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OPINION

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Obama neglecting storm on the horizon?

BY ED ROGERS

As the economy gets worse, President Barack Obama is not building a campaign message that will sell in October. He is chasing Mitt Romney around the country, returning his business career and any other distraction he can create while appearing to be in a recession.

Obama's only chance lies in voters thinking he has a real plan, and there is no evidence of that being true today. The president has an ideological point of view that won't let him initiate pro-growth policies and sit on his hands.

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OUR VIEW

Tacoma police keep the lights on for Teekah Lewis

Teekah, where are you? It's been more than 13 years since 2-year-old Teekah Lewis vanished from New Frontier Lane on Center Street on a dark January night in 1999.

Investigation earlier this year revisiting old crime reports and trying to connect dots that didn't seem connectable 13 years ago.

They've looked especially hard at sports equipment child-luring in the Tacoma area. Pedestrian who almost children often commit similar other crimes before and after.

It is gratifying to learn that a Tacoma police team discovered Friday and Saturday on the house of a man convicted of child-luring in 2010.

Investigators reportedly arrived in a forensic van, used cadaver dogs and dug in the back yard.

They appear to have found nothing. But they obviously see they have new leads in the case.

And they wouldn't have new leads unless they've been looking for them.

Teekah isn't the only missing child in Pierce County who seems to have fallen into a predator's hands. Here are some of the most infamous cold cases.

In 1995, Lorenza James vanished at age 3 in Tacoma.

In 1996, Jeffrey Klumpert, then 14, was apparently taken from the Burien-area house, where his mother was found hours to death.

In 1992, Misty Coyne, then 14, disappeared after spending a day at the Puyallup Fair.

The thing is a murderer. Teekah's family has employed multiple strategies to keep her in the public eye. They have repeatedly held vigils, used the media to appeal for help, and put Teekah's face on television and even the sides of long haul trucks.

Sometimes, the passage of time is on the detectives' side. A perpetrator may make a false step. Somebody he has intimidated may acquire courage. An estranged girlfriend may step forward. A witness or relative may have an attack of conscience. Information technology offers new ways to analyze crime patterns.

As long as Teekah and others like her are not forgotten, their cases may break and justice get lucky. Memory is the ultimate weapon against predators who make children disappear.

ABOUT EDITORIALS

Editorials represent the opinion of The News Tribune editorial board. They are written by Patrick O'Callahan and Cheryl Tucker.

Tougher gun laws probably won't stop spree killers

DAVID BROOKS
Syndicated columnist

Early in the morning of Sept. 4, 1913, Ernst Wagner and four children in the town of Danzig, Germany. They went to Mecklenburg, where he found the town's mayor and a mocking hen for having sex with a woman. He was shot and 20 people, killing at least nine.

This is believed to be one of the first spectacular ramping murders of the 20th century. Over the next 60 years, there was about one or two of these spree killings per decade.

Then the frequency of such killings began to drop sharply. There were fewer than 10 in the 1960s, and fewer than five in the 1970s.

In the 1990s, there were at least 11 spree killings. Over the past decade, by my count, there have been at least 10.

These include Robert Baskin's 2007 rampage in the town of Virginia, Tech. Donnell's shooting spree at a summer camp in Newry in which 69 died, and the killing of 11 men in a 2008 rampage in Aurora, Colo. last week, allegedly at the hands of James E. Holmes.

When you investigate the minds of these killers, you find yourself struck by a weird collection of unrelated schizophrenia and sociopathy. George Harnett of Belton, Texas, was angry that a woman kept rejecting him. He drove his car through the window of a restaurant and began firing, killing 11 women and eight men.

Tim Kretschmer, I hoped to become a professional table tennis player but felt that the world didn't appreciate his abilities, in that or otherwise. He returned to the German school where he had graduated five years before, went straight for the top-floor chemistry lab, killed nine teachers and then another six people during his escape.

