

The 'green' movement shows up as a religion

At church in Denver this Sunday, an insert in the service book pushed something called the "Lenten Carbon Fast 2009," which just goes to prove how much of a religion the "green" movement has become.

Participants are encouraged every day of Lent to put coins in a box or jar that otherwise would have been recycled, either as penance for environmental "sins" or to celebrate "good" behavior.

Some of this stuff is common sense: "Put a coin in your jar for every nonreusable bag you got while shopping or doing errands this week."

And some of it is patently nonsense: "Put a coin in the jar for every time you used a paper towel instead of a reusable one in the last week."

Does anyone know the science of using a paper towel, which is both disposable and biodegradable, versus washing cloth towels with detergent, water and electric power? Didn't think so.

But green has gone beyond science to belief, backed by a fervor which would put any evangelist to shame.

"Put a coin the the jar for every fresh piece of paper you used today."

One of the more troublesome commands is No. 11: "Put a coin in your jar for every magazine and newspaper subscription still delivered on your porch or in your mail box."

That may sound reasonable, but it's not.

For one thing, there's no suitable replacement for reading on printed paper. It's proven to be almost 50 percent more efficient for the human eye than reading on a computer screen. Plus, most people just like it better.

For another, if everyone stops getting newspapers and magazines in the mail, we won't have many to read.

Sure, most have websites that replicate some or all of their content.

But few of those make money, and those

that do don't make enough to pay the cost of news gathering. Subscription fees pay for only around 20 percent of the cost of a printed newspaper, for instance; enough to pay for printing and mailing, but no more. Even if every subscriber paid the same fee for Internet access, the publisher would wind up broke.

With the death last week of the 150-year-old *Rocky Mountain News* in Denver, it's no stretch to say this "belief" could spell the end of newspapers and magazines which have stood for 2 1/2 centuries as the bulwark of our democracy.

What will replace them? Unverifiable, untraceable blogs? Government and corporate websites that toe the company line? Untraceable "content?"

Remember, most "news" websites get their news from newspapers or from the newspaper-dominated Associated Press. Someone has to pay for this news, and for decades, that someone has been the newspaper advertisers.

Another exhortation: "Put a coin in your jar for every 10 minutes you were on the computer not at work, or doing homework."

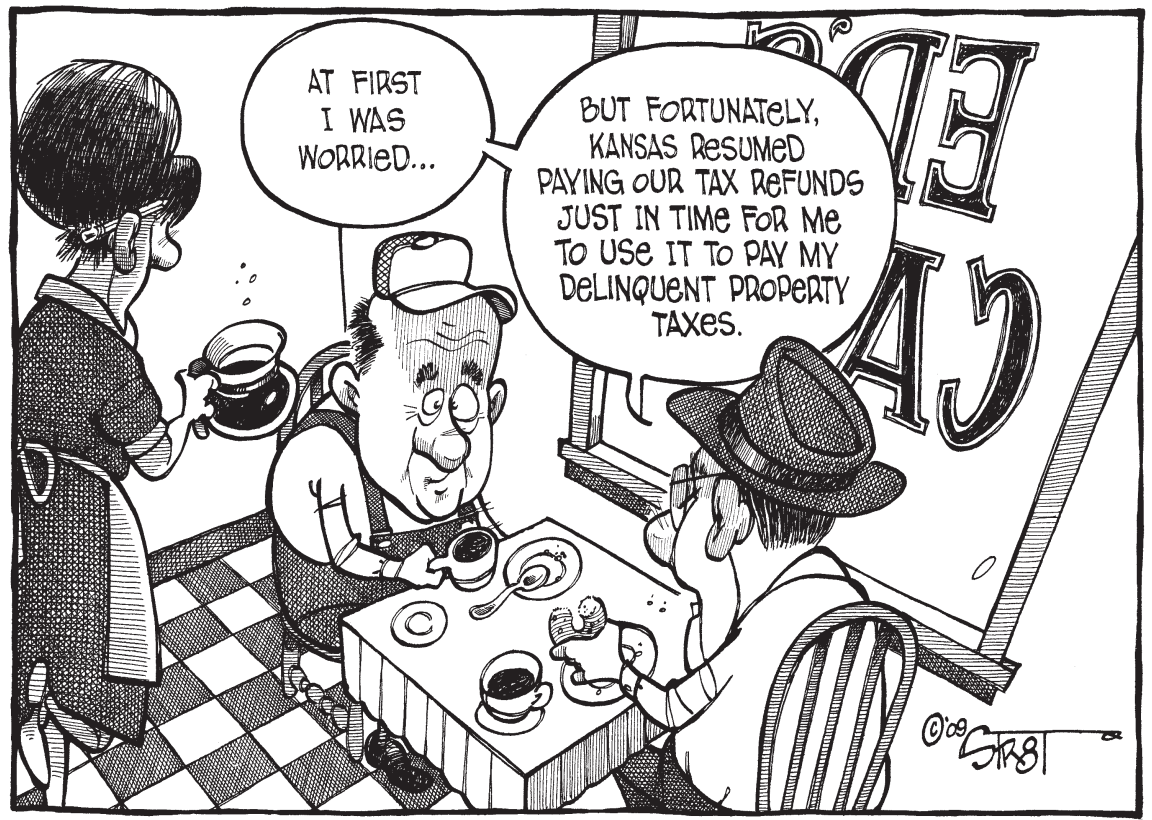
So apparently, we're not supposed to be reading the news on the Internet, either. Maybe the greens just want us to be ignorant, but to heed and believe what they say.

