

## Americans still looking for clean power to use

Clean power. What does that mean? Depends on the tenor of the times. Fifteen to 20 years ago, for instance, environmentalists were protesting anything to do with nuclear power. Development of nuclear plants stopped cold.

Nuke plants created the worst type of pollution, opponents said, radioactive wastes that we had no plans to deal with. State after state rejected plans to build storage sites for material that would be "hot" for centuries. None has been built yet, though nuclear wastes remain in storage, the containers rotting away.

Coal, the once and future king of energy, returned to the fore. Hundreds of steam plants were built. Giant cranes stripped away the soil of central Wyoming. Dozens of trains left the coal fields each day to feed hungry power plants.

Then someone decided that it was carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse gasses" that we had to fear. Suddenly, coal was the enemy and nuclear plants were back in vogue. We'll figure out a way to hide those wastes, just you see.

In Europe, nuclear plants are already under development. In the U.S., the administration is pushing for a resumption of design and construction. Nothing has happened yet. No waste disposal site is being built.

Some coal plants, under pressure from environmentalists, will convert to natural gas, which burns cleaner, producing mostly water and less carbon dioxide in the exhaust. Wind, solar and geothermal plants will add to the

mix, and coal will be dethroned.

Such is the way things are when we follow our emotions. The "best science" of the day has a way of morphing into yesterday's old news.

But can we really depend on nuclear plants to supply the power we need? Or wind? Or the sun?

No one really knows. The truth is, we need to consume less energy. Americans are just energy hogs, but no one wants to be without things our grandparents never dreamed of, air conditioning and big cars and huge houses.

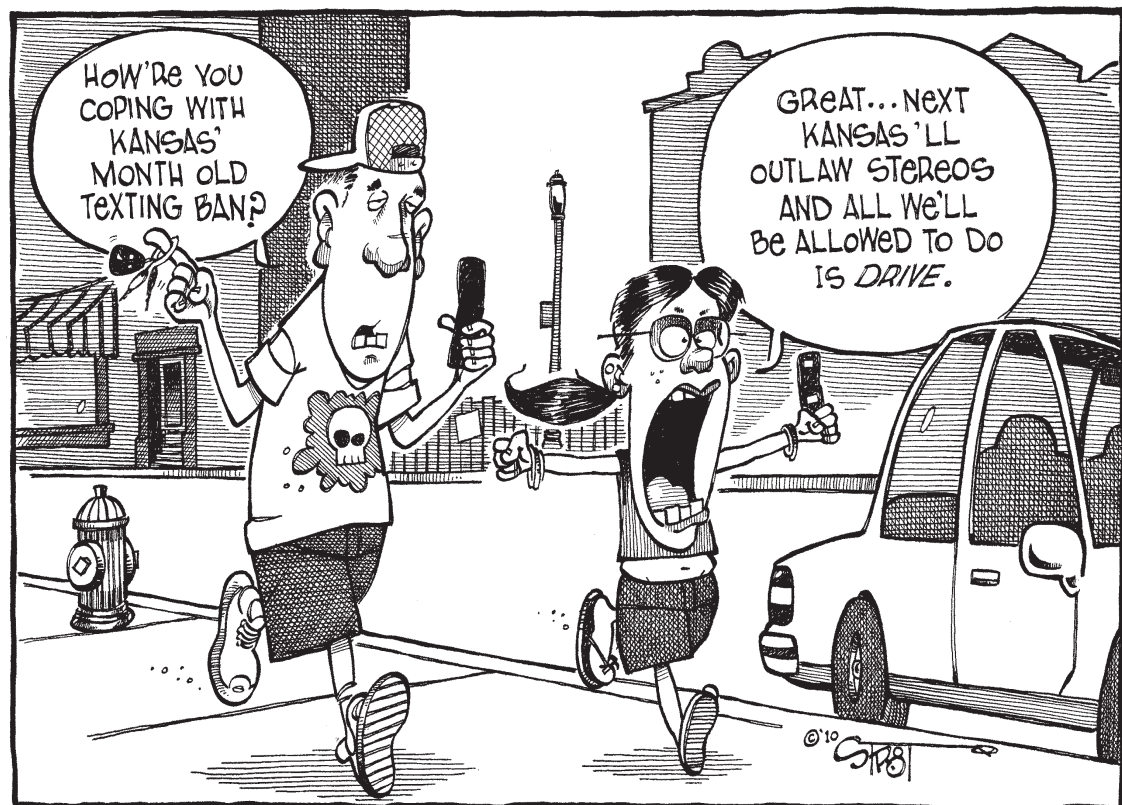
But nuke plants do produce waste, and someone will have to provide a place to bury it. Even natural gas produces carbon dioxide. Any energy plant produces heat. Any transfer to energy from one place to another moves that heat, affecting weather and eventually, climate, at both ends.

