

New energy sources may cause future trouble

The announcement last week that a Kansas community college has snared a grant to help pay for converting its campus to geothermal heating and cooling sounds great. It'll be widely applauded, but it's a little frightening.

Geothermal systems take heat out of the ground in the winter and puts it back in the summer, much like a heat pump takes heat out of the air to heat a home. A few systems are hardly likely to affect the environment, but there's a symptom here of a larger problem.

We don't really know how "alternative" energy sources will affect our home planet, because to date, we haven't had much experience with them. Wind, solar, geothermal, water (wave, current or gravity), all these so-called "green" sources are mostly unknowns.

It's true they won't directly produce the "greenhouse" gases so feared today as a cause of global warming, so they may be an improvement, but what exactly they will do to the environment as a whole — we really don't know.

In a sense, we're in the same position with this as industrial society was a century or two ago, when we were just launching our heavy use of fossil fuels.

Burning fossil fuels for energy is easy — they burn, you capture part of the heat — but inefficient. The more we've burned, the more efficient we've become. But it's still pretty primitive.

While wind and solar systems are the most popular, proposals range from geothermal to dozens of way to harness water power. Each will have its environmental price, a price which may not be apparent without years of experience.

That's because every transfer of energy involves the basic principles of physics, one of which is that for every action, there's an equal and opposite reaction.

So consider the possibility, as we move more and more to alternative power, that thousands of wind generators spring up on the plains of Mid America. Energy is removed from the atmosphere and transferred to the east and west coasts, where the bulk of the population lives.

Could that someday affect the weather somewhere? Of course.

If you move enough energy, you're transferring heat from one place to another. Thousands of wind generators might affect the weather here and there, often in ways no one will predict.

Wind speeds altered? Weather in the Midwest cooler? Over the Atlantic, warmer? Could be. No one knows for sure.

And if thousands of solar panels someday line the Southwest, could that remove enough heat to affect the climate there? Quite possible. Again, no one knows what the long-term impact might be.

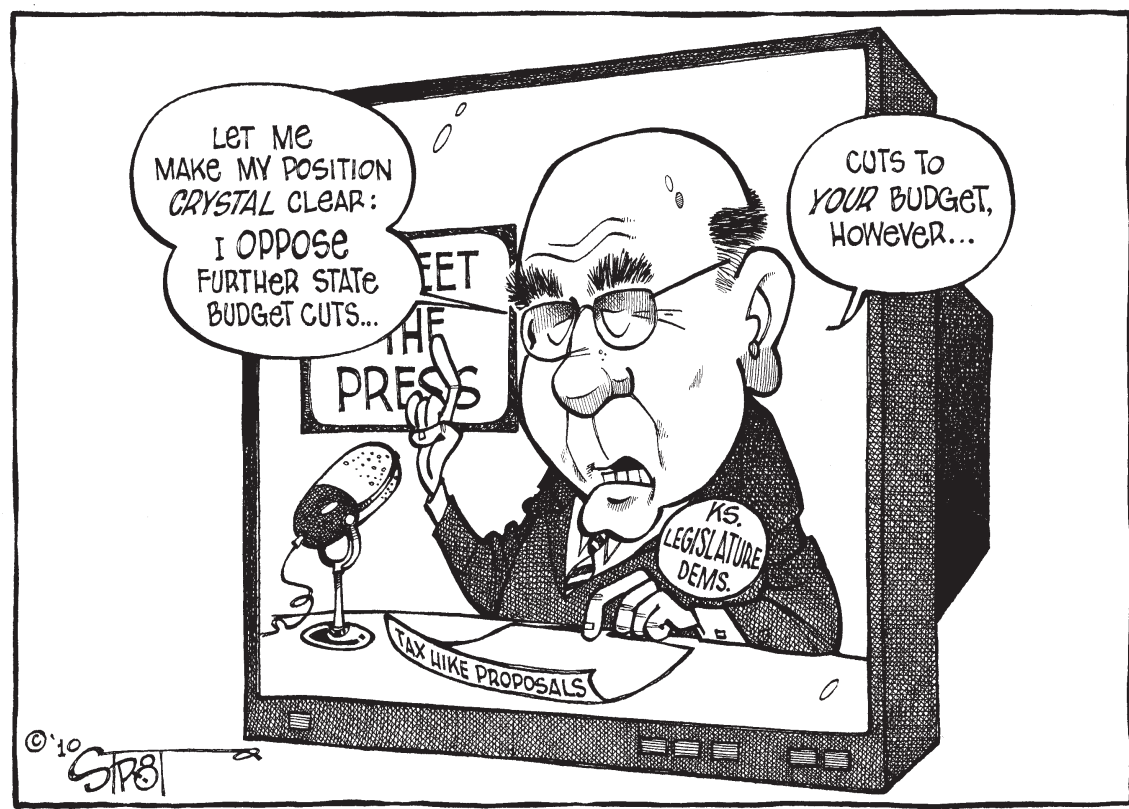
Geothermal systems? Build enough of them, you're sure to affect the underground foundations of our continent. Rocks might get cooler far below, water sources could be altered or disturbed, flows changed, no one knows. The result could be everything from dry wells to earthquakes.

