

A change to come to our currency

On the
Prairie Dog
Steve Haynes



The U.S. Mint is experimenting with new materials for making coins, hoping to reduce the cost of keeping people in change.

The Mint has tried 29 alloys on fake coins so far, ranging from aluminized steel to new mixtures of copper and nickel. One imperative is to keep the same "magnetic signature" as current coins, since many vending machines use that to validate what they take in.

The Mint says it's tried penny, nickel and quarter-sized coins with various materials, which are then tested for color, finish resistance to wear and corrosion, hardness and magnetic properties.

The tests involve "nonsense dies," so no versions of real coins which might enrich collectors are made. Martha Washington appears on many wearing a bonnet, and the words are misspelled.

Why the bother?

Seems the Mint isn't getting its 2 cents worth. With copper and nickel prices soaring to record levels, it costs more than 2 cents to make a penny and about 7 cents to make a nickel today. Dimes and quarters are made with a copper-nickel "sandwich," and the Mint says, just reducing the amount of nickel in the alloy could save millions.

Obviously there's money to be saved here, as well as made, but we think the Mint is on the wrong track.

Instead of finding a cheaper way to make pennies, we should just get rid of them, as Canada is doing. Nickels, too.

A 1950 dollar is worth little more than a dime today, so it follows that our pennies are worth only about a mill today, or one one-thousandth of a cent. Most people won't bend over to pick one up. The calories spent probably cost more than the coin.

Billions could be saved by not minting pennies and nickels, but there's bigger game. The Treasury estimates that eliminating the \$1 bill could save \$4.4 billion over 30 years. These could be replaced by existing \$1 coins, which have not been popular, mostly because merchants don't have a slot for them in cash-register drawers.

But dropping the mostly worthless small change would solve that problem, and eliminating \$1 notes would thin out our billfolds. Sure, it might be a sacrifice to change our habits. With the government deep in debt, though, we've got to start somewhere.

Coins and currency make as much sense as anything.

Even though there'd be complaints, we think people would adjust pretty quickly. Unless something changes, coins are not going to get any cheaper.

So break out those dollars and let's get with it.

— Steve Haynes



An overview of our year in 2012

This will be the last column of 2012. A fresh, clean new year is laid out in front of us. And it will take about three months of it to always remember to write 2013 on our checks.

The end of the year causes me to reflect. 2012 wasn't a huge year for us in terms of significant events in our lives. Rather a chain of little highlights that made it what it was. A good year. Like sands through the hourglass — these are days of our.....

Ohmigosh! Stop! Now, I'm just getting carried away.

Perhaps our biggest accomplishment is we made it through 2012. At this point in our lives that's beginning to say something. I did celebrate my 65th birthday which made me eligible for Medicare. Wouldn't you know it. Haven't been sick a day since. I should probably go see the doctor just because I can.

Overall, I would say this has been a healthy year for us. Jim hasn't tried to remove any other digits and except for the usual aches and pains, we both feel good.

In March we built two houses, back-to-back, in Mexico. It taught us one thing — we are too old to do that again. However, in the process, we met lots of super people. Some from Wichita; some from Colorado.

October found us back in Mexico with a team from our home church.

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



We worked harder than we've ever worked before, but at the end of the week, we had a beautiful home to give to a beautiful lady, Paula, and her family.

On our personal home front, Jim finished installing the hardwood floors and the library shelves and drawers. There are still a few details left to complete, but we're gaining. Besides, who wants to live in a totally finished house? What would we have to look forward to?

Summer was a whirlwind. Granddaughter Taylor came for about three weeks. Which was awesome! Then to top it off, her Aunt Halley came to pick her up and spent a week with us. That was county fair time and we didn't lack for activity. Which reminds me that I have bragging rights 'til next year's fair when I'll have to defend my title of grand champion pie maker. My arch rival, Diane, didn't enter this year, and mine was the only pie, so don't know how much bragging I should really do. But Diane has given me fair

warning, she'll be back!