Doubtless, the fuzzy-headed thinkers who put this stuff together failed to think about the consequences of their words. True believers seldom do.

We're not here to belittle the sound philosophy of conservation and sensible use of resources. Americans are a wasteful people, and we use nearly a quarter of the world's resources for our relatively small population. We can do better.

But before we throw out one of the foundations of our civilization in the name of carbon, shouldn't we at least have figured out how to replace it?

— Steve Haynes



Good-bye to an old friend

It's never easy, being present for the death of an old friend.

But last week, it seemed as if all of Colorado was mourning the 150-year-old *Rocky Mountain News* after the E.W. Scripps Co. announced Thursday the paper would close the next day.

People snapped up copies of the final issue, which featured a commemoration of the paper's history and a reproduction of the first front page on the cover.

By late morning, there hardly was one to be found in vending boxes or newsstands. Hundreds of subscribers complained they were missing the copy from their yards.

While the combination of business operations with *The Denver Post* eight years ago was supposed to save Denver's two big newspapers, in truth, *The Rocky* had been on life support for years.

In the great years of the newspaper wars, both had pushed themselves to the very top of American journalism, winning walls full of Pulitzer prizes and other awards. In an era when few American cities still had two newspapers, Denver had two great ones.

The war had ended after Scripps blinked and cut *The Rocky* back to six metro counties. The company claimed that would be a better value for advertisers, but everyone knew better. It was only a matter of time.

Postowner William Dean Singleton made Scripps pay millions for a 50 percent stake in the new joint agency after the company certified to the Justice Department that *The News* was a "failing newspaper." All operations except the newsrooms were combined and the papers built



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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a new office tower and a new printing plant.

Later, many would wonder what would have happened had the companies kept the millions invested in the plant — especially since both had relatively modern presses — but at the time it seemed like the thing to do.

In the face of an Internet assault on classified revenue, and a deep recession, though, even the partial merger couldn't save the two-paper town. Last year, Scripps reported when it put *The News* up for sale, it lost \$22 million, which implied *The Post* lost a similar amount.

No one could say things would get better. No one wanted to risk the \$200 million ante to find out.

And so, with a day's notice, Scripps pulled the plug. Everyone — *News* employees and *The Post* included — was shocked at the speed of the move.

"We had plans for two weeks, a month, we were ready," one veteran *Post* man said, "but a day? No."

Nonetheless, *The Post* covered the closing with major stories on Friday and had a Saturday edition on the presses that night. *The News* has been the only paper on Saturday, but a newly enlarged *Post* staff put out a paper using ads sold for *The Rocky*.

A grave Dean Singleton avoided any gloating, admitting that it will take a fight to save even one big metro paper in an era when small, community-based papers are healthy and big ones find the going tough. He pledged, in interviews and in private, to win — again.