All we really know is we've heard that fossil fuels are bad for us and we're searching for better alternatives. And those seem apparent, but without careful study, how do we know they're really an improvement over what we have?

The answer is, we don't. We're just poking around in the dark.

This is not to say we shouldn't look for better energy sources; just that any major change like this demands careful study. Otherwise, we will pay a price no one can measure today.

That's a scary prospect. — *Steve Haynes*



Surgery not what it used to be

Hearing about someone's surgery may be your least favorite topic of conversation, but wait 'til you hear about my daughter's operation.

Halley had her surgery in a fantastic new hospital. When we checked in, it was like registering for a stay at a five-star hotel. Her sister and I were given a buzzer similar to the ones they give you at restaurants when you have a long wait.

Halley's first comment was, "Table for two, please." And, that pretty much set the tone for the rest of the stay.

As we waited in the pre-op area, Halley's friends started to arrive. Finally, a nurse had to intervene and ask two to leave before the next two would be allowed in. It turned into a real party with Hostess Halley the main attraction.

Finally, it was time for her to be wheeled into surgery. Her sister Kara and I were kissing her goodbye and starting to get a little emotional. I was giving her one last hug and whispered into her ear, "Love you, Honey. I'll see you on the other side." Which, of course, isn't what I meant to say.

Halley sat bolt upright, and said, "I hope you meant the other side of the door, Mom."

Kara chimed in with, "Don't go to the light, Halley. Don't go to the light." And, that's the way we sent Halley into surgery; everyone doubled over in laughter.

The waiting room was a continuation of the good times, only this was no sterile, uncomfortable waiting room. This was a lobby area complete with fireplace, overstuffed chairs, flowers, gourmet coffee and a breakfast bar. Halley's friends were committed to waiting with us.

They are an eclectic group of women: sophisticated, business savvy, funny, smart, stylish and most of all, kind. We sat and shared our favorite Halley stories and be-



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
quality-pro@webtv.net

ing her mom, I had the best ones. We must have been a little rowdy, because one of the receptionists came back and said, "Are you the ones having all the fun back here? Wish I could join your party."

The first time our buzzer went off was for an update us on Halley's progress in surgery. The next was to tell us she was out of surgery. Next, we were "buzzed" for a quick consultation with the surgeon. Finally, the buzzer let us know she was in her room and we could go see her. All very high-tech.

Halley's first hours after surgery can best be described as "loopy." She kept insisting that the penguins were really little men. Out-of-it or not, it was good to see her again. An intravenous line kept her hydrated and pain-free.

The day after surgery, she felt fine and was practically back to her old self. The hospital is part of an education program that incorporates high school students considering a career in health care into the staff. A young man about 16 came into Halley's room announcing, "I'm here to take your vitals."

It must have been his first time without the direct supervision of a nurse, because he was very nervous. He fumbled with the cords, blood pressure cuff and wires. Halley tried to make conversation with him, asking if he was considering a career in nursing. He couldn't seem to make anything work and even tapped on the unit.

When he held the plug and looked around for an outlet, Halley said,

"You can unplug my phone charger and use that one." The boy reached over and pulled the plug. When he did, Halley gasped and fell back on her pillow.

A look of pure horror washed over his face. I, of course, collapsed in laughter. Halley apologized and said, "Hey, I was just messin' with 'ya man."

To which he replied, "Do you know how much trouble I would be in?"

Anyway, we're home, now, and Halley is recuperating very nicely. She's walking, eating regular meals and sleeping a lot. She's actually, letting me help her. And, I'm trying not to be too overbearing. After being home a day, I gave up waiting outside the bathroom door. She thought that was a bit much.

It's good to have the new and improved Halley back. And, for as much light as I make of everything, it was a serious situation, more than a little scary. But, hey, That's just our family. We cope with humor. If we weren't making jokes, we might be crying. Personally, I think laughing is better.

From the Bible

I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders.

