

Well established process for making alcohol

It probably should come as no surprise, but an expensive government study shows that it takes so much energy to make alcohol from corn stalks that we might as well burn gasoline.

Imagine that. It only cost \$500,000 to find out, which in Washington is next to nothing, just a burp in the spending system. It's certainly nothing compared to the reported \$1 billion the government has spent trying to produce "cellulosic" alcohol, fermented from stalks and stems and other waste rather than grain, which could better be used as food or animal feed to grow food.

Scientists doing the study, published last month, concluded that processing all that corn stover to the point where it can be fermented would produce 7 percent more carbon pollution than just burning the gasoline the resulting alcohol would have replaced.

The plan actually has a lot more problems than that. The only way to get corn "waste" is to harvest it from the field, which means leaving the field bare of crop residue for the following winter and spring. That goes against everything the conservation people have been telling us the last 25 years about saving water and fuel by "covering our acres" with stubble and crop waste.

Under existing federal law, "biofuels" made from waste products like corn stover are supposed to release 60 percent less carbon to the atmosphere than petroleum fuels. This study shows nothing near that goal.

It was met with skepticism from companies that produce or plan to produce biofuels and from farm groups, all of which claimed its assumptions about how much waste would be removed from fields and about carbon loss were faulty. Which probably means the government will have to pay for another study or two.

Why cellulosic alcohol instead of just using grain, the old-fashioned way, like most existing alcohol plants and producers of alcoholic beverages alike?

Many people don't like the idea of producing fuel from food, essentially. In a world where millions go hungry, they see it as wrong to "waste" food. Most corn farmers wouldn't agree. They'd say we can grow plenty of corn and other crops to do both. And they may be right.

Like many decisions in this life, this one may be made as much on the basis of emotions as facts. That's life.

Our advice to farmers is to stake out the current alcohol market, which has been good to them. People get used to those "10 percent ethanol added" stickers, and the place of alcohol-based fuel in the antipollution effort seems secure.

Plus, whatever plants will pay for crop waste – or crops grown just to be cooked for fuel – probably is nowhere near as much as the price of corn.

We can always grow more corn, and the processes for producing corn alcohol, or ethanol, are pretty well established. – Steve Haynes



An awesome duo continues to be awesome

Before Jim and I got married we took one of those personality profile tests. Our scores were the same. Normally, I'm not a super competitive person. But when I'm in a head-to-head battle with my husband, I do like to win.

There is an IQ test floating around on Facebook. It's the Stephen Hawking test, who supposedly has an IQ of 165. I took the test and even though it was not on Mr. Hawking's level, I was secretly kinda proud of my score. "Aha," I thought. "Now is my chance to get bragging rights over Jim."

It took a little cajoling, but I convinced Jim to take the test. "There's only 15 questions," I pleaded. "It'll be fun." My final ploy was to promise, "I'll write my score down. After you take the test, we'll compare our scores. OK?"

The test contained some word scrambles and some reasoning problems such as: As PEACH is to HCAEP; what is 567319 to? There were some number

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



sequence problems and math questions. I figured he might beat me in the math department, but I was confident in the word scramble and reasoning sections.

Jim breezed through the test and when his score was revealed, we guessed it – our scores were identical. I was glad we hadn't decided to keep our times to decide a winner in case of a tie.

So until I can find a test where I'm guaranteed a win over my husband, we'll just continue to be an awesome duo in Trivial Pursuit.

-ob-

After three weeks with us, my sister, Kathryn, decided it was time to go home. Sister-in-law, Donna, rode with us to Denver where we spent the night with our cousin, Christine and Aunt Bernice, our mom's last living sibling. We deposited Kathryn at the airport with plenty of time to spare and were almost back to Kansas before her flight took off.

Donna and I talked "90-to-nuthin'," all the way home, leaving no topic untouched. We've logged many hours of windshield time together this last month, so it's amazing there was anything left to talk about.

Kathryn called from Orlando to say she arrived home and that two days later the boxes we mailed did too.

