

from other pens...

Virginia, money does grow on trees

News reports last week told about another corporate chief executive officer getting the boot (they called it retirement) because of less-than-anticipated performance by the company he was hired to run.

Of course, it wasn't a sour grapes thing. How could it be when the company he apparently didn't guide to fiscal success gave him \$210 million as a going-away present.

To be fair, his retirement package was negotiated before he was hired. Maybe these companies need to put a clause in their contracts that would reduce those pots of gold at the end of the corporate rainbows if performance didn't weather the storm.

But \$210 million?

The same report listed nearly a dozen other CEOs who left their companies, or were asked to leave, and stuffed their pockets with millions upon millions of dollars. One broke the billion-dollar barrier.

These are the same people — corporate chiefs and their boards — who, along with lesser-paid individuals, but still raking in the big bucks, tell us how good everything is. Enron being an example, everything was super great for their top guys until the ugly duckling raised her head and shouted "foul!"

This salary insanity also invades the world of sports: \$50 million here, \$100 million there, another \$150 million. Who was it a while back received a \$250 million contract?

What athlete is worth all that? None! It's a runaway world of foolishness, but, unfortunately, we as fans encourage this activity by attending games and idolizing those on the field of play.

Are we jealous? Hardly! Money has never been a pacifier. But when we read and hear about people forced into retirement with more money in their pockets than our school district, our city, and our county control, questions abound.

Often we question the salaries our United States senators and Representatives pay themselves. But when you compare their salaries (around \$154,000) with other segments of our society, they pale.

Yes, we are the land of opportunity. But it seems like nowadays, opportunity is knocking on fewer doors. Times are not great, even though some try hard to convince us otherwise. Those people need to take a bus tour (not climb into their private jets) out to rural America and see how Real America is dealing with these great times.

They might be surprised at what they see:

- The robust economy they so quickly hail hasn't invaded Real America.
- Why Real America cannot understand or even imagine the amounts of money they talk about.
- Return home from Real America victims of a guilt trip.
- Television shows might begin talking about Real America for a change, not what they see from atop their gold-lined buildings in the financial centers of our largest cities.

When we read or hear about the piles of money following these executives as they go into forced retirement, or otherwise, we can only shake our heads in disbelief.

It's hard for us to understand all of that in Real America. But it is real. — Tom Dreiling, *The Norton Telegram*



Sometimes it's nice to drive without radio

I don't always like all the noise, so I'll frequently drive by myself without a radio or other form of distraction.

I just let my mind wander.

I know, I know. It's kinda small to be out on its own, but with no music or talking, I can listen to where it's going.

Sometimes my thoughts are deep and sometimes they're just plain silly.

Recent conversations, songs, ideas and pictures get reviewed.

That's how I came up with this column. I'll let you figure out where I got it.

You might be a cat if:

- You stand staring at the door until someone opens it, then run the other way.
- Your idea of fun is to rip people's hands to pieces as you lay on your back and they try to scratch your tummy.
- No matter how sad, mad, happy, angry or upset you are, a sunbeam can make it all OK.
- If you're light, you only sleep on dark things, and if you're dark, you only sleep on light things.
- The world revolves around you, but some



cynthia haynes

• open season

people just don't understand.

- You feel that fresh laundry is for lying on.
- Couches and chairs make perfect scratching posts.
- You show unhappiness by leaving your family "presents".
- Plants are delicious. House plants are especially delicious — the more rare and delicate, the better.
- You have no interest in playing with the family dog, although the dog would love to play with you.
- You're the only one in the house who understands that beds are for sleeping on during the day and playing on at night.
- Travel is bad. Travel to the vet is especially bad.
- If you're in, you want out. If you're out, you

want in.

- You adore people with allergies and those who don't like cats.
 - You purr.
 - You think that birds and small mammals are both toys and supper.
 - Newspapers and books are for lying on, especially if someone is trying to read them.
 - You use a litterbox, or if you don't.
 - You think vacuums are bad and computer keyboards are great.
 - You'd be really dangerous if you had opposable thumbs.
 - Shoelaces are dangerous and should be attacked at every opportunity.
 - You were once a really cute kitten and everyone wonders what happened.
 - You think the ancient Egyptians had it right and wonder why people don't worship you anymore.
 - You're the furriest person in your family.
- If you have a good one send it to me at cahaynes@nwkans.com. I'll try to run some more in about a month.

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Without partner there's a lot of work to do

Cynthia has left me for 10 days. The wailing you heard, that was me after I realized I have to do the dishes, the laundry, the cooking and the snow shoveling.

Not that I don't know how. It's just that you develop a partnership over the years, splitting the work. It goes faster that way.

Normally, for instance, I clear the table and put away the condiments and leftovers. She rinses the dishes and starts the dishwasher. We split the cooking.

Now she's off on a junket, and I'm left here to fend for myself. With just one person, there's less work, but not half as much.

So far, I think I've done pretty well, but it's only been three days.

I washed three loads of clothes and folded one. I cheated and rehung the towels from last week so I didn't have to fold them.

I've cooked twice and run two loads of dishes. Put one away.

With Cynthia gone, I can eat whatever I want, so after I put her on the plane in Denver on Saturday, I went to the fish market and bought fillet of sole and fresh shrimp. She eats fish with all the enthusiasm of a girl who went to Catholic schools and won't touch shellfish.

Fixed the fish when I got home Saturday and the shrimp Sunday, saving half for a cocktail tonight. They were good, too.

That may be it for the cooking. We went to dinner a couple of times, and I came home with five leftovers. I could eat those most of the week. I've already made a good start.

Saturday, it took me three hours to unload the car, put stuff away, clean up and fix dinner, sole and fresh asparagus. Then I collapsed. I'd been up since 5 a.m. and driven back from Denver.

It'd been a long time since I'd watched the sun rise on the Rockies — mornings aren't my



steve haynes

• along the sappa

thing, but I can do them if I have to — and I've got to admit, it was awesome.

I've decided, though, that if you have to go to the airport, 6 a.m. is the best time. No traffic, short lines, and you can nap on the plane. Me, I got breakfast and went downtown to watch the morning trains leave. Then I went shopping.

In fact, I got to the mall so early I had to wait. Didn't find much except some special bread we like, but it was peaceful. Then I stopped by to see my aunt, my mother's sister, who's 87. Talked with her for a while. Got a burger and drove home.

Sunday, I tackled the snow, clearing half the brick patio. (That's an in joke; it's really concrete. Ask Judy.) I chopped at the ice in front

of the garage and shoveled the drift from the deck upstairs, which was dripping bad.

I did some writing and some editing, then started to de-Christmas the house. I unplugged the outdoor lights and hauled most of the inside decorations downstairs, wrapping the wreaths in heavy garbage sacks.

I'm not trained or authorized to pack anything in the green-and-red storage tubs, so I left it all in a heap. The living room looks more seasonable, but I left the big tree with its lights on for Cynthia when she comes back. She's like a little girl about Christmas trees.

I guess the key to not being lonely is to stay busy, and as you can see, I've managed that. I signed up for the Wyoming Press Association on Friday and Saturday, which will eat up a chunk of time — if I can get there.

If it snows, I'm stuck here. Worse could happen. I have projects to do over the weekend anyway, there's another paper Monday and I have to go to Denver Tuesday to pick her up.

And I sure don't want to miss that.

Letter Policy

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