I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.
Psalm 9:1-2 (NIV)

Just use all of extra 'stuff'

I love reading cookbooks and recipes out of magazines and newspapers, but it really bugs me when they want you to put in 1 tablespoon of tomato sauce or 2 teaspoons of green-bean juice.

Don't these people know this stuff comes in cans? What the heck are you supposed to do with the rest of a can of tomato sauce — or green bean juice?

The classic is our favorite recipe for Caesar Salad, which we got out of "The Joy of Cooking."

It calls for five anchovy filets. What! Do these people think you buy anchovies at the local fish market?

They come about 10 filets to a can, and I have absolutely no use for spare anchovies. (Don't even think about pizza! It's not happening.)

I don't care for fish. I really don't care for anchovies. But once they're all smushed up in my dressing, they're just a flavoring.

So instead of hanging on to five leftovers, we just put the whole can in the mixer and blend 'er up. Our dressing is a little salty, but it has a lot of flavor and I don't have any left over anchovies.

The other problem recipe I use fairly often is Jackie Kennedy's Beef Stroganoff, which I got out of a



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Rural Electric Co-op newsletter.

I don't know if Jackie Kennedy ever came near this recipe but it's pretty good — except it calls for 3 teaspoons of tomato paste. That leaves you with an open can. I put in the whole can. It's a small can, after all, and the result is delicious.

So my theory is to go all the way. So here's the recipe:

Jackie Kennedy's Stroganoff
2 pounds boneless beef sirloin.
Salt and pepper to taste.
3 teaspoons flour.
4 teaspoons butter, divided.
2 cups beef broth.
1/2 cup sour cream
3 teaspoons (or a whole can) tomato paste.
1/4 cup grated onion.
Sliced fresh mushrooms.

Cut beef into thin strips and season with salt and pepper. Cover and let stand in a cool place for two hours. In a large skillet, whisk flour

and three tablespoons butter over low heat until mixture bubbles and forms a smooth paste. Slowly add broth, stirring constantly until mixture thickens. Let boil two minutes.

Reduce heat and add sour cream, and tomato sauce, still whisking. Simmer slightly for one minute. Do not boil.

In a separate skillet, brown beef and onion in remaining butter over medium heat. Add contents of meat pan to sauce. Simmer gently for 20 minutes.

You might note that this recipe never says what to do with the mushrooms. I use a full package and add them along with the can of tomato paste.

When done, serve this over noodles (we use fettuccini). It makes enough for a state dinner, so be prepared to freeze some for next week — and the week after.

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170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243

E-mail: oberlin.herald@nwkansas.com

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Unemployment tax tackled



Letter from Topeka

By Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer
ralph.ostmeyer@senate.ks.gov

little experience to be charged astronomical increases.

The secretary anticipates the original 2010 schedule will cause Kansas to borrow an additional \$150 million over the next two years to prop up the Unemployment Insurance Fund. Regardless of who the next governor is, he or she will inherit a problem that will require a lot more money and probably policy changes.

In my Feb. 26 newsletter, I failed to mention \$4.4 million of the \$9 billion lost to tax exemptions between 1995 and 2009 was the reduction in property taxes. This amount represents the difference between 35 mills for school funding versus the current 20 mills. The change was made in the mid 1990s following property revaluation. When property values were adjusted upward to market value, the mill rate was supposed to be lowered so that the higher property values generated the same amount of property tax, which had increased 96 percent between 1995 and 2008.

Highlights of Senate action this past week:

Special Education: SB 359 amends the special education catastrophic state aid law by increasing the student eligibility amount from \$25,000 to twice the amount of state aid paid per special teacher in the preceding school year. The bill

makes any federal or state special education aid a deduction in computing the entitlement under catastrophic aid. The bill would reduce state special education catastrophic aid from \$12 million in FY 2009 to \$2 million in the current year. Passed 33 to 7 on Thursday. I voted for this bill.

Text Messaging and Primary Seat Belt Law: HB 2437 makes it unlawful for a person to use a handheld wireless communication device for text messaging or e-mail while driving. A first conviction for this offense would be a traffic offense and second and subsequent convictions a class B misdemeanor. Persons convicted of text messaging or e-mailing while driving who cause serious injury to another person would be guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

The bill contains the same provisions as SB 351 and SB 483, which both passed the Senate this year. Passed 27 to 12 on Thursday. I voted against this bill.

Vehicle Dealers and Manufacturers Licensing Act: HB 2547 amends the law to prohibit manufacturers from stopping a dealer from acquiring, adding or maintaining another franchise and from making certain requirements for facilities if the requirements are unreasonable because of financial and economic conditions. Passed 40 to 0 on Thursday.