

OPINION

REVIEW EDITORIALS

Drive safely in winter

State patrol offers motorists advice

You may have noticed winter is here.

The shorter days, cold and snow are dead giveaways. Life in Iowa means dealing with such conditions for three, four, five, sometimes six or more months a year.

Winter weather blew into the area in late November, and we had another blast at the end of the week. It was a full package, with freezing rain, snow, cold and wind. Brrr.

Although this is an annual occurrence, it seems important to remind people to slow down, take care and be cautious while driving. Every year, people drive too fast, resulting in them skidding off the road, sliding through red lights and stop signs, and striking other vehicles and various objects.

So, it's important to provide a refresher for people who have driven in winter conditions before but seem to have forgotten the basics, as well as new drivers, either in their first year before the wheel, or because they moved here from places that aren't . . . blessed . . . with such a variety of seasons.

The Iowa State Patrol recommends preparing for safety before you start driving. Clear off your windshield, scraping away snow and ice. Make sure your vehicle is warmed up and your windows are clear.

Fill your vehicle up, no matter how long the trip. If you get stuck in frigid conditions, you will be glad you did.

Turn on your headlights, especially in snowy or foggy conditions. You might think you can see fine — but this allows other drivers to see you.

Make room. Time it so there are five to six seconds between you and other vehicles, especially snowplows.

Speaking of time, don't try to make any. Leave earlier and plan on getting to your destination when it is safe to do so. This is a time for smarts and safety, not stupidity and speed. Turn off your cruise control.

Watch the road and judge the traffic. If the surface is covered in snow or ice, or if you see spots of it, slow down. If traffic grows heavier, take note of that, and ensure you have the space to safely stop your vehicle.

Exits and overpasses often are slicker than other parts of the road. Slow down, be aware of the hazards and get through these areas safely.

In case of trouble, be prepared. Have a winter survival kit in your vehicle that includes jumper cables and/or a device to start your engine, an ice scraper and snow brush, a flashlight and a first-aid kit. Warm clothes and blankets are essentials as well.

It's a good idea to include a phone charger, water, snacks, games, music and something to read. You might be there a while.

We are just getting started. Winter weather could last for three or more months. Take this advice seriously and you won't end up out in the cold.

Don't slip up on ice

Take careful approach to recreation

Breaking the ice is important in social settings. It can be disastrous for winter anglers.

Joe Larscheid, chief of fisheries for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, is offering some sound advice for Iowans headed out for fishing and fun on lakes this winter.

It's worth heeding to avoid an icy fate, perhaps a deadly one.

Before you venture onto a frozen surface, check the ice density.

It should be a minimum of 4 inches of clear ice for fishing and 5 inches for snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles.

It is important to check each time, too.

"Check ice thickness as you make your way to your favorite fishing spot," Larscheid said.

"Ice conditions change constantly, and its thickness can vary across the lake. Trust your instincts — if the ice does not look right, don't go out."

When a lake or other body of water is covered in ice which is coated with snow, be aware of the dangers, according to the DNR.

That can insulate the ice, causing some areas to be soft and vulnerable to collapse.

River ice is 15 percent weaker than lake ice, too.

You've heard the advice to avoid the yellow snow? Ice with a bluish hue is safer than clear ice, and dark ice is suspect as well.

Slushy ice is obviously dangerous, as is a surface that is cracked or honeycomb.

The DNR offers these tips:

- No ice is 100 percent safe.
- New ice is usually stronger than old ice.
- Don't go out alone — if the worst should happen, someone will be there to call for help or to help rescue.
- Let someone know where you are going and when you will return.
- Check ice thickness as you go out — there could be pockets of thin ice or places where ice recently formed.
- Avoid off-color snow or ice. It is usually a sign of weakness.
- The insulating effect of snow slows down the freezing process.
- Bring along these basic items to help keep you safe: hand warmers, ice cleats to help prevent falls, ice picks to wear around your neck to help you crawl out of the water if you fall in, a life jacket, a floating safety rope, a whistle to call for help, a basic first-aid kit and extra dry clothes, including a pair of winter gloves.



An icy shell was all that remained of the oldest section of the former Sibley Middle School following a fire that broke out on Thursday, Dec. 7, 1978. More than 30,000 gallons of water were used to fight the fire, which caved in the upper levels of the structure. Photos by Jeff Wagner

Dec. 7, 1978, date which will live in my memory

We've all heard the famous phrase spoken by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

"Dec. 7, 1941, a date which will live in infamy," Roosevelt declared when he addressed Congress the day after the attack, asking for a formal declaration of war on Japan. These words became one of the most famous utterances in U.S. history, since that day had such long-term consequences for our country, and the world.

