

EDITORIAL  
Jill M. Friesz

Wicked weather whipped through the state on Friday evening. Even though it was forecasted, and most people seemed to be on alert and closely monitoring the sky, it seemed to catch everyone by surprise.

Unfortunately, the clouds rolled in as the street was filled with people during a local town celebration, and I was out and about with my camera taking pictures.

I was fortunate to only feel a couple rain sprinkles and hear the distant rumble of thunder before I made it back to the safety of my office. However, once I closed the door and looked out the window, the skies had opened up and the wind was howling down the street sending everyone running for cover.

It didn't take long before my nearly dead phone was blaring warnings as the wind speed and intensity of the storm had picked up. Worried about the computers in the office, I hurried around to get everything shut down and unplugged. Just as everything was safely offline, the power went out. As I sat in the dark

office, I kicked myself for not taking the time to charge my phone earlier in the day.

Luckily, I found a candle and I fumbled around for a lighter so at least there was a little light as the wind speeds increased sending the office cats and I down to the basement to wait out the worst of the storm.

I visited with many people who hunkered down in their basements, crawl spaces, or tornado shelters. If nothing else, this experience may help us be better prepared for severe weather in the future.

We were lucky. While the storm put a damper on the festivities, uprooted trees, damaged fences, sheds, quonsets, boats, campers, and docks – damage was minimal.

The destruction the same storm system caused in the eastern part of the state, including the loss of many homes and three lives is devastating.

This serves as a not-so-gentle reminder that Mother Nature can be fierce, and storm predictions and warnings should be taken very seriously.

THE WORLD  
around us

Iran Bombing

US President Donald Trump has raised the possibility of a change in leadership in Iran, after his country joined Israel in striking Iranian nuclear facilities. On Sunday, Trump posted on social media to ask “why wouldn’t there be a Regime change???” His remarks came after other top US officials stressed that toppling Iran’s leaders was not the aim of Saturday’s military action, during which US bombers targeted three sites in an effort to curtail Tehran’s nuclear program. Saturday’s strikes on three separate sites in Iran by the US came after a week of hostilities between Israel and Iran, triggered by an effort by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin to wipe out Iran’s nuclear research program.