Our prison ministry is growing. Every Friday night and Sunday afternoon, about 50 men come to fellowship and study. Every other month the correctional facility permits us to immerse (baptize) as many men as want to be "buried with Christ." If we have a legacy to leave, that is probably it. We'll never know how many lives have been affected. Don't need to.

Jim had a milestone. Fifty years ago the school of preaching he attended began. We went to the celebration and he renewed many old friendships.

One of his highlights from the year would probably be getting his 1916 Ford Speedster running again. He loves driving the "old flivver" around town, giving rides to anyone brave enough to get in with him. Boys and their toys.

Finally, we are both really trying to learn Spanish. Have a set of audio CDs and we each listen in our vehicles as we drive to and from. Personally, I'm not conversational, yet. But I can ask what time is it, where is the bathroom and how much does something cost. Jim knows how to order food; taco, burrito, tamale and enchilada. Between the two of us we could survive.

So, farewell to 2012. It was nice to know 'ya.

Hello 2013. Looking forward to getting acquainted.

Silence is golden, why don't we listen anymore

Today, information bombards us like a meteor shower. It's everywhere.

Each day our eyes see thousands of images on television and computer screens. Our ears hear thousands of words. Many people read thousands of words on the printed page.

People text and talk. They Facebook and walk. They Twitter and tweet. They blog and beep. They Bluetooth — didn't know that was even a word until a few years ago. One thing I do know, it shouldn't be a verb.

Folks who can't speak or write our own English language are making up their own version daily, but that's a whole 'nother story.

Does anyone listen anymore?

Listening and reading. Wise men and women throughout history have told us we ought to be doing more of this. Give your eyes a rest from the video world every now and then.

Guess what?

Every day I scan approximately a half dozen newspapers online. I even pick up a copy of the Kansas City Star and hold the "real thing" in my mitts nearly every Sunday.

And books both in paper, hardback and my Nook, I can't begin to think of how many I've read during the last 50 years. I read every day and sometimes I have two or three books going at the

Insight John Schlageck



same time.

One of my favorite authors, Leo Tolstoy (War and Peace and Anna Karenina) used to choose a theme and offer a wise thought for each day of the year. He coupled this with quotes from some of the greatest philosophers of all times.

Here are a few of the thoughts on which Tolstoy reflected. Most have to do with listening.

After a long conversation, stop and try to remember what you have just discussed. Don't be surprised if many things, sometimes all things you discuss, are meaningless, empty and trivial.

A stupid person should keep silent. But if he knew this, he would not be a stupid person. ---Saadi.

If you want to be a clever person, you have to learn how to ask cleverly, how to listen attentively, how to respond quietly and how to stop talking when there is nothing more to say.

People whose only motivation is to say something original utter many stupid things. ---Voltaire.

If you have time to think before you start talking, think.

Will what I have to say harm anyone?

Is it necessary to speak?

Nothing can support idleness better than empty chatter. People would do better to keep silent rather than speak the boring, empty things they routinely say to entertain themselves.

First think, then speak. Stop when told, "enough." ---Saadi.

Those people speak most who do not have much to say.

People are taught to speak, but their major concern should be how to keep silent.

I have spent all my life amongst wise people, and I have found nothing better than silence in this world. If a word costs one coin, then silence costs two. ---Talmud.

Keep silent. Rest your tongue more often than you do your hands. You will never regret that you have kept silent, but you will often regret that you spoke too much.

Do not say words you do not feel, lest your soul be blackened with darkness. ---The Book of Divine Thoughts.

Silence is golden. Listen.

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Dear Editor,

I had a nice letter given to me after the Veterans day parade written by Andrew Gleason. He praised me for serving in the service and was worried about my well being. Nice to have such young people in our community. That is one of the reasons Norton is a good community to grow up in.

Larry Sumner

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