Those events took place a quarter of a century before I was born. However, there was another Dec. 7 that had long-term consequences for me and my hometown of Sibley, but this happened in my lifetime.

On this day, in 1978, I was in the sixth grade, attending middle school. The school was located in the center of town, just a few blocks from my house.

We got out of school around 3:15 p.m., and about 30 minutes later, a friend and I were playing catch with the football on the street in front of my home, even though it was very cold.

A man drove up and said something to my friend, who then yelled out, "The school is on fire!" We ran in excitement the few blocks back to school, and when we came around the corner, we saw the attic portion of the building already engulfed in flames.

The fire department had already arrived, and it ended up being a massive blaze. Longtime Sibley resident Jeff VandeGriend was a probationary volunteer firefighter in 1978, and this was his first big structure fire.

In a recent conversation, he recalled to me how cold it was on this day, so fighting it was a huge challenge. He was stationed on the south side of the building and remembered how the local kids were in a festive mood at first, knowing they did not have to go to school the next day. But soon, as the fire became bigger, the mood in the crowd dramatically changed.

"It got very quiet once it sank in, once they realized they would not be returning to school there, ever. I'll always remember how quiet it got," he told me.

At one point, the fire department amazingly let some junior high kids run into the east wing to retrieve desks and other materials. One person in that group was eighth-grader Ken Huls, who would go on to become Sibley's fire chief, decades later.

I was in a group of people



Ashton and Sibley firefighters battle a blaze at the Sibley Middle School on Thursday, Dec. 7, 1978. Five fire departments helped beat the flames before they could spread to newer wings of the building, but the central portion was considered a total loss. Heat tape installed on bell tower eaves to reduce ice buildup has been blamed by investigators looking into the fire which destroyed most of the 1902 portion of the middle school.



TOM KUIPER
REVIEW COLUMNIST

on the northwest side of the block, just south of First Presbyterian Church. Just as Jeff recalls, since I was a kid, I remember initially being excited, knowing there would be no school the next day, and possibly longer. But then it seemed to hit us, a sense of apprehension, knowing our lives and the future of the town was going to be dramatically different. Our crowd got very quiet, too.

As it turned out, we were out of school for a while as the administration tried to figure out where to put those of us who no longer had a school. They moved the fifth- and sixth-graders to the small Catholic school building just a block away from the middle school. The seventh- and eighth-graders got transferred up to high school, to attend classes at a suddenly very crowded high school complex. We were off just over a week and back to school for a few days. But then, it was time for the Christmas break! Being out of school for the better part of a month, a wish come true.

However, it ended up being a classic case of "Be careful what you wish for," since being off that long, in the middle of winter was quite boring. I and most of my classmates found we actually wanted to get back to school by the time January had rolled around as

this was pre-internet, even pre-cable television.

What I most remember about the aftermath was how, over the next several months, the burned-out building became a playground for me and a few other youths in town. We would often sneak in via an open window to explore the empty building, even going up to the library where there were still some books on the shelves, along with a lot of burned material. Mostly we just liked going in there to break light bulbs and dump stuff over. (Forgive me, I was 12).

The town eventually put up a new middle school building which connected to the high school, and it is a very convenient site as the whole public-school facility is in the same location.

But my life was changed over the next few years, dealing with the aftermath of that day.

When I was a kid, back in December of 1978, the Pearl Harbor attack took place 37 years prior, and to us that event seemed like ancient history. It has now been 44 years since the middle school fire, and I can assure you the fire is ancient history. But since I, and so many other kids of that era remember the day so well, it is a day that will forever live, perhaps not in infamy, but in our memory.

If you have memories of that day which you'd like to share, please e-mail me at thomaskuiper85@gmail.com, and it may be subject of a future column.

Tom Kuiper lives in Sibley. He may be reached at thomaskuiper85@gmail.com.

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OPINION

A HISTORY OF THE WAGNER FAMILY PUBLISHING BUSINESS

It was what we didn't know that counted!

CHAPTER 25
Paul Gruchow

A few months after Iowa Information bought The Sheldon Mail-Sun, Jeff and I found in Paul Gruchow in Worthington, MN, the perfect candidate to join our group as the eighth investor.

Paul had been managing editor and editor at The Daily Globe in Worthington and was highly regarded for his intellect and as an exceptional writer. My son Jeff and I had gotten to know him Saturday mornings at the Globe while we were waiting for the press crew to print that week's N'West Iowa REVIEW.

