

Don't believe everything you hear

A recently televised video of President Barack Obama being confronted by an Illinois farmer elicited a flashback, the recalling of a conversation I had with my dad decades ago while I was a student at SDSU.

At the time I was taking an entomology elective class to meet my science requirements, and our lectures included discussions of control methods. My professor, with graying hair, recalled that as a graduate student, it wasn't uncommon for him or his classmates to mix up a batch of DDT while "out in the field" on a research assignment.

We had learned enough in his class, by that time, to know that DDT was pretty powerful stuff.

"I thought it spelled the end of the fly," Dad said, as I was describing what I had just learned about this deadly chemical concoction.

In the late 1950s, my dad and uncle decided to use DDT to keep flies in check on our dairy farm. The stuff worked amazingly well, he said, to the point that what they were seeing was hard to comprehend at times.

Every spring, the milking barn would be thoroughly cleaned and a fresh coat of whitewash was applied. "We decided to put the DDT into the whitewash," Dad said. "This was in probably April. By late August, a fly could land on the wall, and after a few seconds, it would be dead."

DDT was developed as the first of the modern insecticides early in World War II. It was initially used with great effect to combat malaria, typhus, and the other insect-borne human diseases among both military and civilian populations.

Scientists began to notice something, however. While DDT is remarkably effective in killing pests, it can also be extremely dangerous to humans and the environment.

It nearly caused the demise of the peregrine falcon and the bald eagle. The Environmental Protection Agency banned the pesticide's use in the United States effective Dec. 31, 1972.

That's why you and I can see something today that wasn't possible 40 years ago – a bald eagle, in flight, in the wild. For years, my elementary school classmates and I could only see the majestic bird during field trips to the Great Plains Zoo in Sioux Falls.

We'll let the flashback end and get back to real time now.

During his recent stops in Illinois, one farmer told Obama, "Please don't challenge us with more rules and regulations from Washington, DC." Later, in Alpha, IL, the president fielded a similar comment, specifically about Environmental Protection Agency rules. The questioner said there should be some common sense so "we don't regulate farmers out of business."

In both cases, Mr. Obama responded that farmers might be hearing unfounded rumors. "If you hear something is happening, but it hasn't happened, don't always believe what you hear," he said.

There is a great deal of validity to the president's comments. It's advice we suggest South Dakota farmers take seriously. It is easy these days, when government is tagged as an evil bogeyman out to get us, to believe everything you hear.

It's natural, too, to begin thinking that the unbelievable is, well, believable when you constantly hear it from what you believe to be credible sources.

For example, the very first piece of legislation authored by

South Dakota Rep. Kristi Noem last April was the Farm Dust Regulation Prevention Act of 2011. Noem claims her legislation is needed to stop the

BETWEEN THE LINES



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"threat of burdensome new EPA dust regulations."

We can't help but wonder if the true purpose of her bill is to simply keep alive the myth that the EPA will soon be descending

upon all of us who rely on the agriculture industry.

Lisa P. Jackson, EPA administrator, must constantly refute the stuff put out by politicians like Noem who evidently don't mind misleading their constituents.

Among Jackson's list of myths:

The "cow tax." "There's never been plans, not by me, certainly not by anyone in this administration, to tax cows as a way to deal with the fact that they certainly have a contribution to greenhouse gas," Jackson said last April at the North American Agricultural Journalism annual meeting in Washington.

Dust regulation. Dust is a regulated "conventional pollutant" under the Clean Air Act. The EPA regulates "particulate matter," or dust particles in the air, especially tiny particles that can affect lung disease and contribute to heart disease. The Clean Air Act requires the agency to look at the standards every five years and determine if they should be changed, raised or lowered. A scientific board has reviewed the matter of dust and has (PM-10, of a size of 10 microns or higher) and has recommended lowering the current standard. The EPA staff subsequently recommended either retaining the current standards or lowering the tolerated amounts.

The EPA has held five of a series of "listening sessions in rural America," in preparation for the decision. She says some in agriculture incorrectly imply that the EPA is "making decisions about dust regulations that would be totally unimplementable and – in some cases — nonsense."

