

from our viewpoint...

Shopping at home helps our businesses

The holiday season opened last week with Black Friday, the shopping-heavy day after Thanksgiving which kicks off the annual retail frenzy, and business people hope their cash registers are playing a happy tune.

Many retailers opened early on Friday — some as early as 4 a.m. this year — and offered door-buster deals and loss leaders to draw people to their stores. In some places, people stood in line for two to three days to be the first to grab the handful of special items each store had in stock.

Black Friday, a term coined in the 1970s, refers to the beginning of a period in which retailers are in the black or turning a profit. It is traditionally the opening day of Christmas shopping, and sometimes has been the busiest shopping day of the year.

This year as you check your list of what to get everyone, try to think of which local merchant can help you fill those needs. Shopping at home first helps the holiday spirit of everyone and pays off in so many ways.

Our merchants deserve to be first in our thoughts when the shopping begins because they work hard to help fill our needs all year long and can solve a lot of little problems if they are asked.

Everyone talks about shopping at home, but it takes a conscious effort to follow through. It's something we all have to work at throughout the year.

Every dollar we spend in our hometown rolls over at least four times. Those local dollars help keep our city, county, hospital and schools running.

The Goodland Merchants' Christmas on Us program is a way to help keep money in our town. It gives those who shop here a second chance to have a special Christmas with the prizes given away.

Over the years, Goodland's Christmas on Us program has averaged about 30,000 tickets handed out, which translates to about \$300,000 that has been spent with the sponsoring merchants — money that otherwise might have gone elsewhere.

When we spend money out of town, we are putting money in the hands of strangers who are not our neighbors and who will be collecting tax money for some other city, county or school.

It is important to keep our dollars as close to home as possible because that is the money our county and region depend on to survive and prosper. We need to be aware of what is available here, and it's important for the businesses to let their customers know what they can provide, and their ability to fill special orders.

The other thing about dealing with our Sherman County businesses is they will provide the follow up services that we may need, and can personally help solve problems or answer questions. Some even offer house calls.

With the higher gas prices, out of town shopping trips are becoming more costly, pinching the budget. Why bother?

Sure, you can look around and say there are not as many businesses here as you would like, and the selection sometimes is not as much as a bigger town, but if we all shop somewhere else, there'll be less next year. That's not what we want, is it?

That means we all need to spend our money where it will do us the most good — at home.

Holiday shopping can be as much fun at home. Many of our merchants have known us for years and have watched our kids grow up. If we make an effort to shop at home this holiday season — and all year long — maybe some of them will see many of our grandkids grow up as well. — Tom Betz



Vietnam has shrugged off war effects

Surreal. We looked at each other, the salesman from Tennessee and myself, as we walked through the jungle outside Saigon.

We had just toured the tourist attraction built around the old Cu Chi tunnels, a Viet Cong stronghold north of Saigon. Today, it's been rebuilt with representative bunkers showing how the sturdy communist soldiers lived underground while the Americans ravaged the surface.

At one point, a guide shows you how a "liberation fighter" could just disappear under a camouflaged trapdoor. Several of us, including South Dakota publisher Charley Najacht, a retired National Guard colonel who was a platoon leader in the war, tried the spider hole.

Then there's a tour where you can crawl through what's left of a real tunnel. Just going down there and looking creeped me out.

Americans and the French before them had a different name for this area. They called it the Iron Triangle, an area so difficult and so fortified that it denied all attempts to subdue it.

The Americans tried, mounting three major offensives through the zone in 1966 and 1967. One division-level sweep involved more than 16,000 troops. B-52s tried to carpet bomb the tunnels. American troops known as tunnel rats crawled in to demolish them.

But eventually, the Americans moved on and the communists rebuilt the tunnels. The



steve haynes

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Americans even built a division firebase on the south end of the complex to block attacks on Saigon. Today, guides point out that it was located partly over one tunnel. The Vietnamese brag that the Americans never figured out how the guerrillas could pop up right in their midst.

For a generation that lived through what is known here as the American War, it's more than a little strange to be here — in the midst of a green, relatively prosperous and booming country — and hear all this from the "other" side.

The departure of the Americans in 1975 marked the end of nearly a century of war and occupation for Vietnam, including domination by the French and the even more cruel Japanese.

If anyone today questions why the U.S. didn't "win" this war on the battlefield, they need only to know one statistic: While American battle losses are listed at 58,000 killed in action, the Vietnamese count theirs at 3 million, including 1 million combat troops. An enemy willing to take that kind of losses and

continue fighting will wear any power down. So the U.S., under the old conservative Richard Nixon, just pulled out. Support for the war was gone.

Peggy Hutchinson, who was with us on the trip, was a pioneering woman journalist in the '60s and '70s, one of the first women combat reporters. She recalled being on the roof of the Caravelle Hotel downtown watching as the communists rolled in to take Saigon.

"They were shooting people and throwing the bodies in trucks," she said.

Chaotic film of the last helicopter leaving the U.S. embassy burns in our minds.

But today, our guide points out, more than 60 percent of the population in Vietnam was born after the war. They have no memory of the conflict with the Americans and the "reactionary elements." They care only about the growing economy and feeding their families.

The same might be said of this country. And if you want to know who won the war, look around at Cu Chi or the airport shops, anywhere in Vietnam. Cynthia marveled at the fact that everything is priced, not in dollars or francs or euros, but in dollars.

