

Price control, tax holiday no way to curb gas costs

The soaring price of gasoline has generated some really bad ideas, including demands for price controls and an ill-thought-out plan to cancel motor fuel taxes when prices spike.

We tried price controls in the 1970s, during the first so-called "energy crisis." They didn't lower prices, but they did produce long lines at the pump, spot shortages and major aggravation.

Memories are short, though, and many Democrats are again calling for controls. They won't work any better today — you can't increase supply by cutting prices — but demagoguery being what it is, politicians can't resist an easy target.

The truth is, prices are already going down, backing off the record peaks and settling into a more "normal" level. The second truth we have not learned is that this "energy crisis" isn't going to go away.

High prices are the product not of greed or "excess profits" by oil companies, but of spiraling demand for oil in the face of tight supplies.

This push comes not so much from the U.S. and Europe today, but from China and India, where awakening economies allow more and more people to own a car.

Someday soon, oil will be too expensive to burn as fuel and we'll have to find a replacement.

The government doesn't have to do anything. It'll happen when we decide we can't afford gasoline for our cars. We'll demand a cheaper fuel, and industry will produce one.

And that's how it'll be. We won't run out of oil, exactly, but it'll become too valuable for industrial uses to just burn. There are other

fuels, but the world will need plastics, tires and a million other products. We'll find ways to replace many of those uses with renewable resources, too, as oil gets more scarce.

In a way, the oil companies are doing us a favor. The sooner we switch to alternative fuels, the sooner we'll not have to worry about global warming and pollution from internal-combustion engines. That's not bad.

Then there is the plan to repeal the federal gasoline tax when prices average over \$3 per gallon. That's about the worst thing we could do, encouraging people to drive more when fuel supplies are tight and oil is expensive.

This bill, backed by Kansas freshman Rep. Nancy Boyda, shows the liberals talking out of both sides of their mouths. One day, they want to cut global emissions, the next they want to encourage driving.

That makes no sense, and it could ruin the federal highway program, which depends on the 18-cents-per-gallon tax to supply money for road repairs and rebuilding.

The federal Highway Trust Fund already faces the threat of bankruptcy as high prices, more efficient vehicles and the shift to alternative fuels depletes revenue in the face of inflation and increasing demand for roads.

Ms. Boyda's answer: tax the oil companies. But they need the money to fund the search for more oil and reduce dependence on foreign sources, especially in the Mideast and Venezuela.

Well, you can't have your cake and eat it, too. High fuel prices may hurt, but they will spur us to better things. Just remember that next time you fill up. And smile, if you can.

— Steve Haynes



Wedding plans on without her

Plans for the big October wedding are progressing nicely. At least that's what I'm told.

As the mother of the bride, I might be the logical one to do the planning. However, since daughter is almost 30 and getting married in Augusta, Ga., she gets to do her own thing and Steve and I get to pay the piper — and the preacher and the caterer, etc., etc., etc.

I do know a little about what is going on, since I get regular requests for cash. (The happy couple gets a set amount from us, and anything they don't spend is theirs to keep — or spend. Any expenses over that are also theirs.)

So far, Lindsay reports, they have purchased the rings and are waiting to have them engraved with their initials and the wedding date.

She has her dress. It's white with a train that would have made Princess Di jealous. Lindsay took us to the fitting when we visited earlier this month. I got to carry the dress, and I think that it may weigh more than she does. But, it is gorgeous, and so was she when she stood there in the mirror with a seamstress hemming everything in sight.

This gown has more hem than a house full of curtains.

The kids decided to get married and have the reception in Aiken, S.C., because they could rent a garden attached to an old mansion in the park for a lot less than any place



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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available in Augusta. Of course, that raises a whole different set of problems, since it's in a different state than they originally planned.

Georgia doesn't require blood tests and they weren't sure the minister was licensed to marry people in South Carolina. As of Monday, the word was the minister is OK but they still don't know about marriage requirements in South Carolina.

They had decided to say their vows once for the record at home in Augusta just before leaving for the wedding. Now maybe they won't have to do that, especially since Steve claimed he might raise an objection that they were already married when that part of the ceremony comes around.

He would be soooooo in trouble if he tried that, and I hope they don't tempt him.

Other details, which I'm sure you're waiting breathlessly for: the wedding party colors apple red and silver. The bridesmaids will be getting their dresses at a wedding shop,

where they can choose from several styles in the same colors. It's an obvious attempt to circumvent the ugly-bridesmaid's-dress problem that has bedeviled women for years.

The kids plan a buffet supper and dance after the ceremony. I'm in charge of picking a song for the official father-daughter dance. I'm choosing a swing dance. Steve should have a good time swinging a 90-pound woman in a 100-pound dress.

Lindsay said that she's chosen the deejay. He's called Freak Boy.

OoooooK. Sounds like our kind of music.

The groom and his dad have set up the rehearsal dinner. I think they're expecting the Atlantic fleet or all our combined relatives — whichever comes to more people.

Pick a song, buy a mother-of-the-bride dress and send money.

I think I've got the wedding thing down pat. I just can't figure out why people say these things are so much work.

Chicks invade her bathroom

They say history repeats itself.

It was about 13 years ago when I came home from work to find 200 baby chicks living in a refrigerator box in our bedroom. This week, I came home to find about 30 little peepers ensconced in my bathroom.

We didn't have much luck trying to hatch our own. The first incubator we used couldn't hold a constant temperature, so we borrowed a different one and set about three dozen eggs.

