

from our viewpoint...

## First half of year provides challenges

The first half of the year is gone, and inside today's edition of *The Goodland Star-News* is our annual Progress Report.

Many readers will stop and ask what kind of progress could there have been in the past year. How does the potential impending loss of a major downtown store and a halt in construction at the power plant mean there has been progress?

There was a lot of progress, despite those potential setbacks, and the report is packed with the good things happening in Goodland and Sherman County.

Whatever happens with the J.C. Penney store, the project has focused attention on downtown and what can be done to invigorate the area. Wal-Mart is not the reason we are having trouble downtown, but the continued development along K-27 north and south of the I-70 interchange is certainly drawing people away from the old business district.

The traffic on I-70 is an attractive draw, and easy access to the stores and restaurants in the area makes it a good location as compared to the relative distance, plus finding and getting to downtown.

If the effort by the city, county, Economic Development Council and Chamber to keep Penney's stalls, the groups will have given it a good try. Their combined efforts show the progressive spirit is alive in this area, and the support from around the region has been an important reminder of the strength of character of the people who choose to live here.

West of town, work continues at the E-Caruso ethanol plant, which is closer to being a reality. You might think the high price of corn would make it hard for the plant to get going just as several larger plants announced they are closing, but the E-Caruso plant is not a huge operation, and that is probably a good thing.

Plus the plant is within 200 miles of Denver refineries where there plenty of demand for ethanol. As the world market continues to fluctuate, the need for ethanol will increase even as the price for corn continues to rise.

Next door is the Goodland Energy Resources power plant, where work has been temporarily halted while negotiators try to hammer out a sale. The purchase of the coal-fired power plant by an outside firm is taking longer than some thought. As the summer temperatures rise, the need for the plant will continue to show why it must and will be built.

The people who invested in the vision of the Goodland Energy Center have demonstrated the wisdom of their effort. In today's energy-thirsty world, the fact the plant has the permits needed to operate and the ability to burn many fuels makes it a unique opportunity.

Elsewhere, the city and county are finishing up most projects in the \$12 million, two-year joint road project. Painting of the stripes on old U.S. 24 across the county is one of the final steps in the project, being done with bond money to be repaid by a one-cent sales tax approved by voters.

County Road 65 has new paving and the one-mile stretch of Road 16 that runs past the Sugar Hills Golf Club has been paved, the rough old railroad crossing replaced with concrete.

Progress is all around if you stop to see it. Like all things in life, the changes are constant. New businesses are coming to Main Street to fill a few of the buildings, and hopefully more will find their niche on the avenue Mile. The city has rebuilt more than 30 intersections in recent years, and one of those was on Enterprise Road, where people can drive on a new section of concrete with the help of Service Oil's dedication of the street to the city.

The evidence of progress is there if you look, but keep your fingers crossed that Penney's will decide to stay. — *Tom Betz*



## Winning the war on fat kids

"What a relief. After two decades of growth, childhood obesity rates have finally leveled off!"

"Ah, yes, you speak of a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Based on data gathered from 1999 to 2006 by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it would appear obesity rates for kids and teens have plateaued."

"That's good news, right?"

"That is the hope. However, researchers are cautiously optimistic. One doctor interviewed in *The New York Times* said he's not sure if obesity rates are at a true plateau in prevalence or just a temporary lull."

"But I thought there has been a nationwide effort to combat obesity in kids."

"That is correct. State and local government programs may be having some effect, but nobody knows for sure. The fact is 32 percent of America's schoolchildren are still overweight or obese."

"That's a lot of kids."

"The reasons why are obvious. America produces massive amounts of processed, high-calorie junk foods. These products are loaded with corn syrup, sugars and fats. The human body was not designed to consume such processed, high-calorie foods."

"I didn't know that."

"Too many busy families are skipping nutritious home-made meals in favor of fast food. Everybody knows that fast food is also loaded with calories and fat."

"So that's why I'm putting on the pounds!"

"Our wealth is part of the challenge. Many kids are walking around with cash in their pockets, giving them the means to buy junk



**tom purcell**

• commentary

at the convenience store. Add to that the fact that kids spend hours sitting around watching television, playing video games and visiting social-networking sites on the Internet and you're going to have an obesity problem."

"We need more government laws and programs to fix this problem!"

"That is what some suggest. Some would like government regulations to clamp down on food manufacturers. Some advocacy groups are trying to put 'sin taxes' on junk food. Some believe the solution is to use the might of the government to determine what the rest of us should eat."

"They want to tax my Twinkies?"

"But the real solution comes down to the most important force on Earth where children are concerned: parents!"

"Parents?"

