

A GRATEFUL NATION



It Could Have Been Us

BY KELLY HERTZ

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That could have been us. Not to be an alarmist, but you really should be thinking that as you see the images and read the reports from Moore, Okla., where a monstrous tornado ripped a scar in the world.

On the other hand, the odds say you don't have to think that way at all.

What hit Oklahoma Monday was a killer storm that swooped down from skies that aren't unlike the skies that soar over Yankton, Tyndall, Hartington, Vermillion or anywhere else on these wide-open plains on a given sultry day.

What we saw this week was a devastating disaster, but most of us will forget about it in a week or so. We'll quickly set aside the thought of such dangers because the odds of any of us being hit by a tornado are incredibly small. One online source I found put the chance of your house being struck by a tornado at about 0.1 percent. So, there's no pressing need to panic, even as you see what happened in Oklahoma and nervously cast an eye upward to wonder what hell could spin down at us from the violent heavens.

This region is no stranger to such threats. Most every summer, we are faced with tornado watches and, occasionally, warnings. Almost always, relatively little comes of them.

As a result, some of us have grown lax in our response to possible tornadoes in the area. We treat them instead as adrenaline-surging curiosities to be experienced, or we imagine ourselves to be would-be storm chasers bent on getting some cool video.

Oddly enough — and I must make this critique carefully — the weather service doesn't help this situation much. Meteorologists have gotten quite good at identifying atmospheric conditions that are ripe for tornadic storms. Radar can even detect cyclonic spinning in clouds, which in turn often prompts warnings to be issued, even if an actual tornado isn't spotted. Many times, nothing comes of these, other than a lot of wind for short periods and some downed trees. As a consequence, some of us don't heed the warnings with the ur-



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gency that we should. Call it the weather service that cried wolf, or call it overkill. We've grown numb to the warnings, even though the reasons for them cannot be disputed.

Although the odds are with us, one could also argue that we all are in danger of being hit by a tornado because we all share about basically equal odds in getting clobbered. While that also feels like crying wolf, it's the statistical truth.

You could certainly argue that Oklahomans must be prepared for such outbursts from nature; there really is a reason they call that area "tornado alley." Even so, the odds were terribly small on Monday that any of those homes, or those schools, in Moore would be struck by the twister.

One can never comfortably bet your life and your world on the odds.

Ask the people up in Spencer, who in 1998 also owned the same very slim odds that a monster tornado would somehow crush their tiny patch of prairie. The odds were with them, but fate — for lack of a better label —

was not.

The fact that Yankton has rarely seen a tornado, at least in my memory, doesn't make this place immune to such events, any more than Spencer was immune.

The best thing we can do is be prepared, which is what the people of Oklahoma have become well practiced at — you know, tornado alley and all. The grim truth is, any given town in this area could be next on the tornado hit list. It probably won't and it probably never will. But none of us know that, just as the people in Spencer didn't know that or the people down in Coleridge a few years back didn't know that ... the list can go on forever.

Yes, it could have been us on Monday, but it wasn't. This time. We can be thankful for that and pray for those who endured it. But we should also be thinking about the unthinkable, about what we would do and, more to the point, how seriously we would take that threat when and if the moment ever arrives. Because if it is ever us, our choices will be damn few but dreadfully important.

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

Weathering The Politicians

BY MICHAEL REAGAN

CagleCartoons.com

Yesterday I read an interesting article in Newsweek about the connection between tornadoes and climate change.

Newsweek's story explained how top climate scientists were concerned about several ominous and fundamental changes occurring in Earth's weather patterns.

Evidence that Earth's climate was changing in the wrong direction, the article said, included a shorter growing season in England, higher average temperatures at the equator and an increase in tornadoes like the monster than killed at least 24 people in Tornado Alley this week.

"Last April," wrote Newsweek, "in the most devastating outbreak of tornadoes ever recorded, 148 twisters killed more than 300 people and caused half a billion dollars' worth of damage in thirteen U.S. states."

Newsweek's article went on to say scientists weren't sure what was causing the global climate to change and could not predict how it would affect specific local weather conditions.

But the news magazine said top weather scientists were certain of one thing: They were "almost unanimous in the view that the trend will reduce agricultural output for the rest of the century" and result in "a major climatic change that would force economic and social adjustments on a worldwide scale."

Oh, I forgot to mention a few important facts. The date on that Newsweek article was April 28, 1975. The headline was "The Cooling World." And the climate change scientists were almost unanimously worried about was a global cooling trend.

Global cooling, the Big Climate Scare of the 1970s, wasn't blamed on humans, and weather disasters like Hurricane Sandy and this week's tragedy in Oklahoma were not politicized by climate illiterates like Babs "The Weather Girl" Boxer and her fellow U.S. Senator from Rhode Island, Sheldon Whitehouse.

