

## People deserve to know what's in fuel they buy

They say honesty is the best policy, but ethanol proponents apparently haven't gotten the message.

Backers of the alcohol-based fuel have pushed state after state — Kansas among them, unfortunately — to eliminate laws requiring gasoline pumps to be posted for ethanol content.

While some vendors have kept the labels, they've quietly disappeared from others. The underlying logic of this scheme seems to be that it's OK to fool all of the people some of the time.

Let us say right here, we see nothing wrong with ethanol-blended fuel. We might as well be burning the stuff as drinking it. Increased use of alcohol-blend fuels promotes farm income, reduces dependence on foreign oil and reduces costs.

But alcohol fuel isn't for everyone. Some people with older cars don't want to endanger their engines, and the need to know what's in the gas they buy. Others either don't want to use the fuel, don't think it's right or don't want to pay the extra price — and there is one.

As consumers, we think they all have a right to know what they are buying.

Farm groups backing the move away from pump labels say they hope to promote more ethanol use. It's their right to promote farm products, but it ought to be done above board.

Let the Farm Bureau buy ads to push the acknowledged values of ethanol fuel. They could write letters to the editor, put up billboard, buy time on television.

Tricking consumers isn't really a nice thing to do, but that's what this change amounts to.

News reports suggest that many motorists don't know they're buying adulterated fuel. Many think the law still requires a label on the pump.

Some states require ethanol in all gasoline sold. Colorado is one, but there, all pumps are clearly labeled. Nothing wrong with that. The alcohol is used to oxygenate the fuel to reduce pollution.

Missouri just began requiring more alcohol in fuel, a move strongly backed by farm groups. One farmer-owned oil firm pushes the claim that alcohol-based fuel actually performs better than regular gasoline and that a 10 percent blend — the most common — should have "little effect" on gas mileage.

And that's true, as far as it goes. Ethanol blends are good fuel, with high octane ratings. Our experience with the newspaper's fleet is that a car will run about 5 percent farther on regular gasoline, though, so the cost difference can be as much as 10 cents per gallon.

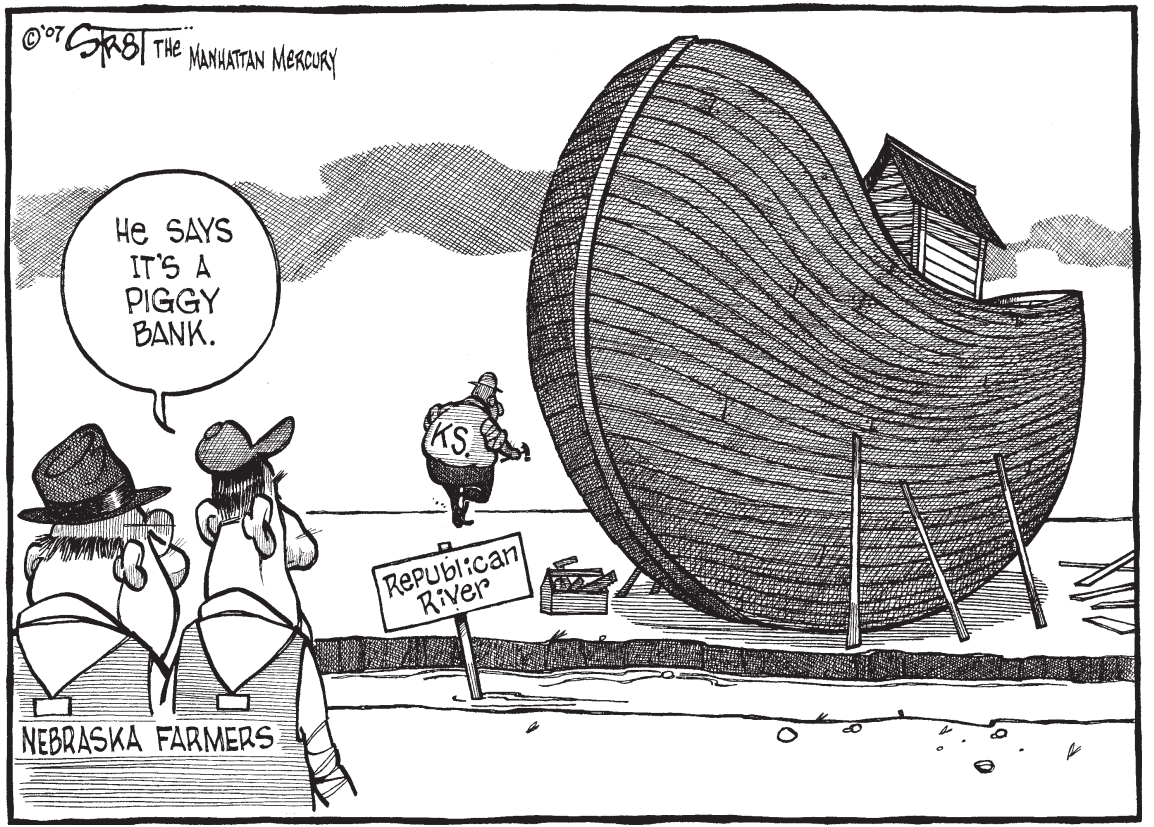
For years, ethanol fuel sold at the same price as regular, then a couple of cents cheaper. Now, many stations sell it for six cents a gallon less, and that at least approaches a fair deal.