"According to the Mayo Clinic, the cause of childhood obesity is pretty simple: Kids are eating too much and exercising too little. To correct the problem, parents need to create new family habits that promote healthy eating and exercise."

"How do parents do that?"

"Stop buying junk food on a regular basis. Just buy it once in a while as an occasional snack. Bone up on basic nutrition, read labels and make sure healthful foods are readily avail-

able. And always serve fruits and vegetables with meals."

"That sounds straightforward enough. What else?"

"Parents should limit the amount of time kids spend in front of the tube and the computer screen. They should limit all activities that allow their kids to sit around chomping on Doritos and drinking sugary sodas."

"But what will kids do with the extra time?"

"What kids have always done: go outside and play. Let them ride their bikes, catch ball, build shacks or make up games — without parental involvement. Believe it or not, kids have gotten along well for centuries without their parents hovering over every move."

"A kid might like that."

"Most important, parents need to lead by example. Parents need to eat right, turn off the tube and exercise, too. As these commonsense measures begin producing results — as kids begin shedding the weight — parents can reward their children for their success. But for goodness' sakes, don't reward them with food."

"These Mayo Clinic ideas make a lot of sense. Parents surely are the best cure to childhood obesity. Though I got a question."

"Go on."

"I've been meaning to knock off some pounds. You think my parents will let their 40-year-old son move back in?"

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Incorporating:

## The Goodland Daily News

1932-2003

### The Sherman County Herald

Founded by Thomas McCants

1935-1989

### THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

Founded by Eric and

Roxie Yonkey

1994-2001

### Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company

## Big oil begins telling the 'rest of the story'

It's about time Big Oil started defending itself.

As any recent television viewer can attest, the American Petroleum Institute - the main lobbying group for the oil industry — has launched a huge ad campaign designed to tell Big Oil's side of the \$4-a-gallon gasoline story.

Aimed at one audience — voters — the multimedia, multimillion-dollar propaganda blitz is a necessary antidote to the misinformation and false charges we constantly hear about Big Oil from Big Media and our duly elected demagogues.

We've all heard about the alleged sins of Big Oil, the handy media-made pejorative for the world's largest oil and gasoline manufacturers:

It controls/manipulates the world energy market. Its six "supermajors" — multinationals like ExxonMobil, Royal Dutch Shell, BP, Chevron — are exceptionally evil and rapacious corporations that are responsible for skyrocketing oil and gasoline prices.

They are uniquely and grossly profitable. They deserve to have their "excess" profits taxed and their robber-baron bosses scolded — if not publicly waterboarded — by Congress.

A few weeks ago, when the Senate Judiciary Committee grilled five U.S. oil executives, some senators treated them like captured war criminals. Demagogues like Dick Durbin scolded them for their high salaries, threatened them with windfall profit taxes and suggested brainless, environmentally correct ways for them to reinvest their companies' oil revenues.

The Big Oilmen defended themselves ably, mainly because they actually knew what they were talking about.

The oil execs warned, correctly, that government intervention will only make things worse - not that Sen. Durbin and his fellow grandstanders gave a care. And they called on Congress, futilely, to allow more drilling and exploration for domestic oil on the vast swaths



**bill steigerwald**

• newsmakers

of federal land in Alaska and off America's shores that by law are off-limits to oil and gas development.

Many Americans have heard by now the truth that oil companies pay far more dollars in taxes each year than they earn in profits. And that the oil industry's average net profit margin — 8.3 percent last year — is lower than Big Tobacco and Big Beverage (19.1 percent), Big Pharma (18.4 percent) and Big Banking, Big Insurance and Big Media.

But during their show trial, the execs delivered some other pertinent facts in their defense:

• U.S. companies, while huge, are actually relatively small players in a gigantic global oil market. They can compete directly for only 7 percent of available reserves while large government-owned companies like Petroleos de Venezuela own and control 75 percent of world supply.

• As Stephen Simon of ExxonMobil humbly pointed out, his hated behemoth — America's largest oil and gas corporation — accounts for only 3 percent of global oil production and 6 percent of global refining capacity. It has only 1 percent of global petroleum reserves — 14th in the world.

Big Oil can take care of itself in Washington — and it always has. It has bought and paid for all the lobbyists and political patrons it needs. Big Oil is not perfect. And it doesn't deserve a dime in government subsidies or special tax breaks.

But with worldwide oil demand up, oil harder to get at and oil prices at \$130-plus a barrel and maybe climbing, America needs Big Oil now more than ever — no matter what environmentalists and liberal senators feel or think.

So instead of pandering to voters' ignorance, maybe Washington politicians should try to do something useful for once — like helping Big Oil discover, extract and deliver the energy all earthlings still need to make their lives better.

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