When Vern Vance and his family had decided to sell the Globe, following the untimely death of their son Bob, Bob's brother Jim, along with long-time employees Paul and Owen Van Esen, bought it. They continued to operate it for a few years, maintaining the excellence, credibility and quality the subscribers had come to expect.

When eventually those three sold the paper to two Des Moines investors, Paul rented space in the old Worthington Post Office building and concentrated on writing essays and books on the importance of the environment and living life. Some of his most famous books were "Boundary Waters: The Grace of the Wild," "The Necessity of Empty Places," "Worlds Within Worlds," and "Images of Home" with illustrations by photographer Jim Brandenburg. It was Brandenburg, when he was a Globe



PETER W. WAGNER
PUBLISHER

staff photographer, who first got Jeff interested in photography.

Gruchow hesitated when I first approached him on joining our cause, but he soon bought in, saying community newspapers were essential to the future of the communities they serve.

Tired of the daily grind, as so often happens with working journalists, Paul had no interest in returning to working for a newspaper but felt reconnected to his roots in helping us build our regional publication.

Gruchow was a valuable addition to our organization. He coached our reporters, helped them develop an understanding for what was worthy of coverage and how to share the story in fresh and interesting ways.

He also helped Jeff and me better understand the general principles of good newspaper management and operation. Our ideas merged easily, since almost everything we knew about publishing had been taught us by someone at the Globe during our days printing there.

Paul also was a good addition to our board. He was able to explain to others on the board how the publishing business differed from

their manufacturing and retail operations. When one investor became discouraged because things were not moving quickly enough, Paul quietly bought out his share.

Meanwhile, the company was beginning to look at publishing opportunities at the Iowa Great Lakes.

There were only two publishing companies in the Okoboji area at that time. There was the Spirit Lake Beacon group which dominated the region in number and variety papers it owned: the Spirit Lake Beacon, the Millford Mail, the Lake Park News and a weekly shopper and a free distribution summer tourist tabloid.

But even with all those titles, the Beacon group fell far short of the revenue John Adams generated weekly with his regional Lake News Shopper.

Adams did it all. He sold much of the advertising himself, did many of the actual ad layouts, took the pasted-up pages to a central printing plant and, with the help of a few others, delivered the paper door-to-door around the lakes each week. He worked hard, took care of his customers and was greatly admired for his commitment.

Our family's first venture into the Iowa Great Lakes market was a tabloid paper published in conjunction with the Nodland family and Cutty's Resort. Printed monthly on yellow newsprint, it was titled Cutty's Bear Facts and featured updates on upcoming special programs and events at the Okoboji Cutty's location. The name

came from the big wooden bear, carved from the trunk of a tree, that was located at the entry to the resort.

But it was unsuccessful. To have the right to produce the paper and keep the revenue from any ads we sold into it, we had to include a great deal of general membership information that made printing it too costly. Additionally, few area businesses were interested in buying advertising. It seemed most Cutty's owners brought everything they wanted or needed with them and seldom left the facility — with its indoor swimming pool, outdoor play areas and excellent miniature golf course — to go into a nearby town.

The project lost money from the beginning and soon had to be shut down.

Our next effort was what over the years became OKOBOJI Magazine. Again, the idea was to partner with some lakes area facility to take advantage of exclusive distribution to owners and guests.

This time, we partnered with John Long who had just updated two existing facilities as Village East and Village West. Village East was the former Holiday Inn and Village West the former Vacation Village. We called the new magazine Village Adventures.

This second lakes publication was done in a slick magazine format with every page printed in full color at an off-site location.

There were two problems with this plan with one similar to that which existed with Cutty's Bear Facts. Although

Long's team members were excited to have their own in-house magazine, they were not interested in contributing to the overhead. Not even by advertising in the product. But they did insist on having information on the resorts they wanted in every issue.

Further, Long's management team decided after the first issue, that we could not sell advertising to any area business in competition to any enterprise located at either of their locations.

That meant we could not sell advertising to restaurants, gift shops, boating supply or boat sales operations, women's fashion stores or event locations. That greatly limited our opportunity for advertising revenue.

Readership and reach also were problems since the magazine was only distributed to room guests at the two Village resorts.

We published three issues under the Village Adventures title and then broke away from the partnership and produced a fourth edition as Okoboji Adventures. A few issues later we changed the name to simply OKOBOJI Magazine. That is the title we have used ever since.

Early issues were direct mailed to addresses of preferred guests at the Village resorts as well as the addresses provided to us by Okoboji's three boat dealers, Bob Burns Chevrolet-Cadillac, select real estate firms, and gift and decorating boutiques.

Today, under the editorial direction of Myrna Wagner, OKOBOJI is published seven

times each year and distributed to more than 10,000 families.