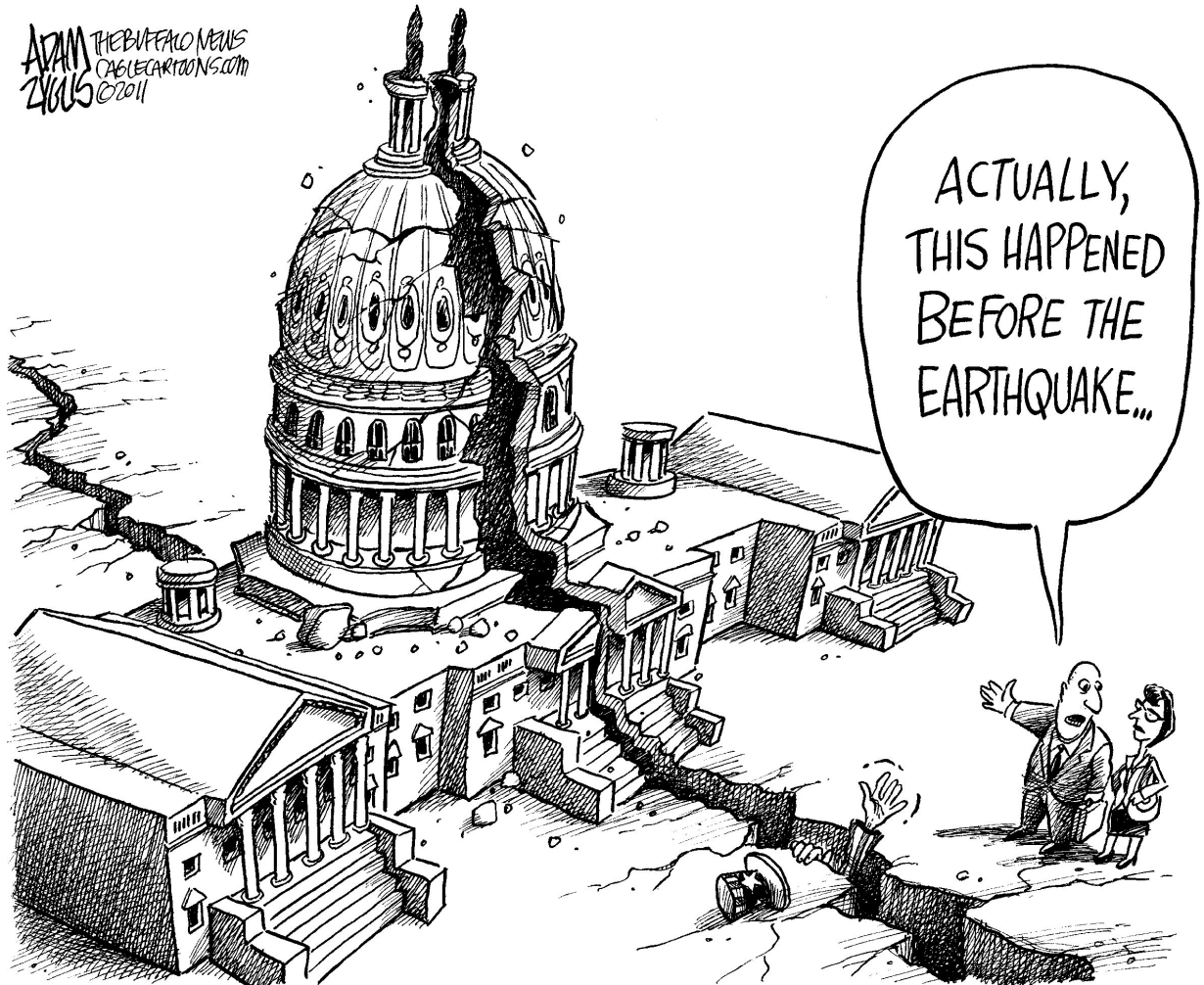
Spray drift. "There are allegations out there that this agency has a 'no spray drift' policy," Jackson said. She says that would be like saying "we can never have an accident." The agency is looking at a label revision to clarify that there is no such policy and won't be one.

Jackson says the myths are a problem because they "distract us from the real work we should be doing," of "very real environmental concerns that impact American people but that touch agriculture." Myths "tend to be born from and breed a culture of distrust." She says the agency must protect air and water quality "in a way that 'farmers and ranchers are able to do their jobs.'"