It's probably a mistake to think there are ever known what "causes" these rampages. But when you read through the assessments that have been done by the FBI, the Secret Service and various psychologists, you see certain common motifs.

Many of the killers had an exaggerated sense of their own significance, which, they felt, was not properly recognized by the rest of the world. Many suffered a grievous blow to their self-esteem — a lost job, a divorce or a school failure — and decided to strike back in some showy way.

Many had suffered from severe depression or had attempted

suicide. Many lived solitary lives, but most shared their violent fantasies with at least one person whose they considered their confidant.

The killers generally felt kenne before they acted but in power and in control during the rampage. Some committed suicide when they were done. But a surprising number gave up. They felt the moment they wanted to make and hadn't thought about what came next.

The crucial point is that the dynamics are internal, not external. These killers are primarily the product of psychological damage, not sociological conditions.

Yet, after every rampage, there are always people who want to use these events to indict whatever they don't like about society. A few years ago, some writers tried to blame video games for a rash of killings. The problem is that rampage murders tend to be older than regular murders, and they tend not to be heavy video game users. Besides, there's very little evidence that video game addiction leads to real-life violence in the first place.

These days, people are trying to use the Aurora killing as a pretext to criticize America's gun culture or to call for stricter gun control laws, even though the average European or Asian spree killing.) Personally, I've supported tighter gun control laws, but I don't think that these laws improve public safety. Researcher evidence that the gun control literature for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for example, were unable to show the laws are effective.

And gun control laws are probably even less germane in these cases. Rampage killers tend to be meticulous planners. If they can't find an easy way to get a new gun, they'll surely find a way to get one of the 200 million guns that already exist in this country. Or they'll use a bomb or find another way.

Looking at the gun, looking at video games — that's starting from the wrong perspective. People who commit spree killings are usually suffering from serious mental disorders. The response, and the way to prevent future episodes, has to start with psychiatry, too.

The best way to prevent killing sprees is with psychiatry, which one person notices that a relative or neighbor is going off the rails and gets that person treatment or perhaps the hospitalization consent.

There also has to be a more aggressive system of mental health opinions, especially for men in their 20s.

The truly disturbed have always been with us, but their numbers are now taking more invidious forms. David Brooks is a New York Times columnist.

When it comes to climate change, the dice are loaded

PAUL KRUGMAN
Columnist

A couple of weeks ago the Northeast was in the grip of a severe heat wave. As I said in this column, it's a fairly cool day in New Jersey, considering that it's late July. Weather is like that, it fluctuates.

And this kind of observation may be what dooms us to climate catastrophe, in two ways. On one side, the variability of temperatures from day to day and year to year makes it easy to ignore or obscure the longer-term upward trend. On the other, even a fairly modest rise in average temperatures translates into a much higher frequency of extreme events — like the devastating drought now gripping America's heartland — that do not

experiencing global cooling, not warming, because it's not as hot right now as it was a few years back.

How should we think about the relationship between climate change and day-to-day experience? Almost a quarter of a century ago James Hansen, the NASA scientist who did more than anyone to get climate change on the agenda, suggested the analogy of loaded dice.

Imagine, he and his associates suggested, separating the probabilities of a hot, average day from the probabilities of a hot, average year. By the early 21st century, they predicted, it would be as if four of the faces were red, one white and one blue. Hot summers would become much more frequent, but there would still be cold summers now and then.

And so it has proved. As documented in a new paper by Hansen and others, cold summers by historical standards still happen, but rarely, while hot summers have in fact become roughly twice as prevalent. And since the 19 hottest years on record have occurred since 2000.

But that's not all. Really extreme high temperatures, the kind of thing that used to happen very rarely in the past, have now become fairly common. Think of an rolling two sixes, which happens less than 1 percent of the time with fair dice, but more often when the dice are loaded. And this rising incidence of extreme events, reflecting the same variability of weather that can obscure the reality of climate change, means that the costs of climate change aren't a distant prospect, decades in the future.

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