Ethanol is fine for those who want to buy it. Many people will buy it just because it burns cleaner, many others because it is cheaper. Some people object that it doesn't really save energy and may not want to buy it.

But all consumers deserve to know exactly what they are buying. A policy aimed to help farmers, but based on dishonesty and trickery, cannot help but fail. And the farm groups ought to know better.

Shame on them.

— Steve Haynes



## Needed: safe place to walk

With the holidays, all the meals and snacks and goodies and parties and fun, we could use some exercise.

And it hasn't been that easy to come by the last month.

First was the ice. Then the snow. More snow. And more snow.

Then it warmed up a little, and things got really slick.

Even after several days of warmer temperatures, there's not a lot of good places to walk around town.

We'd been walking at Sappa Park quite a bit, but the snow closed off the trails. With the streets all snow-packed and turning to ice, though, we took a second look at the park.

It turned out the road there wasn't all that bad. With powdery snow on top, you could walk safely, watching out for icy spots. We went to the lake for most of a week.

Then the road there glazed over, just like in town.

Where to go? The Gateway, while a nice place to walk, often isn't open when we have time, like after work and on Sunday, or when they've set up for dinner or an event in the arena. Mostly, it hasn't worked for us this winter.

The streets in town were slick and getting slicker, but we noticed some people out walking, even on snowy nights. Many sidewalks in



### Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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residential neighborhoods haven't been cleared since the first storm, either because the house is vacant or the owner can't shovel them. Or won't.

Downtown, we noticed, seemed to be mostly clear of ice, at least on the walks. All but a few businesses cleared their walks and south of Hall, you could walk in the snow or the street.

Even if the walks are clear, Cynthia pointed out, you still had to cross a street every block, and those weren't. So you have to be careful.

So we started walking in town, sticking to cleared walks and places where there was a little powder over the ice, and staying out of the street as much as possible. That's a reversal of our usual practice, which is to walk mostly in the street, at least at night. Some of the sidewalks around here are pretty broken and unsafe when you can't see them, and many yards don't have a walk at all.

We've had to be picky. No walking when the wind is up. Watching traffic so the dog doesn't get run over. We figure we can walk most of the time it's not raining and the wind isn't too brisk. When the breeze gets up, it's just no fun to be outside.

And by this week, who knows, the road out at the park might just be clear enough to walk on again. It looks like the streets in town could be icy, at least in spots, for the rest of the winter.

Though you never know what the weather will bring here.

From a low point of maybe half our walking goal, this week we're up to nearly 90 percent and gaining. At first, the legs complained, but now they're back in shape.

The dog is happier. I'm happier. Even Cynthia is happier.

Spring and the trails, I can't wait for that. But at least we're walking.

## Leak gets in the way of work

By now, the enthusiasm of New Year's resolutions has worn off. The leftover Christmas candy proved too much of a temptation, or cleaning up the garage/closet/attic/shed was just too daunting.

At our house, plans to work on more fun projects were thwarted by a pesky leak under the kitchen sink.

Jim will be the first to tell you he hates plumbing, especially when the solution is evasive. It seemed no matter what he did, the leak kept returning.

Meanwhile, all the usual "stuff" that lives under the sink was packed into a cardboard box. No matter where I put it, it always managed to be in the way.

We hope a new valve that finally arrived will solve the leak problem. But I'm not putting stuff away until



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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I'm convinced the leak is no more. If the pan under the sink is still dry tonight, I'll "move back in."

-ob-

Sammy/Missy update: It's been almost two weeks since our new kitty, Missy, moved in.

It's safe to say she and our other cat, Sammy, have reached a new plateau in their relationship. They no longer want to kill each other. In fact, it's much better than that. They have actually sniffed noses.

Once, I caught them chasing each other through the house.

They have even shared a food bowl.

I think it's just a matter of time until they are real friends.

-ob-

My brother, Bill sends me the funniest e-mails:

Did you hear about the family that invited the preacher over for Sunday dinner?

While Mom and Dad were in the kitchen putting the finishing touches on the meal, their son and the preacher were talking in the front room.

"What are we having for dinner?" asked the preacher.

"Goat," said the little boy.

"Goat? Are you sure?" asked the preacher.

"Yes," answered the boy. "I heard Daddy say this was as good a day as any to have the old goat for dinner."



Colleen Geihlsler  
Oberlin

### Letter to the Editor

#### Man rescues gifts from car

To the Editor:  
I would like to thank Larry Mack for coming to our rescue.

After several attempts at getting my daughter-in-law's car door opened — her keys inside — I called Larry and asked if he could help us. He came right over, even though it was late and cold.

In no time the door was open and we were carrying Christmas presents inside. I'm so glad there are still people who care enough to help.

Thank you, Larry. Your kindness was very much appreciated.

Colleen Geihlsler  
Oberlin

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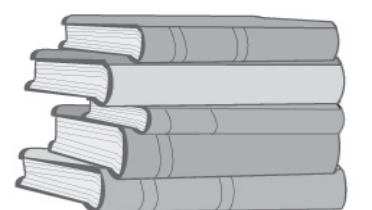
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### From the Bible

They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

Matthew 25:3, 4



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