



As gasoline approaches \$4, many are making changes

So finally, when gasoline approaches \$4 a gallon, Americans are starting to change their habits.

About time, some might say. Way too late, others will chorus. The truth is, people will do what people need to do.

Driving is an economic decision. Most Americans drive too much, but that's partly because fuel has been so cheap for so long.

Cheap, you say? At \$3 per gallon? Well, yeah, gas might have been 21 cents a gallon in the 1960s, but by the mid-1970s it had jumped to \$1 or more. And still people kept on driving.

Oh, there was a gas crisis or two, and we had to wait in line for fuel.

People sought houses closer to town. People talked about saving energy.

But life was good. Times were easy. And we began to think of \$2 gas as affordable.

Then the world got smaller, China got bigger and gas hit \$3. Americans bought more big trucks, more huge "sports utility vehicles."

But as oil topped \$125 per barrel and fuel shot past \$4, Americans began paying attention. Something happened that all the Al Gore harangues, all the government programs, all the talk could not force: people started to look for ways to drive less and spend less.

The free market works like that. Guilt and knowledge will only drive us so far. But at some point, fuel becomes so expensive that people actually take note.

And we may be at that point, if the dealers' lots and manufacturers' yards full of big trucks are any sign, the time to size down and save has finally come upon us.

There is only so much oil in the world, after all. The more we use, the less that will be left.

It isn't American excess that's driving this market, though. It's a growing world at our doorstep that finally has the money and the economic muscle to use a lot more of the resources we've taken for granted: oil, coal, food, water, you name it.

China, India, the rest of Asia, all clamoring for the things we in the West have.

And finally having the cash to buy them.

The price of oil isn't going down, not any time soon. It may dip and fluctuate, but the trend is going to be ever upward from here. The Third World has arrived, and it's hungry for what we have.

What does that mean for Americans?

We're going to have to think in terms of sustainable living. Smaller cars. New fuel sources.

The government won't have to make us do that. The cost of fuel will drive us.

Eventually, we'll have to stop burning oil. It'll be too valuable as a feed stock for chemicals, plastics and the like to just burn up, and like they say, they're not making any more.

We'll have to find ways to use wind, sun, hydrogen from the ocean and, yes, even dirty old coal and dangerous nuclear to fuel our daily lives. The good news is whatever we turn to will be cleaner and safer than any energy source we know today.

The bad news is all of it will cost more. We really do need to learn to live a simple life, with less excess and more purpose.

Ah, but that's preaching.

The reality of the market will enforce our decisions. Some days the choices won't be so pleasant, but life will go on.

And who knows, we might just like the results, once we get used to them. — Steve Haynes



Teacher tells of return to home

Letter to the Editor:

I moved back to St. Francis in 1998 to begin my teaching career, only five years after I had promised never to do so.

I was young and rash as a high school senior and made no secret about my desire to leave and find a more exciting place to live. I wanted entertainment and action, places to go and at least one chain restaurant within 10 miles. Like many of my classmates, I just wanted out of here. Well, 15 years later...

That story probably sounds familiar to many of you who, like me, have called St. Francis "home" since you were born. Your quest for adventure and excitement brought you back full circle to the one place on earth you said you would never return to.

When you considered sending your family to the big-city school, or fighting traffic for an hour to have dinner at Red Lobster, or making sure the yard gate was pad-locked to keep your kid safe while she was playing, coming back home didn't sound like such a bad thing. I imagine that a good number of our 2008 graduates will be thinking about the same things five years from now.

The reason many of us came back is the same reason why this year's seniors will do so: St. Francis is a great community and provides a wonderful school system that holds them to high standards. And there's no better time to reflect on this than high school graduation.

Talk to anyone who has been to another community's commencement exercise to compare that experience with that they witnessed at St. Francis Community High School just a few days ago. Granted, there are other schools in America that have class, but more often than not, you'll hear horror

Letters to the Editor

stories of water fights in the gym, kids flashing inappropriate clothing under their gowns, activist speeches, and many other things that would not be allowed here.