-ob-

It's a little late, but I hope all the moms out there had "una Feliz Dia de Las Madres (a happy Mother's Day)."

Protecting and enhancing the land we live on

There's an old saying that goes something like this: "Sometimes you have to look back on where you've been to know where you're going." While I'm not a fanatic about history, I believe it certainly has its place in our society today.

Whenever I take a road trip across Kansas or some other destination across our great land, I often stop along the way to read historical markers. More often than not they are half hidden by vegetation and often include details about battles, pestilence and devastation as well as discovery, success and progress.

When Mom and Dad were alive we sometimes drove to a handful of cemeteries in rural Kansas and Missouri to pay homage to our relatives. Below the headstones rested the remains of men in our family who spent their lives planting and harvesting behind sweating teams of horses, butchering hogs on bitterly cold days and teaching new sons about the soil.

Also down there were the remains of women who collected eggs, washed clothes by hand, cooked skillet full of fried chicken and managed to be good wives and mothers under sometimes nearly impossible conditions.

They are the ones who wove the fabric that serves as the yardstick for our new and dynamic future. What happened with these early pioneers has a

Insight John Schlageck



direct bearing on our present successes and failures.

One such winning story revolves around the strides agriculture and its people have made in the interests of conservation. Not everything that has happened in conservation can be limited to the last 10 or 20 years. Many of the innovations in conservation began taking shape in the years after the Dirty '30s, nearly 80 years ago.

Thousands of shelterbelts were planted in Kansas and other Great Plains states. After rain finally began falling again, ponds dotted the landscape holding this precious resource. Landowners learned to make the water walk and not run, conserving it for livestock and sometimes for thirsty crops.

Terraces snaked their way across thousands of miles of farmland holding soil and water in place. Soil-stopping strip cropping created patterns and reduced wind erosion.

Slowly but surely conservation measures continued to slow the soil erosion

gorilla that had stomped across the High Plains leaving in its wake gullies the size of automobiles, drifts of soil as high as fence posts, withered lifeless wheat and corn and starving livestock on barren pastures.

Yes, with knowledge, education, patience, understanding, hard work and Mother Nature's ability to heal herself, the rich, fertile land recovered. Throughout this renaissance of the land, farmers and ranchers learned that stewardship of the soil, water and other resources is in the best interests of us all.

Guess what? We're in our fourth or fifth year of another drought depending on which part of the state you live in. Some farmer/stockmen from the eastern third of Kansas believe the drought is moving their way. And if you haven't traveled to the western third of the state, crop and livestock conditions are turning from bad to worse.

It is important for all of us to understand what has happened in the past so we can place present events and future needs in their proper perspectives.

A new, modern twist may be nothing more than an old theme or something coming around after having gone around. After all human history is comprised of human ideas. Nearly all ideas are timeless, just waiting to be dusted off, reshaped and used again.

Dear Editor,

I am writing this letter in hopes of raising awareness for something near and dear to my heart. May is Melanoma Cancer Awareness Month. In January, my 30 year old sister went in to the doctor for a kidney infection and was diagnosed with melanoma cancer that metastasized to her brain, liver, kidney, both lungs are full of spots, spine, collarbone, and some tissue (eleven places in all). She had been diagnosed with melanoma skin cancer seven years ago and after they removed it, told to see her dermatologist every six months, which she has done. However, she was not being scanned and checked to see if she had it internally because she was not told to. She is fighting the FIGHT of her life and her main request has been, get the word out to educate people about melanoma. There is a misconception that it is only skin cancer. It is so much more and it can be one of the deadliest forms of cancers because it's not usually found early when it is internal. Please do monthly skin checks from head to toe and see a dermatologist yearly. If you have ever had melanoma skin cancer, please talk to your doctor about being scanned for internal melanoma and not have to see an oncologist for the rest of your life. They will catch things with a PET scan that a dermatologist wouldn't find. It could save your life. If we can save even one person, it's worth sharing her story with a million people. Educate yourself and your loved ones. The black ribbon represents Melanoma Awareness.



Thank you
Angela Bonham
Goodland, KS

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