"Clean" coal plants are far better than older coal plants, but still dirty. That may be progress, but ... any kind of plant has its own impact. We know not what that may be today, and care less if the new plant is "cleaner." But someday, we will have to pay the price. It won't be cheap.

Someday, too, advancing technology will give us better ways to use nuclear fuel, wind, the sun, and yes, even coal. Maybe that will save us, or maybe just add to our doom.

And we'll still not have a place to take the nuclear wastes. Who wants it?

This energy problem has no easy answers.  
— Steve Haynes



## Man collects bugs in autumn

We do the darnest things for our kids.

I have a friend who just got out of the hospital. She had spent five days in the heat and humidity helping her children with their 4-H projects during the county fair.

She said she really, really tried to drink plenty of water, but her two busy boys have livestock and other projects that required a lot of work. She just got dehydrated.

She acknowledged that she knew what was happening, so the day after the end of the fair, she went into the emergency room and told them she was a couple of quarts low.

Two liters of normal saline later, she was ready to go again.

The next week, this same friend got a present from a co-worker — a nice grasshopper.

She was ecstatic. She said she would take it right home and put it in the freezer.

This brought up a less-than-Martha-Stewart moment in my mind as I saw her taking a package of pork chops and a side of grasshoppers out of the freezer for supper.

No, she explained, the grasshopper is part of next year's entomology



## Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
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project for her sons' 4-H work.

You've got to get going in the fall on collecting bugs, she explained, because some of them are just not available until the autumn, and by then the fair is over. So, she continued, as the little monsters show up — the bugs that is — they are popped into plastic containers and stored in the freezer.

I mentioned this to my friend May, who's children were all in 4-H, and she nodded wisely, noting that she used carbon tetrachloride on her insect collection, but those days are gone. It's been banned by the government.

Another friend told me the story of her 4-H disaster. Her children do photography, she explained.

Since it's the digital age, she got a nice printer for their art. It works

great, she said, but the pictures must be sprayed with a fixer so the image won't yellow or fade.

The first time she tried helping a child with a picture, she got fixer on her hands and then got stuck to the print.

Since the fixer was so good at sticking things, she figured she could use it to fix the 20-year-old headliner of her car, which was coming down.

She sprayed and pushed, she said, and parts of the liner stuck to the top of the car. The rest just disintegrated or stuck to her fingers.

That was the last time she tried to use the fixer to fix anything but photos, she said. Seems she had bits of grey fabric stuck to her fingers for days.

## Air conditioning is a privilege

I'm not the only one complaining about outrageously high utility bills. Matters not if you are country folk or city slicker, the cost of cooling our homes this summer has been extreme. But, could you imagine not having air conditioning?

Conversations about this summer's heat invariably come around to, "Well, when I was a kid..."

Fifty years ago, nobody, not even rich people, had air conditioning. A few may have had what we called "swamp coolers." And, that's about all they were good for, cooling a swamp. The humidity they produced made you feel like you were in the Amazon rain forest.

But we didn't miss what we never had. We rode in the car with the windows wide open, hair blowing in the wind. Farmers drove tractors without cabs (most not even an umbrella). Women cooked five-course meals on gas stoves inside the house. And we didn't seem to mind.

My mother's ritual was to shut the house up about 10 a.m. while it was still relatively cool from the evening air. With the high ceilings of those old farmhouses and the open stairway, the heat went upstairs like a chimney. Our second-floor bedrooms were like ovens at night. Perhaps that's why we kids slept outside so much in the summer.

Mom kept an old metal bed frame with an even older mattress out in the yard. We would pack out some old blankets and a pillow or two for a night under the stars. Mom would



## Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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lay down with me and it was there I learned how to find the North Star and the Big and Little Dippers.

Even though I could never "see" them, she pointed out Oriens' belt and the Seven Sisters.

So, I'll probably keep on complaining about the high cost of electricity, but I'll be glad we have the means to pay it. And every time I flip the switch, I'll be thankful I have the luxury of power at my fingertips. Because I know there are still millions of people in this world who are not as privileged.