"Maybe we did win," she said.

Or looking at the bustling suburbs of this city of 7 million, with their new wide roads and LED traffic signals and herds of motor scooters, maybe in the end, everybody won.

Scientist says global warming normal event

In the great, never-cooling debate over the causes and consequences of global warming, it's always clear whose side Fred Singer is on: not Al Gore's. Singer, who was born in Vienna in 1924, was a pioneer in the development of rocket and satellite technology and holds a Ph.D. in physics from Princeton. Now president of the Science & Environmental Policy Project research group (sepp.org), his latest book (with Dennis Avery) is "Unstoppable Global Warming Every 1,500 Years." I talked with Singer on Oct. 27 by phone from his offices in Arlington, Va.:

Q: What did you think upon hearing of Al Gore's Nobel Peace Prize?

A: First of all, I was really not surprised. The peace prize is a political exercise. Remember that Yasser Arafat got the peace prize for, ha, contributing to lasting peace in the Middle East.

Q: Have you seen Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth"?

A: Yes. I saw a slide show at a presentation, which he made in Washington. I saw the movie and I read the book. They're all the same amount of bunk. They're all very, very well presented — very skillfully presented from a technical point of view. But the science is really shoddy... The only really important issue is, is the warming we are experiencing now natural or is it man-made? That's really the only issue. Everything else is commentary.

Q: Now the Gore camp will say global warming is man-made and they'll point to all kinds of things to prove that.

A: And they're all wrong. Q: Is there anything that they point to where you say, "Yes, that's true but...?"

A: Yes. There are a lot of things they point to where I say, "Yes, but..." For example, they say glaciers are melting. Yes, but. It doesn't tell you what the cause is. You see, any kind of warming, from whatever cause, will melt ice. Whether it's natural or man-made warming, the ice doesn't care. It will melt when it gets warmer. This is a trick that they do. They play this trick many times over — showing the consequences of global warming, which really don't tell you what the cause is. And the only important question is, remember, "What is the cause? Is it natural or man-made?" If it's



bill steigerwald

• newsmakers

natural, then there is nothing we can do about it. It's unstoppable. We can't change the sun or influence volcanism or anything of that sort. We're not at that stage yet. It also means that all these schemes for controlling CO2 are useless, completely useless. It's all bunk.

Q: When you say global warming is natural, what is your chief culprit?

A: The sun. Definitely. The evidence we have shows an extremely strong correlation with solar activity. The (Earth's) temperature follows the solar activity and the correlation is very strong.

Q: What about the things like the wobble of the Earth on its axis and the Earth's eccentric orbit around the Sun?

A: That's also important, but on a different time scale. For each time scale there is a particular cause. The time scale I'm talking about when I talk about direct solar influences are of the order of decades. The time scales that involve wobbles and orbits of the Earth around the sun involve times scales of 10,000 or 100,000 years.

Q: Can you give a synopsis of "Unstoppable Global Warming Every 1,500 Years"?

A: Yes. Our book -- I co-authored it with Dennis Avery -- basically looks at published papers in the peer-reviewed literature by geologists and other paleo-scientists, oceanographers and so on, who have studied the climate records of the past. Every one of them shows this (roughly 1,500-year) cycle. It was first discovered in ice cores in Greenland. Then it was seen in ocean sediments in the Atlantic. And now it's been found everywhere, including in stalagmites in caves. In all kinds of climate records that you wouldn't think of that have been studied, you see this cycle. It shows warming and cooling — that's an oscillation — a slight warming and a slight cooling. It's not a big effect. But it could well account for the current warming. It can well account for the warming

that occurred 1,000 years ago. It can well account also for what we call "The Little Ice Age," which occurred roughly 500 years ago.

Q: Is the quote-unquote "scientific consensus" that Al Gore and his acolytes are always speaking of growing stronger or weaker?

A: Let me put it this way: Many scientists, unfortunately, support the idea that the human influence on climate is very strong compared to natural influences. We don't. We see the evidence differently. But most scientists disagree with Gore on specifics. For instance, on sea level rise: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Control, which is the U.N.'s climate advisory body, has come out with its report and predicts a sea level rise on the order of a foot and a half per century. Al Gore has a 20-foot rise. So he's way out of line compared to the mainstream science.

Q: People like you, who think that global warming is not a crisis that demands instant or dramatic government action, are regularly accused of being tools of the oil, gas and coal industries. How do you defend yourself from that charge?

A: Ha, ha. Well, there are various ways. In the first place, I've held these views for a very long time. And secondly, I'm not a tool of the oil industry. In fact, when you think about oil -- let's take Exxon for an example -- what the global warmists are trying to do is to demonize coal. Why? Because coal emits more carbon dioxide than oil or gas. Well, if they do that -- if they prevent the use of coal -- it figures that it makes oil and gas more valuable. It drives up the price. Exxon has huge reserves of oil and gas.

Q: As you've watched this global-warming debate evolve, are you optimistic that good science, honest science, will trump politics?

A: Yes, I'm optimistic because eventually it must do that. The problem is the word "eventually." In the meantime, a great deal of damage can be done to our economy as various schemes are being put forward to control CO2 emissions -- essentially to control the use of energy.

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