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# Paper 'n Ink...

Up and out of the way...

by Lynn Brisendine

At times living up on the Caprock is just about the best. We, those lucky enough to call this part of Texas home, escape so many devastating natural events. Hurricanes are chief among those maladies facing millions. This past week is a case in point.

The "perfect storm," a title given to a monster which whirled through the north Atlantic Ocean in the early '90s, has nothing on what is taking place as the piece is being written.

Some, way up here on the high and dry caprock of Texas, were kind of tired of hearing the constant barrage of the east coast media about this weather phenom. Many of us West Texans were thinking that this latest Hurricane ravaging the Atlantic Seaboard had nothing to do with us. Well, they are totally wrong.

Sandy, the tropical mass, joined with two other cold fronts forming a 2,000 mile wide mass of clouds. So, millions of people out east are having to contend with a deluge of rain from the south which is meeting cold air from the north and this is resulting in huge snowfalls on the back side of the systems.

In effect, these conditions have shut down New York City and Washington, D.C. Both occurrences mean much to this nation as a whole.

NYC is the marketing center of the universe. This storm has caused that massive place filled with millions to basically shut down. With it, the stock markets were closed Monday and Tuesday. Future days are optional as reports were describing three feet of water flooding the floor of the Stock Exchange. Closing Wall Street costs traders an inestimable amount of money. The big boys make thousands of trades a day, all gone for at least two days. Many other trade centers which control pricing structures all across the United States were dark for at least a day and probably more.

It would be interesting, and we will probably be able to read the statistics within a few days, of just how much money was lost over the duration of this natural disaster. Just the amounts of money lost in tolls, cab fares, subway fares, bus fares, restaurants, even Broadway was shuttered. The total money lost just from one, two or three days will be enormous.

Both these huge cities have economies which see tips making up so much of individuals' incomes. These, of course, will not be forth coming as the doors to thousands of restaurants, bars and other customer driven businesses are shut down.

Tourists who were basically trapped will remain in hotel rooms, if they had that option. The otherwise crowded Times Square was deserted with only news men and women doing their stand-ups in a place so used to an unbelievable hustle and bustle.

But those monies will fade into the works when compared to the damage being wrought, broken windows, flooded tunnels, damages to

trains and other municipal properties were massive. And that doesn't begin to tally up to what citizens who live in the area stand to lose in lost wages and property damages.

So, how else can this mess affect you and I here on the South Plains? Flight schedules have been so disrupted that flying on a plane anywhere in the lower 48 is almost impossible. The flight patterns and schedules have been tossed into utter chaos. Monday alone, 7,944 flights were cancelled in North America, another 5,751 flights were cancelled on Tuesday. And others were being cancelled for Wednesday. These figures were posted after the debacle of air travel during the weekend. Last Sunday 1,393 flights were cancelled and travelers suffered through 4,073 delays. Even three days before the storm actually began to threaten the coast last Saturday, 137 flights were cancelled and another 2,045 were delayed. In total, Hurricane Sandy caused 15,508 flight cancellations for North America since last Saturday.

Other airports across the nation were also experiencing excessive delays and cancellations, including San Francisco International Airport, Los Angeles International Airport, Denver International Airport, DFW International Airport, O'Hare International Airport, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, Tampa International Airport and Orlando International Airport. Flyers were grounded everywhere.

While this is inconvenient at the least for hundreds of thousands of passengers, the real problems are just beginning for millions of northeastern residents. Floods are predicted in many states. Other problems will come from trees still burdened with leaves catching the forecasted snow. The falling branches will knock out power while the flooding will overburden sewer systems and those affected will be without power, drinking water, even working sewage systems.

No one seemed to know when trains and subways would reopen. Saltwater flooded miles and miles of underground tunnels. Electrical systems were shorted out, tracks will be affected by the corrosive nature of the salt water.

Electric lines were down across several states and the storm continued to rage as it moves slowly across the northeast. It will take days, perhaps weeks, before any kind of normalcy can return.

Many news casters involved with covering this catastrophe compared the feeling in the area to that experienced on 9/11.

Not to labor the point, but the next time we have a sand storm, perhaps it would be appropriate to recall what bad weather really can be.



## Thinking in Type:

By Brian Brisendine

One of my favorite Halloween stories is of an actual event that took place on the spooky holiday almost 70 years ago.

Radio was the favored medium for entertainment in most homes at the time and families gathered around the big boxes in their homes to listen to exciting tales of action heroes and distressed maidens.

The sound effects and the actors and the imagination that went into radio programs of that era are lost in today's high-tech world.

But every year around this time, I get to hear bits and pieces of one of the most famous radio broadcasts of all time.

If I'm lucky, I'll catch the whole drama and at one time I had the piece on tape, but it's been lost in one of my many moves over the years.

Seventy-four years ago this Halloween, millions of Americans were reeling from the terror they felt the previous night.

On that Sunday night, they sat down in front of their radios for an evening of entertainment as was normal.

Only on that particular evening, as they listened to popular band music, a grave sounding newsmen interrupted with a special bulletin announcing that scientists were seeing explosions on the planet Mars.

The announcement stunned listeners, but the band music continued, fueling speculation on what might have been happening.

Minutes later another bulletin broke the music reporting "a huge, flaming object, believed to be a meteorite, fell on a farm" in New Jersey. People were glued to the radios waiting to find out what was going on.

