

THE KANSAS CITY STAR.



ROYALS' ARMS A SORE POINT | SPORTS DAILY

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SUNDAY

AT NEW THEATRE, THEY KNOW THEIR AUDIENCE | A+E

TODAY'S WEATHER: LOW 64, HIGH 77. MOSTLY CLOUDY, CHANCE OF THUNDERSTORMS. | CC12

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DAVID EULITT | THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Storm clouds on May 25, 2011, cast a mournful shadow on tornado-devastated Joplin and reminded people in the wreckage of how weather conditions had been three days earlier.

The hardest call

One year ago, the Joplin tornado transformed Rob Chappel, the Jasper County coroner. Accustomed to working anonymously, he was suddenly called upon to be the man in the middle of chaos and grief. Now he's finally ready to share his story.

By LAURA BAUER | THE KANSAS CITY STAR

JOPLIN, Mo. | Rob Chappel had done the job hundreds of times before. Car crash, drug overdose, homicide or suicide — he's the guy who certifies death in Jasper County. He investigates the cause, helps identify the victim and releases the body to the family.

But he'd never been responsible for more than two bodies at one time.

Not until May 22, 2011.

For many in Joplin, the deadliest U.S. tornado in six decades lasted 20 minutes. For Chappel and those who came to claim the dead, the tragedy would drag out for nearly two agonizing weeks.

It would be a defining moment for a man with a lifetime of death experience and a southwest Missouri community that barely knew the name of its county coroner.

Chappel would see more bodies in the first few hours than he usually sees in an entire month. More in the first day than he works in six months. And the numbers would keep rising.

Part one of three
Go to KansasCity.com for all of The Star's Joplin tornado coverage.



KEITH MYERS | THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Earlier this month, Jasper County Coroner Rob Chappel visited the gravesite of storm victim Will Norton, who is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery in Webb City, Mo.

SEE CORONER | A16

Bust of gang offers hope for immigrants

In Dodge City, foreign workers' fear of police has made them easy targets for criminals.

By SCOTT CANON
The Kansas City Star

DODGE CITY, Kan. | The scars on Jose Aguilar's hands are pretty standard stuff for a man who's made a rough living carving up cattle.

He dismisses them as "nada" — nothing.

It's the mark on his scalp, where he was clubbed with a tire iron, that leaves a lasting mark on his psyche.

Aguilar is like so many immigrant workers in town who provide easy prey for American born-and-bred Latino gang bangers.

He's in the country illegally. He speaks virtually no English. He is, he says, essentially illiterate even in Spanish. Many of his fellow Guatemalan expatriate slaughterhouse workers don't use banks, consequently

carrying and stashing cash — drawing robbers like ants to a picnic. They're also smaller than just about everybody else in Dodge City. And they tend not to call the cops.

So the thugs who busted into his home a few years ago could reasonably think they could bully him as they pleased.

"They can do what they want to us," said Aguilar, who's scheduled for deportation this summer.

That may be changing. The message from the Dodge City police chief that even immigrants in the country illegally should call for help — "we want to protect them from crime, and that's it" — seems to be getting through. And earlier this month 23 members of the Nortenos gang in Dodge City were swept up in a federal racketeering indictment with allegations ranging from robbery to murder. The resulting

SEE IMMIGRANTS | A8

A+E F1 | CAREER BUILDER I1 | CLASSIFIED I2 | DEATHS A20-23 | H+H D1 | LOCAL A4 | LOTTERIES A14 | MOVIES F9 | OPINION A24-25 | SPORTS DAILY CC1 | SUNDAY HOMES H1

DEALSAVER: \$8 FOR \$16 WORTH OF LUNCH FARE AT TENGO SED CANTINA IN THE POWER & LIGHT DISTRICT | DETAILS ON A2

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