Both Boxer and Whitehouse jumped on the Oklahoma City tornado tragedy this week to exploit it for political gain.

While they were still pulling survivors out of the wreckage, Whitehouse gave an idiotic speech on Mon-



Michael REAGAN

day linking "cyclones" and other extreme weather events to climate change.

Then he beat up Republicans for not believing the myth he and his political soul-bothers believe — that climate change is catastrophic, man-made and only fixable by great climatologists like Al Gore and wise Washington politicians.

Whitehouse later apologized, saying he wrote the speech before he knew about the tornadoes striking Oklahoma. But his climatic ignorance and his crass, opportunistic politics were exposed.

Meanwhile, Sen. Boxer had no excuse. She took a break from her gun control crusade to spend time on her other crusade — climate control.

On Monday she expressed her condolences to the tornado victims, then twisted another natural tragedy into a political issue. She blathered that the tornado was "proof" of climate change.

Sorry, Ma'am, but tornados have been around for a long time. That's why we call it Tornado Alley, not "Global Warming Alley." In Florida and the Carolinas we have Hurricane Alley. I live in Earthquake Alley.

Next time a natural disaster strikes, I have some advice for all the climate-control freaks in Washington. Please shut up. Nothing you say or do will change anything. Oklahoma is not going to get safer if Earth gets cooler.

And Boxer, Whitehouse and their ilk are not going to make tornadoes disappear like Newsweek did.

Believe it not, senators, climate is not something that Washington can control.

It's ultimately affected — and controlled — by Almighty Nature, not humans and their carbon burning. And certainly not by agenda-driven politicians.

Michael Reagan is the son of President Ronald Reagan, a political consultant, and the author of "The New Reagan Revolution" (St. Martin's Press). He is the founder of the email service reagan.com and president of The Reagan Legacy Foundation. Visit his websites at www.reagan.com and www.michaelereagan.com. Send comments to Reagan@caglecartoons.com. Follow @reaganworld on Twitter.

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It is truly amazing to be a part of community that continually takes care of its own. We are sincerely appreciative of all the contributions that we received this year and we thank everyone who came down to the river this year! We will see you next year!

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OPINION | WE SAY

Memorial Day's Meaning



THUMBS UP to our military personnel — and especially those who gave the full measure of themselves in defense of this country — as we once again face another Memorial Day weekend. For many people, this weekend means it's a three-day holiday filled with plans and fun, and no one can be faulted for that. But there is other business that should be considered on this holiday, such as the meaning of the holiday itself. We honor those who are no longer with us, and although this ritual stretches well beyond the memory of military souls, it nonetheless has a special meaning for the memories of the fallen soldiers. They are the reason we are here, after all, and they shouldn't be forgotten. If you can't make a memorial Day program somewhere, at least take a moment to think about what they gave to us and the price they paid to do it. It's a small thing to ask in return.

Sister Margo's Farewell



THUMBS UP to Sister Margo Tschetter as she retires from the Sacred Heart School as fifth-grade teacher. A special program on Sunday afternoon will honor her work and her impact on thousands of students for at least two generations. She has taught 45 years, with 34 of them at the Catholic school in downtown Yankton. Sister Margo has become legendary for her students' baking project and sales. In the process, the students gained valuable skills and learned about business. Much has changed in education through the years, but Sister Margo has continued to touch her students' lives with a mixture of love and learning.

'Nebraska's' Reviews



THUMBS UP to the mostly positive reviews "Nebraska" received after premiering in Cannes Thursday. The film, directed by Nebraska native Alexander Payne and written by Yankton-born Bob Nelson, was mostly shot in northeast Nebraska. Some critics were calling "Nebraska" a minor work in the Payne library, but all agreed that it is a touching story about families, friends and Middle America. Bruce Dern and the rest of the cast have gotten high marks for their performances, too. We look forward to weighing in with our own opinion when "Nebraska" opens stateside Nov. 22.

Oklahoma's Problem



THUMBS DOWN to the gang at Westboro Baptist Church, the lunatic congregation out of Kansas who have made a name for themselves by protesting at military funerals and other events to damn America and its "pro-gay" agenda. The church's latest act of stupidity occurred this week when Westboro's Fred Phelps Jr. blamed the devastating Oklahoma tornado on NBA basketball player Jason Collins, who recently revealed he was gay. Kevin Durant of the Oklahoma City Thunder lauded Collins for the move. So, in the wake of the tornado carnage, Phelps tweeted: "OK Thunder's Durant flips God by praising fag Collins. God smashes OK. You do the math." Phelps later went on to praise "God's wonderful wrath in Oklahoma." This "church" is too easy of a target anymore, for their cold-hearted idiocy speaks for itself. All we can say is, no one can ever accuse the Westboro-ers of being demure. Unfortunately.

