**For Release Wednesday, October 23, 2019**

**Capitol View**

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**Climate Change in Nebraska? Wait Until This Afternoon**

Ask a Nebraskan about climate change and they’ll likely tell you to wait until this afternoon.

A fellow Baby Boomer friend wrote a social media post from her home in the Panhandle that said: “Hail, 75 and 80 degree temps, thundersnow, 5 inches of snow. All in one week!”

You likely remember the epic March weather that brought national attention to Nebraska’s weather. You have also likely read at least something about eco-campaigner Greta Thunberg. She’s the 16-year-old Swedish schoolgirl who went from anonymity to leader of a global movement in little more than a year in the fight against climate change.

Move over Al Gore. There’s a new sheriff in town and she’s blaming the Baby Boomer generation for leaving things in such a mess. No, wait. Al Gore was born in 1948 and he actually won the Nobel Prize Laureate in 2007 for “informing the world of the dangers posed by climate change.” And you thought he just invented the internet! That was a popular joke. He never claimed that he did.

With Nebraska’s first measurable snowfall already on the books last week and statewide temperatures in the 70s again today, it’s a good time to look back at the climate awareness history we might remember as well as the weather.

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Raise your hand if you remember the first Earth Day, April 22, 1970. What did you do that day? I was working at a newspaper and probably raised a glass in honor of the day. Maybe it was a glass of milk from one of those reused glass bottles that I took home with my groceries in a reusable paper bag.

Or maybe I covered an Earth Day rally or listened to a lecture about native grasses and soil types and their importance to the ecosystem of the oft-windswept prairie that I could see from the window of my house. I didn’t have a family yet, but when I did about a decade later, we diapered our first-born with cloth and washed the dirty diapers because that’s the way we were raised.

I probably watched reports on Earth Day activities on the single TV set, or maybe the lone radio, because we didn’t have a device in every room. The phone was lifeless black and hung on the wall. The internet may have been someplace by then, but we barely had computers that did anything but organize words for our newspaper bosses.

Google was something your eyes did if you saw an attractive member of the opposite sex. Libraries had encyclopedias and we had to go there to look things up. If you needed official comment from a source, you had to pray that they would be in their office when you called and would answer the phone.

Sorry Miss Thunberg, we were a lot more eco-friendly than the youth of today. Have you been to a college campus or shopping mall lately and actually seen people making eye contact or talking face-to-face? We didn’t have a plethora of fast-food restaurants and we picked up our trash. Keep America Beautiful meant something to us in those days.

While we’re at it, we didn’t drink water from plastic bottles, so we didn’t have to recycle them. We had to use water fountains or carry around old-school metal things called canteens like our fathers and uncles used during the war. Coffee came almost exclusively in ceramic mugs, which we washed and re-used. Straws were made of paper.

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We used wind and solar power to dry our clothes and passed clothing that we had outgrown along to our siblings. We packed fragile items to store or to send to someone in old newspapers. No Styrofoam or bubble wrap. We used ink pens that were refillable and walked or rode bicycles before we could afford automobiles. Our lawnmower didn’t have an engine either.

In addition to Earth Day, Greenpeace was founded in 1970, the World Wildlife Foundation in 1961 and the first scientific paper on man-made carbon dioxide, the “greenhouse effect,” was published in 1972.

Pioneering laws were introduced in the U.S. in the 1970s, such as the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Air Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act. The first United Nations Earth Summit was held in 1992.

Sorry Miss Thunberg. I take issue with your statement that we’re failing you and young people are starting to understand our betrayal. You say the eyes of future generations are upon us and if we choose to fail you that you won’t forgive us.

Your understanding of forgiveness needs some work, but what you really need to concentrate on is your facts. It’s easy to throw stones, but it’s more fun to throw snowballs. Come join us in Nebraska sometime soon and we’ll teach you how.

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