On May 18, those attending commencement in St. Francis saw classy students deliver a couple of wonderful speeches, receive amazing amounts of scholarship money (much of which was awarded by the local Scholarship Committee), and generally conduct themselves in a dignified manner.

Ask parents who have traveled with the students on a school-sponsored field trip to Denver and they'll tell you how refreshing it is to see the difference between our kids and everyone else's. It's not uncommon, whether in the Country Dinner Playhouse or the Downtown Aquarium, to see spiked peacock hair, multiple gaudy facial piercings, or clothes that don't quite cover everything they should.

While it might not be fair to make a judgment about these kids solely on the basis of how they look, it does speak volumes about what the community they come from is willing to tolerate. Kids who represent St. Francis on a school trip know what kind of behavior and attire is expected from them, and it's an extremely rare occasion when our students do not represent us well.

Quite simply, the St. Francis

schools are a mirror image of the community that supports it. We graduate great kids each year because we have a tremendously supportive community that helps to make them that way. Students are encouraged by your applause at music and drama presentations, and they love your cheers during sporting events.

They also value your positive comments outside the school building. Countless students over the last 10 years have told me about an encouraging word or two that someone from the community has passed along to them. The impressions left by such positive encounters will last forever in the lives of these youngsters.

As you can imagine, teaching young folks is not always an easy task. Aspiring teachers who dream of uplifting notes, apples being reverently placed on the desk, and the made-for-Hollywood moments of inspiration are in for a rude awakening; disappointments and heartaches are just as common. Nonetheless, USD 297 is charged with the mission of educating the children you send to us, and we take that responsibility seriously. We appreciate your support and cherish the wonderful relationship between the school system and the community we serve.

Dave Morrow
St. Francis



Hangin' With Marge

What's Wrong With my Pole

By Margaret Bucholtz



Kurt and I were invited to go with some of our children over the weekend. It was the first time I have ever been away from home at Memorial Day time, but I have to say we had a wonderful time.

There were 17 of us at the lake and, even though the weather wasn't the best, the company couldn't have been any better.

Our little 3-year-old grandson,

Tucker, was there with his fishing pole. It was green and on the end it had a large round plastic weight. He spent a lot of time practicing his cast and it wasn't too long until he could get the line quite

Finally the time came to get on the boat and fish. He took off with his pole just as big as the older grandchildren.

When he got back to shore, his mother asked him if he went fishing.

He said, "Yes, Mom, but my pole doesn't work like theirs. I didn't catch anything and I think maybe it is time you got me a different kind."

You just can't fool them for long!

Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



Last Sunday morning, while hanging the "Stars and Bars" for Memorial Day weekend, I got to listen to the Cheyenne County Symphony Orchestra.

The beginning of the summer has its own music. This piece could have been called "The Morning Bird's Song."

To the north of town a flock of Rio Grande Turkeys were gobbling. Their sounds were like the string's section, carrying the main theme.

Off west were some migratory water fowl, most likely Canadian

Geese. These blasted wide open honks, similar to the horns in the brass section.

Added to this came a constant rhythm of a Flicker or wood pecker just to the east of me. Its woody beat kept the other musicians in tempo, just like a percussionist.

To fill in any holes, a mass of smaller song birds and morning chirpers were present. This harmony became the wood winds for the group.

Nature's music has a perfection that man can only hope to imitate.

I imagine that sounds like this singing, prairie orchestra must be the sort of thing that inspired Beethoven to compose his Pastoral Symphony, #9.

Speaking of Beethoven's 9th, for a real treat take a recording of it to a high place in the country when one of our summer storms rolls in. The combination of power and beauty complement both.

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GOD SAYS
The Lord looketh from heaven;
he beholdeth all the sons of men.
From the place of his habitation
he looketh upon all the inhabitants
of the earth.
Psalms 33:13, 14

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