We thought, "We have a rooster; we have hens; ergo, we should have fertilized eggs."

Apparently not. After the required 21 days, we saw a crack in one of the eggs, then another and another. Five chicks hatched. One never made it out of its shell and another appeared to be partly paralyzed. So we ended up with three healthy chicks out of 36 possibilities.

Evidently, Jim didn't think that was enough, so he came home with two dozen more. Except the store sent him "baker's dozens" and we really have 26. Add that to our original three, and we're up to 29 chicks.

Twenty-nine chicks smell just as bad as 200. And, frankly, I'm ready for them to find a new home. But right now, the only safe place for them is the bathroom — with the doors shut.

If we left the door open, our two cats would think we were providing a drive-through restaurant. They



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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would never be satisfied with Meow Mix again.

As it is, they hear the chicks and just loiter hopefully around the bathroom door. So far, they've never been able to get past us.

-ob-

There's one other inevitable thing besides death and taxes: weeds.

Maybe not in your yard, but in ours, there's not a flower bed, a tree line or a corner that doesn't harbor dandelions, cheat grass or the dreaded bindweed.

I've challenged myself to pull weeds somewhere every day. However, it's one of those tasks that has no end. Where do you stop?

I have to set a limit, either time or space, and say, "That's it for today." Otherwise, I would never get to work. I would be pulling weeds all day.

The chickens love me. I toss my daily gatherings in to them. Now, when they see me coming, they rush to the fence to greet me.

-ob-

I'm a list maker. Jim shudders

when I come up with a "honey-do" list for him. But when we sat down to talk about what needs to be done before our kids come to visit this summer, a list was the only way to keep track.

There are some things that HAVE to be done. And then, there are some things I want done.

We HAVE to finish a bedroom and, at least, the television room so people will have a place to sleep.

I WANT the crown molding up before they come.

We HAVE to install the central air conditioning, but I WANT the kitchen drawers finished.

I want the porch screened in, I want the built-in ironing board installed, I want the balcony finished. You get the drift: my "wants" outnumber my "needs."

Ultimately, though, I just want our kids and grandkids to come home, because I really need them.



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Feed groundwater, man says

To the Editor:

The State of Kansas has a water problem that can be summed up in six words: "Too much, too little, too bad." Too much results in floods. Too little results in drought. Both are bad, but in some ways drought is worse because it affects more people.

Both would not be as bad if we make the soil absorb more rainfall. Deep subsoiling is one way to do that.

There are some facts about water and dirt that are important. Due to capillary action, water in the soil is either going down or coming back up, but if the water goes deep enough, it will not come back up. This point in most soils is about four feet down and some refer to this as the evaporation point.

Water that gets below the evaporation point goes on down to restore underground aquifers. Some may be stopped on the way down by rock or shale formations to reactivate our springs and keep water running in our rivers.

According to one study, out of 20 inches of rainfall in western Kansas, less than .2 of an inch gets below the evaporation point. If we can in-

Letters to the Editor

crease that amount, then we would start to restore our underground water supply.

In 1957, I owned a land improvement company and experimented with subsoiling. I thought it showed promise so I wrote a letter to the *Topeka Daily Capital*.

The editor devoted an entire editorial endorsing the idea. Other people, including Gov. George Docking, also thought the idea had merit. Gov. Docking was going to appoint me to the state water board until he learned that Kansas legislators had passed a law requiring all board members to have college degrees.

We had a lot of people in the state with college degrees, and yet in 1951 we had a flood. Five years later, in 1956, the Missouri River was running so low they had to dredge to maintain one-way barge traffic. "Too much, too little, too bad."

In 1993, we had another major flood, and last year, again, the Missouri River did not have enough

water to maintain barge traffic.

Now, in the spring of 2007, it has turned wet and some areas have flooding problems while some ethanol plants do not have enough water to expend. Even though we have all these people with college degrees, we still have a water problem.

For the good of the state, I think that some of us who do not have college degrees need to get involved.

I may not be qualified to serve on the water board, but I can still write letters. This is the first of a series I intend to send to every newspaper in the state. I had some positive results from writing letters in 1957, so I am going to try it again.

It will benefit everyone in the state if we store more water underground and have a plentiful supply. Deep subsoiling is one way to do that, but it is unfair to expect the landowners to bear the cost. If we can use taxpayer dollars to build big dams, then why not pay landowners to subsoil their land?

Lloyd Wiersma
Wamego

Would Gateway be safer for grads?

To the Editor:

I attended the Oberlin high school graduation on Sunday, May 20. I was impressed with the enthusiasm of the graduates and family members.

The reason I am writing is because I am concerned about the safety issues of the gymnasium being overcrowded. Besides all the seats being full, people were sitting on the stairs and floor. There was a large number of people standing in the doorways and halls.

My concern is how safe is it to

have such a large number of people in the gymnasium at one time? Is there a limit of how many persons the gymnasium can safely accommodate at one time?

What if there was a fire or a bomb

threat? How long would it take to get everyone out?

Maybe it is time for the school board to look at using The Gateway building.

Martina Urban, Colby

Write

The *Oberlin Herald* encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

Mail letters to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan., 67749, or by e-mail to oberlinherald@nwkansas.com.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

We do not publish form letters or

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Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses which do not pertain to a public issue.

From the Bible

God is my strength and power; and he maketh my way perfect.

II Samuel 22:33