Looking back, those first issues of Village Adventures, Okoboji Adventures and OKOBOJI Magazine stand out because of the unique and exceptional photos taken by Jeff Wagner.

That early experience gave him a love for the Iowa Great Lakes that has made it a second home for him and his family every weekend during the summer.

It also explains the continued commitment to photographic art — as well as excellent reporting and writing — for the magazine by Rylan Howe today.

Our small success with OKOBOJI Magazine led to further investments in that region. The Wagner family and Paul formed a second corporation, Iowa Great Lakes Information, and purchased the Spirit Lakes Beacon, Millford Mail, Lake Park News and Okobojian. But it was a disaster that we'll look at in a future chapter.

Meanwhile, Paul moved to Northfield, MN, where he taught at St. Olaf College, and at Concordia College in Moorhead, MN, as well as continued to write essays and books.

He remained involved with Iowa Information with declining interest until his death on Feb. 22, 2004, in Duluth, MN.

Peter W. Wagner lives in Sibley. He is the founder/publisher of The N'West Iowa REVIEW and may be reached at puw@iowainformation.com.

True holiday spirit is giving with nothing expected in return

Among other things, the holidays are a time of giving and receiving gifts.

The question most often asked of people is, "What did you get?" Much less frequently asked is, "What did you give?" Invariably, the inquiries concern for material gifts.

Purchasing a gift can certainly be thoughtful and a wonderful gesture, especially when it's backed up by your actions.

However, the most valuable presents are those that aren't sold in stores.

When you give your love, your time, help someone in need, aid another in solving a problem or overcoming an obstacle, you give something priceless.

The true spirit of the holidays is giving. When you give, you receive. You can get anything in life you



BRYAN GOLDEN
DARE TO LIVE WITHOUT LIMITS

want by helping enough others get what they want. But only if you give without expecting anything in return.

The impact of giving isn't limited to just the holiday season, it's something that has value all year.

The power of giving is often underestimated.

When you give unconditionally, you don't just impact the recipient; you start a chain reaction. By brightening the life of one person you also

affect all those who they then touch.

No gesture of giving or kindness is too small. Holding the door open at a store, helping someone carry groceries to their car, letting another car in front of you, saying please and thank you, and saying hello to a stranger you pass on the sidewalk are some of the many things you can do daily.

For family and friends, your time is one of the most precious gifts you can offer. Are you there for others when they need you? Do you offer a hand without being asked? Do you help out when asked?

Too often, people get caught up in their own desires, thus losing sight of the needs of others. A person who tries to get through life by looking out for himself or herself first is invariably frustrated. Often this person views life as a competition

to determine who can accumulate more.

On the other hand, those who are concerned for the well-being of others are happier, more content, and more satisfied. By giving without expecting, they in turn receive the things they need.

Giving is a simple concept that works every time it is applied. There will be people who don't appreciate what you do, but it doesn't matter. You are giving without anticipating anything in return. Besides, there will be many more who are thankful for your efforts.

If you don't treat others well, buying a gift won't compensate for your behavior. The recipient might like what you give them, but it won't make up for your actions. You can't bribe someone to forgive the way you treat them with a present.

The best gift you can receive is the joy of making someone else happy. Being unselfish is a wonderful way to live. When you give with no ulterior motives, your actions are seen as genuine. Should you expect something in return, your behavior is always suspect. We all know people who do nice things only when they want something in return.

Make giving a daily routine. Don't start and end with the holiday season. Every day is a good day to do something nice.

When people feel good due to your actions, you can't help but feel happy yourself. And that is priceless. The most significant action you can take is having a positive impact on the lives of others.

Bryan Golden is the author of "Dare to Live Without Limits."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Farmers should be part of the solution

To The REVIEW:

Farmers in the United States, and around the globe, are being unfairly targeted.

They provide us with a reliable and affordable source of food. They deserve our thanks and respect.

Instead, they are needlessly attacked by the climate change zealots, accused of contributing to the destruction of our world.

Are farmers unnecessarily harming the planet? Let's look at the facts.

United States agriculture accounts for less than 10 percent of all GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

In fact, U.S. ag ranks far behind other sources of emissions, such as transportation (29 percent), electricity (25 percent), industrial (23 percent) and commercial and residential sources (13 percent).

On a net basis, agriculture in the United States eliminates more GHGs than it produces, removing approximately 730 million metric tons of CO2 equivalent in 2017.

Beef cattle have been specifically targeted for the methane they emit, but a recent study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture concluded they account for only 3.3 percent of GHG emissions.

Over the last 70 years, U.S. ag has tripled production while land usage, along with usage of energy and fertilizer, has remained almost constant.

