help expand the center's surveillance equipment and security measures, enabling the scheduling and monitoring of two family visits at the same time. Unfortunately,

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



THUMBS UP to the Bon Homme school students and staff who collected 87 large boxes of donations — filling three pickup trucks — for the Bon Homme County food pantry. Food pantry director Shirley Mann said the donations included items not normally carried by the facility. The donations were timely, as the pantry had just distributed its Christmas gift boxes and found its shelves quite bare. Mann said the next major organized food drive won't be held until next May, with

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



THUMBS DOWN to the difficult times that have befallen Americans entering the workforce. In a recent Bloomberg.com story, it was noted that average incomes for those aged 25-34 has fallen 8 percent since December 2007 – much more than for other age groups. One researcher noted that it will likely lead to Generation Y having a lower income path for their entire lives. An economist added that children are not earning as much as their parents and that could very

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



A sad **THUMBS DOWN** to the passing of beloved veteran actor Jack Klugman, who died Monday at age 90. Klugman is best know to many television fans as the slovenly Oscar Madison opposite Tony Randall's neurotically neat Felix Unger in the TV version of "The Odd Couple" in the 1970s and as the crusading medical examiner in "Quincy" a few years later. But Klugman was already an accomplished actor well before his "Odd Couple" stint. He had already won an

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:

would you s	support	iegai	ızıng	mar	ıjuan	ia for r	ecreation	onai use ?		
No										7%
Yes										
Not sure										2%
TOTAL VOTES	CAST									57
The Press & I	Dakotan	Inter	net po	oll is r	not a	scientit	ic surve	v and refle	cts the opinior	าร

only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.

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.

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. 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 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 II 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 watch

dog 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.

Five years ago: President George W. Bush used a "pocket veto" to reject a sweeping defense bill because he objected to a provision that would have exposed the Iragi government to expensive lawsuits seeking damages from the Saddam Hussein era. Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto was laid to rest as the country's army tried to quell a frenzy of rioting in the wake of her assassination. Six French charity workers sentenced to eight years' forced labor in Chad for allegedly trying to kidnap 103 children were transferred to French custody. (The workers were later pardoned by Chad's president and set free.) David Letterman's production company reached an interim agreement with the Writers Guild allowing his talk show as well as Craig Ferguson's to return to the air.

One year ago: North Korea's new leader, Kim Jong Un, escorted his father's hearse in an elaborate state funeral, bowing somberly and saluting in front of tens of thousands of citizens who wailed and stamped their feet in grief for Kim Jong II. Turkish warplanes mistakenly killed 35 smugglers and other villagers in an operation targeting Kurdish rebels in Iraq. Kaye Stevens, a singer and actress who performed with the Rat Pack and was a frequent guest on Johnny Carson's "The Tonight Show," died in The Villages, Fla., at age 79. Today's Birthdays: Comic book creator

Stan Lee is 90. Former United Auto Workers union president Owen Bieber is 83. Actor Martin Milner is 81. Actress Nichelle Nichols is 80. Actress Dame Maggie Smith is 78. Rock singer-musician Charles Neville is 74. Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., is 68. Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., is 66. Rock singer-musician Edgar Winter is 66. Actor Denzel Washington is 58. Country singer Joe Diffie is 54. Country musician Mike McGuire (Shenandoah) is 54. Actor Chad McQueen is 52. Country singer-musician Marty Roe (Diamond Rio) is 52. Actor Malcolm Gets is 48. Actor Mauricio Mendoza is 43. Comedian Seth Meyers is 39. Actor Brendan Hines is 36. Rhythm-and-blues singer John Legend is 34. Actress Sienna Miller is 31. Actor Thomas Dekker is 25. Actress Mackenzie Rosman is 23. Pop singer David Archuleta TV: "American Idol") is 22

Thought for Today: "If you don't know history, then you don't know anything. You are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree." — Michael Crichton, American author

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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What will the reaction be when one of those

Jim Sorenson, Yankton

Guns In Schools

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.

YOUR LETTERS

school employees (somewhere in the country) uses

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.