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This issue is devoted to the phenomenon of winter weather on the Great Plains, particularly blizzards and their aftermath. The blizzard is one of the feared seasonal expressions of natural hazards associated with the Great Plains states. Others are droughts, floods, thunderstorms, and dust storms. To illustrate the impact of the blizzard we present three essays. One by way of introduction, the second to illustrate a personal response and effects of a blizzard, and the last essay to demonstrate the wide reaching consequences of blizzards.

The first essay, "Great Plains Blizzards," was written by Charles E. Webb, Associate Professor of Geography at Emporia State University. Professor Webb's research speciality is in regional climatology and his insights into Great Plains blizzards establishes the parameters of the problems associated with these severe storms.

The second essay is an autobiographical account of what started out to be a hunting trip west of Wichita in 1871, written by G. W. C. Jones. George Jones was born in Christchurch, New Zealand in 1855 and was brought to the United States by his parents in 1865. Following the events of this encounter with a blizzard as a young man, G. W. C. Jones went on to be admitted to the Bar in 1883, practiced law for many years and was elected Probate Judge of Sedgwick County, Kansas in 1915, serving until 1925. A popular judge and political figure, he died in 1928. He wrote this account of his early life shortly before his death. His story is published with the permission of his grandson, W. Arthur Jones of Wichita.

Stanley E. Votruba is a free lance writer and lecturer who lives in Mitchell, South Dakota. He presented this story of the South Dakota blizzard of 1880-81 as a paper at the South Dakota History Conference in the spring of 1987.