— ob —

There was a rodeo at my house Sunday morning and I missed it. It was my Sunday to work at the radio station, so I was gone before sun up. Jim was scheduled to preach at a little country church and had every intention of being there early. He was about to walk out the door when a neighbor called and said, "Your calves are out."

R-r-r-r-r-ch. Jim's plans came to a screeching halt. He found the gate he had neglected to latch. It, of course, had to be left open to allow re-entry. Quickly, he grabbed a bucket of the sweet feed the calves

eat like candy and headed down the alley where they had been spotted. Soon, all four calves, April, May, Junior and Julio, were following him home like the Pied Piper. But that's where the parade ended. Junior and Julio went back into their enclosure but April and May took a detour.

By the time Jim had the two little heifers headed in the right direction, Junior and Julio were trying to come out again. Eventually, with the help of a few neighbors, all four were in the same pen at the same time, but not without some running on Jim's part. He called on his cell phone, still panting and wheezing, to say he was finally on his way to church. The good news is he made it on time.

## From the Bible

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10 NIV

## Report outlines risks for kids

Why can't they be like we are; Perfect in every way. What's the matter with kids today?

These lyrics from the 1963 musical "Bye, Bye Birdie" reflect the attitude of many older folks that the young generation just isn't as stalwart as we were when we walked five miles to school each day, through the snow, and uphill both ways.

Each year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention release their survey of Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (June 4 *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* Vol. 59, SS-5 available at the website as Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2009.) It should be no surprise that today's kids face a different set of hazards and fears than we did. Nationwide data show:

- During the 12 months before the survey, 31.5 percent of high school students had been in a physical fight and 6.3 percent had attempted suicide.
- 9.7 percent rarely or never wore a seat belt when riding in a car driven by someone else.
- During the 30 days before the survey, 28.3 percent rode in a car or other vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking, 17.5 percent had carried a weapon, 41.8 percent had drunk alcohol and 20.8 percent had used marijuana.
- 34.2 percent were sexually active.
- 38.9 percent of sexually active students had not used a condom during their last intercourse.



## Education Frontlines

By John Richard Schrock

• 2.1 percent of students had injected an illegal drug at some time in their life.

• 19.5 percent of high school students smoked cigarettes during the 30 days before the survey.

• 81.6 percent were not physically active for at least 60 minutes per day. Only one-third attended physical education classes daily.

• 7.4 percent had been physically forced to have sex when they did not want to. (higher among girls at 10.5 percent than boys 4.5 percent)

• 5.6 percent had carried a weapon (gun, knife, or club) on school property on at least one day during the 30 days before the survey. Overall, the prevalence of having carried a weapon on school property was higher among boys (8.0 percent) than girls (2.9 percent).

• 7.7 percent nationwide had been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property one or more times.

• Nationwide, 5 percent had not gone to school at least one day during the month before the survey because they felt they would be unsafe.

• Nationwide, 12.0 percent were

obese. Overall, the prevalence of obesity was higher among boys (15.3 percent) than girls (8.3 percent).

• 15.8 percent were overweight.

• 44.4 percent were trying to lose weight.

• Nationwide, 10.6 percent did not eat for 24 or more hours to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight during the month before the survey.

• During 2003 to 2009, a significant linear increase occurred in the percentage of students who used computers three or more hours per day (22.1 percent to 24.9 percent).

• The percentage of students who vomited or took laxatives to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight did not change significantly from 1995 to 2003 (4.8 percent to 6.0 percent) and then decreased during 2003 to 2009 (6.0 percent to 4.0 percent).

This may partly answer the question, What's the matter with kids today? But a similar survey from our youth would find we were not perfect in every way, either.

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## Childcare need creates opportunity

To the Editor:

Parents who work rely heavily on reliable child-care providers to take their children during working hours. Over the past few years, we've seen an increasing shortage of providers. This has kept some from returning to work after the birth of a child.

It takes a special person to be a quality child care provider. Recent changes in Kansas law require that all child care providers become li-

## Letter to the Editor

censed. This may seem difficult, but it really requires very little. The cost is minimal and the requirements are reasonable. The training is offered free through Smart Start Northwest Kansas.

The benefits of working from your home and offering the care

friends and neighbors need for their children is worth all the effort. For information, call Smart Start at (785) 465-9103.

Karen Merryman, Colby professional development coordinator  
Smart Start Northwest Kansas

## 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.

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from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

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