The meteor, as it turned out, was actually a 30-yard wide metal cylinder that was making hissing sounds. Then the top began to "rotate like a screw" and reporter

Carl Phillips shared what he was witnessing.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is the most terrifying thing I have ever witnessed. Wait a minute! Someone's crawling. Someone or something. I can see peering out of that black hole two luminous disks -- are they eyes? It might be a face. It might be, good heavens, something's wriggling out of the shadow like a gray snake. Now it's another one, and another one, and another one. They look like tentacles to me. There, I can see the thing's body. It's large as a bear and it glistens like wet leather. But that face, ladies and gentlemen, it's indescribable. I can hardly force myself to keep looking at it, it's so awful. The eyes are black and gleam like a serpent. The mouth is kind of V-shaped with saliva dripping from its rimless lips that seem to quiver and pulse."

Phillips continued to describe what he saw.

Then the invaders took out a weapon.

"A humped shape is rising out of the pit. I can make out a small beam of light against a mirror. What's that? There's a jet of flame springing from the mirror, and it leaps right at the advancing men. It strikes them head on! Good Lord, they're turning into flame! Now the whole field's caught fire. The woods, the barns, the gas tanks

of automobiles, it's spreading everywhere. It's coming this way. About twenty yards to my right..."

Then silence. The stunned audience was soon told that people were being killed by fire, charred beyond all recognition.

The reports continued for an hour and went on to say the U.S. Army was engaged and also that New York City was being evacuated.

Listeners who tuned in at the beginning of the hour heard the disclaimer that the ensuing story was fiction. It was a rendition of H.G. Wells' novel, War of the Worlds.

Unfortunately, millions of listeners dialed in about 12 minutes into the broadcast because they had been listening to the end of another popular broadcast and took every word to heart.

The world was being invaded by Martians and panic spread quickly.

I've heard this story many times and I've seen documentaries and, believe it or not, even studied it in a mass communications class in college.

I've always been fascinated by it and by the power of entertainment and news, but it was a serious matter in 1938.

I think there's a lesson here. Have a happy Halloween, but leave the radio off!

# State Capital Highlights

Compiled by Ed Sterling, Texas Press Association



### Court puts cut to Planned Parenthood on hold...

AUSTIN — A Travis County state District Court on Oct. 26 put a temporary restraining order on the state's plan to cut off funding to Planned Parenthood.

Planned Parenthood for many years has been the largest of several organizations serving low-income women through the state-run Women's Health Program funded mainly with federal Medicaid dollars.

Pursuant to the restraining order, funding will continue until Nov. 8, when the case will be heard again in the same court. At that time, State District Judge Amy Clark Meachum will consider the validity of the state's effort to keep Planned Parenthood out of the Women's Health Program.

Planned Parenthood sued the state over a rule enacted by the Health and Human Services Commission — in accordance with a law passed by the Texas Legislature in 2011 — that allows the agency to cut off state funding to organizations that are affiliated with abortion providers.

Plans are for the Women's Health Program to forego some \$40 million from Washington, D.C., by switching to state funding only. With this impending switch, the question is whether the state's Human Resources Code, which requires federal approval to authorize the Women's Health Program, still holds water and therefore prevents the state from striking Planned Parenthood from a list of providers.

Dr. Kyle Janek is chief executive of the Health and Human Services Commission, which oversees the Women's Health Program. Janek said,

"We remain committed to enforcing state law and making sure women have access to family planning services. We'll proceed with our plans to launch a state program on Nov. 1 that achieves both those goals."

The Commission on Oct. 26 began sending a brochure to current Women's Health Program clients that explains how to find a doctor or clinic in the new program.

**Travis letter to return**  
Texas State Library and Archives Commission on Oct. 24 voted to allow the return of Col. William Barret Travis's "Victory or Death" letter to the Alamo in March.

This will be the first time for the letter to be at the Alamo since it was written there on Feb. 24, 1836, at the beginning of the historic battle. Travis wrote the letter as Mexican forces under President General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna laid siege.

Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson made the request for the historic return, the General Land Office reported. Patterson said he is working to raise \$100,000 in private donations to pay for transportation and security expenses to display the letter.

**Redistricting appeal is filed**

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott on Oct. 19 filed an appeal asking the U.S. Supreme Court to reverse the D.C. district court's decision to deny preclearance to the redistricting maps enacted by the Texas Legislature during the 2011 legislative session.

Abbott claimed the Legislature satisfied legal requirements in drawing new district boundaries and asserted the lower court

"improperly extended the Voting Rights Act beyond the limits imposed by the Constitution and created new standards that have never been recognized by the U.S. Supreme Court."

**85 mph extension opens**  
Texas Department of Transportation on Oct. 24 reported that it and the State Highway 130 Concession Company opened SH 130 between Austin and San Antonio.

The new roadway featuring a speed limit of 85 mph spans 41 miles from Mustang Ridge southeast of Austin to Interstate 10 in Seguin with the idea being to relieve congestion on Interstate 35 in and around Austin.

State Highway 130 Concession Company is under contract to operate and maintain the roadway for 50 years at no cost to the state. Beginning Nov. 11, the toll rate will be 15 cents per mile for passenger vehicles using TxTag. Cars and trucks without a TxTag may also use the road and will be billed via TxDOT's pay-by-mail service, the transportation agency reported.

**Stem cell role is touted**

Gov. Rick Perry on Oct. 26 spoke at the 1st annual Houston Stem Cell Summit, pointing out how Texas figures into the advancement of regenerative medicine "to produce safe, effective and ethical adult stem cell therapies."

Perry said the Texas Legislature, Texas Medical Board and Texas Department of Health and Human Services "have set up a regulatory framework to guide companies, institutions and physicians collaborating to produce effective stem cell research."