John Temple, editor and publisher of *The News*, managed to bear up through three days of emotional good-byes and supervising the final edition. Friends said he had aged years in the last few months as he tried first to save his paper, then do what he could for his people.

He spoke Friday to the Colorado Press Association convention, arriving and leaving to long standing ovations. He said he thought the paper's 210,000 subscribers would miss it.

"The Joint Operating Agreement allowed for eight years of two papers in Denver," he said. It grew until 2006.

"I think it had to end with one newspaper."

By Saturday, when he came to the associations' awards to gather in one final set of plaques, he appeared more relaxed. The editors gave him — and *The Rocky Mountain News* — one more ovation as he moved back to his seat.

Guess who's on the phone!

We had just returned from a weekend in Denver at 8:30 p.m. Sunday night, and I was not in the mood for guessing games.

"Where is the phone," Steve asked.

"Well," I thought. "It's probably hiding in the mess on top of your desk. Just where it's been since a power surge killed the old line and you fixed it up by stringing wire across the kitchen."

But it wasn't.

As I looked, I saw my husband holding an empty wire where just a couple of days before our phone had been.

I looked around. The television was still sitting in the corner of the kitchen counter, junk was still piled a foot high on the table. No one had taken the china, pots and pans or the silver.

Why would someone take the phone?

Steve went to check the rest of the house. I went out to the car to get another load.

On the way back in, I found the phone. It was sitting right outside the back door.

Why was anyone's guess.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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My friend and part-time cleaning lady Barbara had been there while we were gone, I thought, so maybe she decided to clean the phone and had accidentally left it outside.

This begged the problem of why she would have taken it out there to clean. However, there it was, so Steve picked it up, took it inside and plugged it in.

I continued to unload the car and put stuff from suitcases down the clothes chute or in the closet. Steve checked the mail and set up his laptop, which he had taken with him to Denver.

A half hour or so later, Steve went to the phone to call someone. I was in another room when I heard him yip and start laughing.

"Our phone has ants," he yelled. Sure enough, when I came to

look, he had the phone unplugged and was busy trying to kill a swarm of tiny ants with vinegar as they ran out of both the receiver and the base.

"I thought there was just some white powder or something all over it," he said. "But it's ant eggs."

Vinegar did not seem to be slowing our little six-footed visitors fast enough, so he went to the basement for the Raid. After taking the phone apart and spraying it, he checked his desk and started spraying the spider plants, who live there.

"Our plants have ants," he announced without a trace of the guilt he should have felt for that terrible pun.

He proceeded to spray them all.

Uh, Barbara, was there something you forgot to tell me about?

House guest earns his keep

We're hearing the pitter-patter of little feet in our house. Actually, it's the pitter-patter of size 12s belonging to Jim's son, James.

James is relocating to northwest Kansas and will be staying with us as he conducts a job search. In the meantime, he could write a book on "How to Be a Good House Guest."

We came home from our Sunday afternoon prison ministry to find the dishes washed, carpet vacuumed and a pot roast in the slow cooker. He's promised to properly install the sound system for the television and CD player. I've compiled a "To Do" list a mile long and I'm sure James will earn his "keep."

— ob —

I know I'm gullible but, I wish Jim wouldn't capitalize on it so gleefully.

Our Sunday evening Bible study group is digging into Paul's letter to the Philippians. We had just finished the part, in Chapter 2, where Paul writes of the serious illness of his good friend Epaphroditus.

In an aside, Jim muttered, "He drank the water at Corinth."

Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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Aghast, I said, "Did he really?" Jim looked at me like, "I can't believe you bought that."

Later, my friend Jane said, "Don't feel bad, Carolyn. I believed him, too."

I need to remind Jim (one more time) about the little boy who cried, "Wolf."

— ob —

Now that James is here, Jim is anxious to take advantage of another pair of strong hands to help with the remodel of those last three rooms. Boxes have been flying as "stuff" is being packed up and either discarded or moved to other storage. It feels good to see the ball rolling again.

— ob —

To those of you worried about our safety on our upcoming Mexico mission trip to Juarez — don't. We'll be fine and won't do anything foolish. I promise.

From the Bible

They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the Lord; but such as are upright in their way are his delight.

Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished; but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

Proverbs 11:20-21

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