If climate change advocates get their way and implement programs that would cut GHGs by 50 percent in the next eight years — their stated goal — it would devastate American agriculture.

But don't take my word for it. Look at what has happened in other countries that have caved to climate change followers.

In Sri Lanka, where activists pressured the government to implement strict organic farming policies, it led to shortages, starvation and eventually a revolt that even caused the country's prime minister to flee.

Other countries have also bucked to the climate movement, with devastating consequences. The Netherlands, Canada, Spain and New Zealand, just to name a few, implemented strict rules

regarding the use of fertilizer and GHG emissions. Not coincidentally, all these countries have suffered from food shortages and high prices.

There is a way to solve the problem of GHG emissions. It's called working together and not accusing and blaming.

The government must work with the farmers, instead of dictating to them.

Advances in technology, and our farmers and ranchers working with common-sense environmentalists, will be the key to the problem, just as it has on previous occasions when agriculture and environmentalism have come into conflict. The key to that solution, however, is working with "common-sense environmentalists."

This is not just wishful thinking. Congress has been working with U.S. agriculture for years to enact voluntary, incentive-based initiatives to reduce GHGs and to achieve other obtainable environmental objectives.

These measures include no-till farming, the planting of cover crops and specialty formulated cattle diets to reduce discharges. They don't overapply fertilizers first of all because it's too expensive to

waste, and secondly, they are all for clean water and better air quality. Why wouldn't they? They drink and breathe like the rest of us.

Farmers and ranchers have been working hard for years to find common-sense solutions to climate change. Let's have them be part of the solution.

Bill Pearson,
Sibley

Carbon capture needed for market

To The REVIEW:

Agriculture is Iowa's most profitable industry and has led to wealth and prosperity for many, especially in rural communities.

In recent weeks, we have seen high quality Plymouth County farm land exceed \$26,000 an acre and Sioux County farm land sell for \$30,000 an acre.

In the last 20 years, ethanol has become a crucial component of our state's agricultural sector.

One out of every two rows of corn planted in Iowa will be processed into ethanol.

As genetic technology has increased yields, ethanol production and livestock feed demand have created competitive markets for each

bushel.

Our new challenge is focused on clean climate initiatives. Whether its biogas from livestock methane, CO2 from ethanol production or nitrate runoff from crop production, the American farmer has been asked to do their part through innovation, resource management and production efficiency to improve the climate we all share.

For ethanol, the federal government has offered incentives such as 45Q and 45Z to develop CO2 sequestration methods. These incentives can be utilized by those who answer the call to innovate. Public or private, the incentives are available.

Because most producers cannot develop and implement individual carbon capture and sequestration programs economically, Summit Carbon Solutions has answered the call to partner with ethanol plants and other industries to research, develop and implement a rigorously vetted sequestration plan using the most technologically advanced methods available.

By participating in this effort, ethanol plants will lower their carbon intensity

scores by half and produce a renewable fuel that will be the cleanest burning, lowest carbon fuel on the planet.

The low carbon molecule will also be used as a base feedstock for sustainable aviation fuel, a 100 billion-gallon-per-year worldwide market.

Here in northwest Iowa, landowner support has been strong. As of November, Summit has acquired 58 percent of the overall route in Iowa, 51 percent project wide and local easement approval at:

- Sioux: 68 percent
- Cherokee: 69 percent
- Plymouth: 73 percent
- Woodbury: 62 percent
- O'Brien: 73 percent

By partnering with groups like Summit Carbon Solutions, ethanol producers will provide a premium, cleaner burning fuel to the automotive and aviation sector, and those returns will support their local economies. The result will be strong corn markets, secure jobs, and strong land values for Iowa.

Siouxland Energy Cooperative Board of Directors: Steve Post, Myron Gradert, Bob Van Gelder, Dave Winterfeld, Kelly Niewenhouse, Marlin Faber, Steve Rehder, Craig Solsma, Eric Vander Stouwe, Sioux Center

EDITORIAL PAGE LESSON

■ **What's an editorial?** An editorial is the newspaper's view on an issue. In developing editorials, employees of the newspaper consider what, in their collective view, is best for the community. Editorials are meant to suggest a course of action and to foster discussion.

■ **What's a column?** A column is one person's opinion on any given issue, published as a regular feature in the newspaper. A column does not necessarily reflect the views of the paper.

■ **What's a letter to the editor?** A letter to the editor is

a reader's view on an issue, submitted to the newspaper for publication. Submit your letter online at www.nwestiowa.com/ submit. All letters require a verifiable name, phone number and signature. They also are subject to editing as needed.