Noem certainly isn't the sole EPA negative myth-spreader in Congress. Several of her colleagues find that spreading misinformation about the agency is an easy way to make political hay.

Since the motives of Noem and her colleagues are less than pure, we can only repeat this piece of advice over and over: Don't believe everything you hear.

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Audible only by hearts once broken

"Here, penciled in inches up a doorframe, these little marks mark the growth of a child, impatient to get on with it, a child stretching his neck in a hurry to leave nothing here but an absence in a doorframe." North of Alliance, Ted Kooser, Poet Laureate

This week across America, millions of students, fresh out of high school, are heading off to college.

Dutifully, parents fill vehicles with suitcases and crates, backpacks and bedding, electronics and appliances.

Fighting back tears and swallowing hard, they wonder where the time has gone.

Here is the baby they brought home from the hospital 18 years ago. Now, a towering six feet, his eyes squinting in the mid-day sun, he says, "Please, don't cry, Mom."

Can this be the toddler who took her first steps on this very sidewalk they now travel? Today, a standout center sailing away on a basketball scholarship, she consoles, "Don't worry, Dad, I'll be home for Thanksgiving."

This is the preteen who played pranks just to see his mother scream and told jokes only to hear her laugh. Trying to dismiss air saturated with melancholy, he quips, "Hey, Ma, how many parents does it take to send a child away to college...."

All packed and not so ready to go, a father removes his ball cap, brushes sweat from his brow and wonders if he prepared his child for all the lessons ahead.

A mother bites her nails as the countdown continues to an empty bedroom and a blank place at the table. With a sense of urgency, she frets over what wasn't said and wonders, "Is this the right time?"

Gone are the days she cozier up to her parents' loving embrace. Vanished are the times he wanted to spend with Mom and Dad, instead of friends. Absent is the sense they are all safe and sound under one roof.

Setting out over hills and dales, tunnels and thoroughfares, the mood, heavy as deadweight, hangs over these caravans of families.

Parents wishing they could turn around and roll back the clock.

Younger siblings taunting and teasing as they egg on shared rivalries.

Sending children off to college is a reckoning with one's own mortality. As our children grow older, so we grow older.

Embedded in this journey, we wrestle with our need to be needed. As children become more independent, they're dependence diminishes.

Throughout this journey a reliance on trust and a battle with fear comingle. We want to believe our children are prepared, but we worry anyway.

Actually, this is not so much a sending as it is a passing. Audible only by hearts, once broken in the same manner, is the collective mourning of mothers and fathers of first-time college students everywhere agonizing over letting go.

Even though parents will see their sons and daughters again, they know from this day forward, it will never be the same.

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A resident of Southeast South Dakota, Paula Bosco Damon is a national award-winning columnist. Her writing has won first-place in competitions of the National Federation of Press Women, South Dakota Press Women and Iowa Press Women. In the 2009 and 2010 South Dakota Press Women Communications Contest, her columns took five first-place awards. To contact Paula, email boscodamonpaula@gmail.com, follow her blog at my-story-your-story.blogspot.com and find her on FaceBook.

MY STORY YOUR STORY



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S.D. EDITORIAL ROUNDUP

The Associated Press
The Daily Republic, Mitchell: Aug. 17
Hang in there, SD; things will get better

We are staunch believers in all things South Dakota, and especially this state's beauty, recreation opportunities and unique attractions.

So as we continue to hear that visitation numbers are down this year at attractions that matter to Mitchell-area residents, we are disappointed, but chalk it up to things we cannot help, such as high gas prices, flooding and extreme weather.

Recently, a report in *The Daily Republic* noted that visitation at the Corn Palace is down about 13 percent from this time last year. The number of visitors rose 11.2 percent from 2008 to 2009 and gained slightly, at 1.4 percent, from 2009 to 2010. Through the first few months of this tourist season, numbers are down about 26,000.

The Associated Press reported that the number of attendees at the annual Sturgis motorcycle rally was down, too. Although official numbers have not yet been released, the AP's announcement confirms anecdotal reports we have heard in the days since the Sturgis rally began.

