

'Fast time, slow time' a perspective on life

Sky magazine contributor Brad Herzog, a resident of California's Monterey Peninsula, has vowed to live his life on slow time. — He wrote this in December 1998

For most of us, time zones are hardly a daily concern. They are a pause before a long-distance telephone call, a wristwatch adjustment after a four-hour flight, a brief moment of awareness on New Year's Eve.

We may go days, even weeks, without giving the change in hours a second thought.

But time zones are like Tijuana: The closer you get to the border, the farther you get from reality, and the lines themselves seem as if they've been drawn by a drunken cartographer.

The swerves and dodges can make for some strange pairings (sections of Florida and South Dakota share a time zone), bizarre juxtapositions (part of Oregon is on Mountain time, while part of Idaho is on Pacific time) and suspect divisions (El Paso seems to have been kidnapped from the Central time zone).*

More important, the quirks of intangible lines can make those who live on the margins question the very immutability of time.

Residence on the fringes of time zones means that Fairview, Mont., and its sister community of East Fairview, N.D., are one block and one hour apart. It means you can close down a bar at 2 a.m. in Riggins, Idaho, cross a bridge spanning the Salmon River and close another watering hole at 2 a.m. in the town of White Bird, Idaho.

And it means that from November to March, a resident of South Bend, Ind., could leave home at 9 a.m. for a 9 a.m. appointment in Gary, Ind., and make it in plenty of time.

The federal government officially became involved with the Standard Time Act of 1918, which codified what the railroads had created in the 1880s. Today, the U.S. Department of Transportation is the keeper of the clocks. The time is overseen by Joanne Petrie, who for 18 years has been known as Mother Time.

Petrie, senior attorney in the office of general counsel, is the one who fields requests to move the time line. The process begins when

the highest governmental body in the area, often a county commission, sends Petrie a petition to alter time.

Petrie then schedules a hearing in the affected area about the proposed change, which can get quite contentious, she says, because "time is a very intimate thing."

The hearing is followed by a period in which Petrie accepts written public comments about the issue — sometimes thousands of them. She then makes a decision based on a mandate to make a change if it "suits the convenience of commerce."

"We interpret that to mean: Where do people work? Where is their local airport? Where do they get their TV stations? Things like that," she said.

Of course, you can't please everybody. Becky Grusing, who has lived in Kendall, Kan., for 30 years, has seen the Mountain Time boundary creep westward like a covered wagon.

"The time zone stopped at Dodge City when I was a kid," she said. "Then it moved to Garden City. Then it moved to between the towns of Deerfield and Lakin, because Deerfield wanted Central Time but Lakin wanted Mountain Time. Now it's here.

"They just decide in Washington what's best for us, you know. They thought they were solving the problem by moving it farther west. All they did was move the problem."

In fact, most communities in what we might call the time-zone red-zone have taken to using shorthand for time reference, such as "my time" and "your time." "Fast time" and "Slow time" are what they're commonly known in many of these locations.

"You determine what time zone the majority of your population functions on and go by that," said Margrett Stephens, director of the after-school program at the Lone Oak Community Center in Lone Oak, Tenn., a rural community atop Walden Ridge, outside Chattanooga.

There are two other towns on the mountain, Walden and Signal Mountain, both located in the Eastern Time zone. Lone Oak is in Central time, but because the community center serves the residents of the mountaintop, meaning mostly an Eastern zone community,

Stephens keeps fast time on her watch.

Sure, the time-zone line indicates she's in Central Standard Time, and sure, the government draws the lines for a reason. But the denizens of the red zone, the people on the edge of the hour band, aren't going to let a silly little thing like time get in the way of life.

"That," Stephens said, "is what 'livin' on the edge' means."

* **EDITOR'S NOTE:** Hey, it's not El Paso that's in the wrong zone. It's the rest of west Texas. El Paso is south of New Mexico and 100 miles west of Goodland. The west half of Texas ought to be on Mountain Time.

Rollover accident on K-27



An accident at the Total truck stop south of Interstate 70 happened Thursday just before press time, so details were unavailable, except that a 1986 Ford pickup and a 2001 Nissan passenger car collided on Highway 27 at 12:30 p.m.

Photo by Darrel Pattillo/The Goodland Star-News



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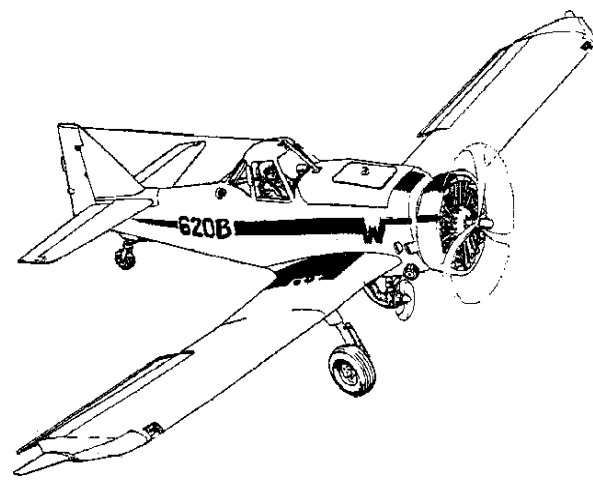
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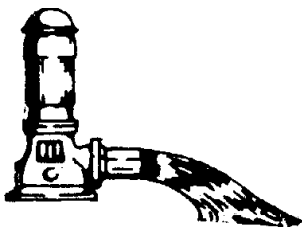


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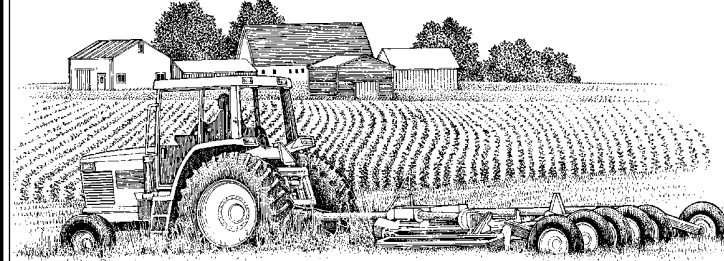
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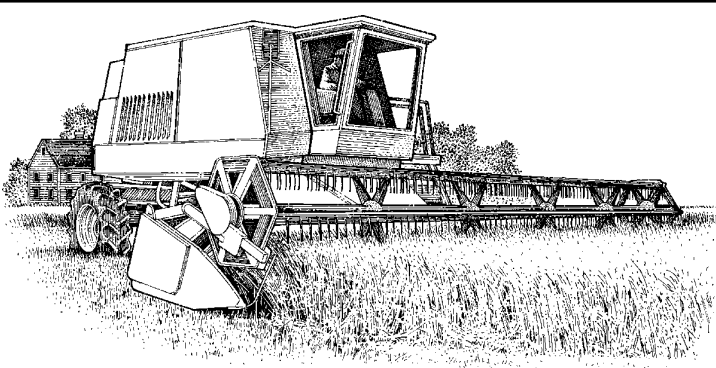


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