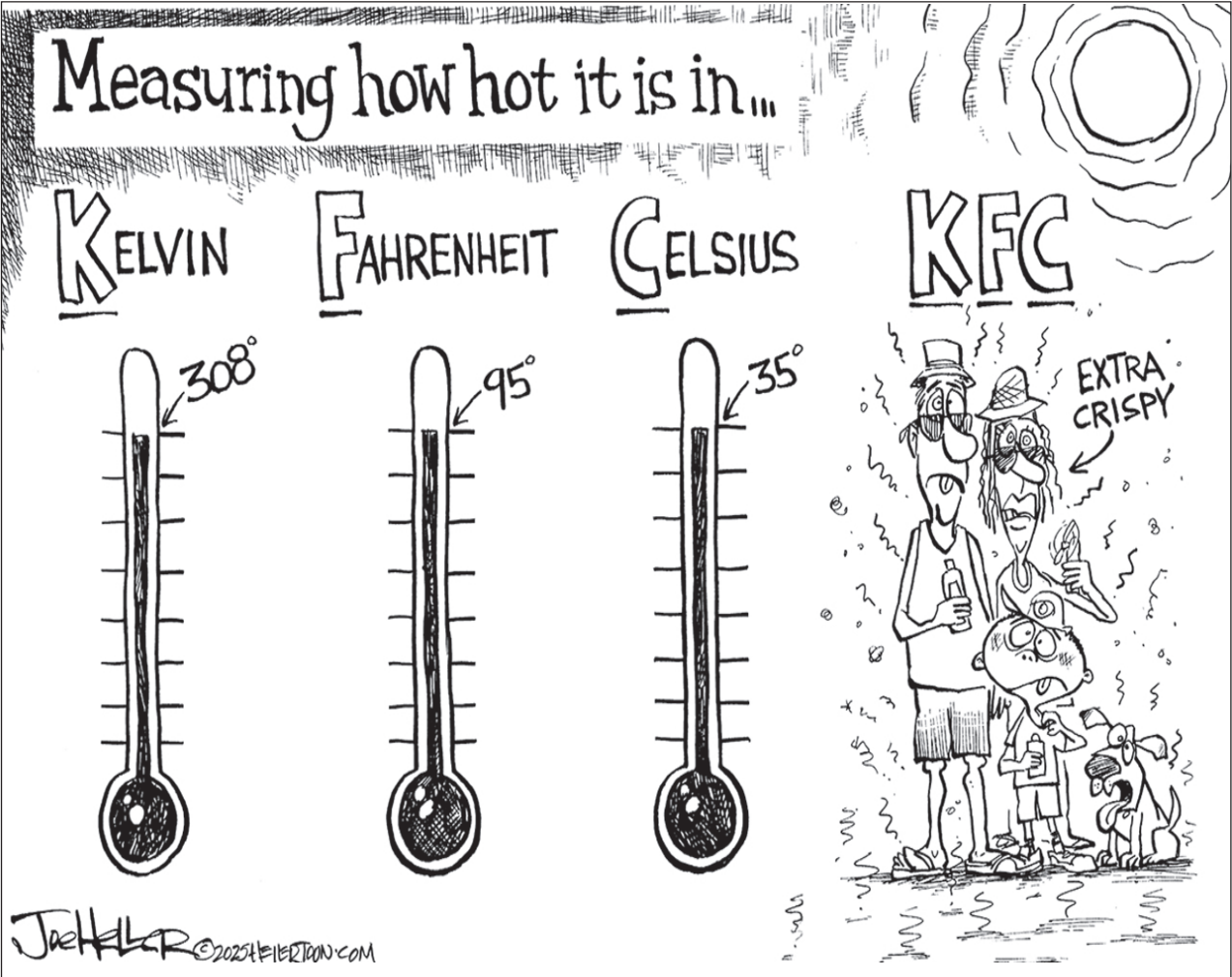
Travel Warning

The U.S. State Department on Sunday issued a “worldwide caution” alert for Americans traveling abroad, after President Donald Trump announced the U.S. had struck three nuclear sites in Iran. Trump on Saturday night announced what he called a “very successful” attack on

three sites in Iran, directly inserting the U.S. into Israel’s conflict with Iran. U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said the strikes delivered a “final blow” to Iran’s nuclear program, though a senior Israel official has told Newsweek that it was not known if it is “fully annihilated.” American officials have long been concerned Iran was working to develop nuclear weapons. Iran says its program is peaceful and focused on energy production.

Soldiers Seized

Colombia’s military says 57 soldiers have been kidnapped by civilians in the country’s south-western Micay Canyon area. It says 31 soldiers were seized on Saturday while the rest were abducted on Sunday by a group of more than 200 people. The military says the civilians are acting under pressure from dissidents of the Farc rebel group, which agreed a peace deal with the government in 2016. The mountainous region is a key zone for cocaine production and remains one of the most tense in the country’s ongoing conflict with rebel groups.



LITTLE PASTURE ON THE PRAIRIE  
When everything goes wrong

It was the night before the trip. One of the dogs had already had an “accident” on the camping gear. Due to unforeseen circumstances, everything I’d packed into the larger, better-equipped camper had been unpacked then repacked into my tiny teardrop, the overflow stacked in the cab of the pickup. In a few hours, I’d leave on a road trip I’d been looking forward to for months. I was exhausted but excited.

Once I finally got on the road, I was confident things would improve.

The first show was considerably more harried than I would have liked because I forgot traveling with a trailer (even a small one) is slower AND parking a pickup and camper in a city is not a seamless affair. After spending time I didn’t have circling the block, I found a spot half a mile away from the venue—a perfectly reasonable distance to walk if you aren’t also trying to lug a guitar, a music stand, and a box of books to sell after the show. I arrived sweating and winded.

The next day, I was driving deep into the mountains to play a festival celebrating ranching, food, music, and community, my four favorite things to celebrate. The weather forecast wasn’t great for an outdoor festival—cold and rainy—but I was still undaunted. I live on a ranch afterall! We are used to working in all kinds of weather. Plus, I’d packed lots of layers and extra boots and blankets.

The first set of boots

was soaked all the way through within minutes of arriving. I’d parked in the designated camping area and started walk-



Eliza Blue

ing toward the festival grounds under gray skies when the clouds suddenly began pouring down literal buckets of water. This sounds like hyperbole, but I promise it’s not. I was instantly wetter than I’ve ever been, and that included the aforementioned boots which, I soon discovered, could hold approximately a cup of water each—proving they were waterproof... from the inside anyway.

The torrential rain continued into the night. There was no point in changing into dry clothes, and I was terrified to put on my second pair of boots and have the same fate befall them as had befallen the first.

Meanwhile, the rain provided me the opportunity to discover that the teardrop had a fairly sizable leak in the roof. I set up the canopy meant to cover the outdoor galley kitchen at the rear of the camper, over the top of the canopy instead. This stopped the leak, but meant I was left cooking in the rain.

The rain slowed briefly as night fell, but I woke in the middle of the night to the sound of water sloshing over my head. The rain was no longer running off the canopy, but pooling along the frame and thumping against the

roof. As the wind began to pick up, all I could think about was the whole thing collapsing. I stumbled out in my jam-

mies, hastily donned raincoat, the second pair of boots (The wet pair was in the cab of the pickup), and managed to empty the canopy. I also poured a few pitchers of water on myself and into my second pair of boots. I rightly assumed that meant I was going to spend the next two days with wet feet, which also meant no matter how many layers I piled on, I

was cold.

By the next afternoon, I’d lost my voice. Then, about halfway home—and I promise again I am not making this up—one side of the hitch to the camper cracked in half. The mobile car repair guy who came to weld it back together (on a Sunday afternoon no less) told me I was lucky it hadn’t completely fallen apart. As he lay on the ground in the damp gravel on a random Montana roadside, the clouds parted, and the sun appeared for the first time in days.

“That hitch is stronger now than when you bought it,” he said when he was done. And I had to chuckle, because I definitely am too.

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