The venerable Corn Palace Stampede Rodeo saw a decrease in guests this year, too. Although the rodeo always is held during the warmest days of the summer, this summer's rodeo-week heat was oppressive, hot and humid.

We can't help the heat, nor can we help the flooding that has ravaged the recreation industry along the Missouri River. Likewise, we cannot do anything about high gas prices.

What we can do, however, is remember that South Dakota is a place that people want to visit. Our ample beauty is free of

charge, as is the agrarian charm of the state and the friendliness of its people. There's a lot to do here.

No doubt, South Dakota could use the influx of tourism money right now. Those additional sales tax dollars would come in handy. But we're confident things will turn around and definitely we're not yet ready to panic.

Argus Leader: Aug. 14
South Dakotans volunteer, care about neighbors

It feels good to give. Just ask the 37.2 percent of South Dakotans who volunteer their time to programs in the state.

The state ranked fifth nationally in the federal study by the Corporation for National and Community Service. The state ranked sixth overall last year.

Midwest states typically rank high — Utah, Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska fill out the top five spots. But volunteering overall fell nationally.

Not here in South Dakota. When times get tough the past year, we kept lending a hand. South Dakota has 230,700 volunteers who have given more than 23 million hours of volunteer time.

That's a huge number. Think about it — we're one of the least-populated states, giving some of the most time.

And that's just people volunteering for organized programs.

What about those of us bringing a meal to a sick friend, baby-sitting a neighbors' child for free or continuing to rake or shovel, just a bit beyond our own property, to help the person who lives next door?

We know we do all that, and more. In the spirit of community, of kindness and of giving.

At a time when many of us worry about how to serve our own

families, we're still going out and serving others.

What an accomplishment, South Dakota.

Watertown Public Opinion: Aug. 17
Legislative districts should mix city and rural

As you have read in the *Public Opinion* from our Capitol Correspondent Bob Mercer, work is under way to redraw the boundary lines of the various House and Senate districts in South Dakota. This once-every-decade effort is required to match political representation with the changes in population from 10 years earlier.

The 2011 redistricting process presents an opportunity to fix what we and many others in our community see as a problem with our current geographic boundaries. If you toss out Sioux Falls and Rapid City, Watertown is the only class A city in the state that has no rural territory as part of its district. Said another way, Aberdeen, Mitchell, etc., all have senators and representatives who are concerned with both the goings on in their city as well as what's happening in rural areas around their community.

Why is Watertown different? We don't know.

Thus, we think it's time for Rep. Val Rausch (R-Big Stone City), as speaker of the House and chair of the redistricting committee, to give this issue a long, hard look and, we hope, rectify this problem. And this is only going to get worse as the majority of House and Senate seats move to the two big cities in our state, Sioux Falls and Rapid City, in 2012.

Before 2012, our Legislature always had more rural legislators than city legislators. As of the 2010 Census, that's going to change. Sioux Falls and Rapid City

will now (more than likely) have more legislative votes than the rest of the state combined.

Hence, changing Watertown's District 5 and 6 so the two senators and the four representatives would have part of the city of Watertown as well as rural areas around Watertown as part of their district will be helpful to the overall health and well-being of our state and region.

Ask any merchant, our Chamber office or our mayor about the importance of out-of-town folks coming to Watertown for shopping, health care and entertainment. The answer is: vital. Why not make sure that cohesiveness is enhanced by splitting Watertown into two districts, with rural and city population in both?

South Dakota's rural population continues to decline. However, the importance of that segment to our success as a state does not. The decline simply represents the greater efficiencies for farming and ranching that began in the early 1900s with mechanization and continues at an ever-faster pace today. We need fewer people to operate the ever-larger farm machinery on ever-larger farms and ranches.

Having representatives in Pierre, though, who understand and are attuned to rural and city needs is vital to the success of our state. That's not going to be easy to do with the majority of seats landing in Sioux Falls and Rapid City. However, by keeping a rural/city split in the other Class A cities of the state, including Watertown, we can create an environment where our rural interests and city interests stay alive for at least another 10 years. Plus, there's ample evidence it has been working quite well in the other Class A cities. So why not allow Watertown's District 5 and 6 to become part of that effort as well?

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