ONLINE OPINION

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

LATEST RESULTS:

Will the rising price of gasoline affect your travel plans for the summer?
Yes74%
No18%
Not sure/too soon to tell8%
TOTAL VOTES CAST299

The *Press & 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.

CURRENT QUESTION:

Would you support a statewide water drainage ordinance?

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, May 24, the 144th day of 2013. There are 221 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On May 24, 1883, the Brooklyn Bridge, linking Brooklyn and Manhattan, was dedicated by President Chester Alan Arthur and New York Gov. Grover Cleveland.

On this date: In 1775, John Hancock was elected President of the Continental Congress, succeeding Peyton Randolph.

In 1844, Samuel F.B. Morse transmitted the message "What hath God wrought" from Washington to Baltimore as he formally opened America's first telegraph line.

In 1918, Bela Bartok's one-act opera "Bluebeard's Castle" had its premiere in Budapest.

In 1935, the first major league baseball game to be played at night took place at Cincinnati's Crosley Field as the Reds beat the Philadelphia Phillies, 2-1.

In 1937, in a set of rulings, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Social Security Act of 1935.

In 1941, the German battleship *Bismarck* sank the British battle cruiser *HMS Hood* in the North Atlantic, killing all but three of the 1,418 men on board.

In 1959, former U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles died in Washington, D.C. at age 71.

In 1961, a group of Freedom Riders was arrested after arriving at a bus terminal in Jackson, Miss., charged with breaching the peace for entering white-designated areas. (They ended up serving 60 days in jail.)

In 1962, astronaut Scott Carpenter became the second American to orbit the Earth as he flew aboard *Aurora 7*.

In 1976, Britain and France opened trans-Atlantic Concorde supersonic transport service to Washington.

In 1980, Iran rejected a call by the World Court in The Hague to release the American hostages.

In 2001, 23 people were killed when the floor of a Jerusalem wedding hall collapsed beneath dancing guests, sending them plunging several stories into the basement.

Ten years ago: Furious crowds hurled debris and insults at Algeria's President Abdelaziz Bouteflika when he visited a

town devastated by a deadly earthquake. The U.S.-led coalition ordered Iraqis to give up their weapons by mid-June. British actress Rachel Kempson, matriarch of the Redgrave acting dynasty, died in Millbrook, N.Y., four days short of her 93rd birthday.

Five years ago: British actor Rob Knox, 18, who had completed filming a minor role in "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince," was stabbed to death during a brawl in London. (His attacker, Karl Bishop, was later sentenced to life in prison.) Comedy performer and director Dick Martin of TV's "Laugh-In" fame died in Santa Monica, Calif., at age 86.

One year ago: President Barack Obama doubled down on criticism of rival Mitt Romney's background as a venture capitalist, telling a rally at the Iowa State Fairgrounds there might be value in such experience but "not in the White House." Brian Banks, a former high school football star whose dreams of a pro career were shattered by what turned out to be a false rape accusation, burst into tears as a judge in Long Beach, Calif., threw out the charge that had sent Banks to prison for more than five years.

Today's Birthdays: Comedian Tommy Chong is 75. Singer Bob Dylan is 72. Actor Gary Burghoff is 70. Singer Patti LaBelle is 69. Actress Priscilla Presley is 68. Country singer Mike Reid is 66. Actor Jim Broadbent is 64. Actor Alfred Molina is 60. Singer Rosanne Cash is 58. Actress Kristin Scott Thomas is 53. Rock musician Jimmy Ashurst (Buckcherry) is 50. Rock musician Vivian Trimble is 50. Actor John C. Reilly is 48. Actor Eric Close is 46. Actor Carl Payne is 44. Rock musician Rich Robinson is 44. Actor Dash Mihok is 39. Actor Bryan Greenburg is 35. Actor Owen Benjamin is 33. Actor Billy L. Sullivan is 33. Actor-rapper Jerod Mixon (aka Big Tyme) is 32. Rock musician Cody Hanson (Hinder) is 31. Dancer Mark Ballas (TV: "Dancing with the Stars") is 27. Country singer Billy Gilman is 25. Actor Cayden Boyd is 19.

Thought for Today: "It is the weakness and danger of republics, that the vices as well as virtues of the people are represented in their legislation." — Helen Maria Hunt Jackson, American author (1830-1885).

FROM THE BIBLE

He shall be called a Nazarene. Matthew 2:33. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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YOUR LETTERS

Successful Walk

Anne Becker, Yankton

On behalf of the second annual Remembrance Walk for Brianna Marie Knoll, we would like to thank the following businesses and individuals who contributed to this year's success: Yesterday's Cafe, Western Office Plus, KYNT, Kopetsky's Ace Hardware, Yankton County Observer, Yankton Press and Dakotan, KCAU-TV, Service Center Federal Credit Union, Leisure World, Kings of Oblivion, Yankton Medical Clinic and staff, Roger's Fam-