

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Teamwork needed for more ethanol

Three cheers for Ford Motor Company and its plan to increase the number of ethanol plants and awareness of the alternative fuel.

Friday, Ford announced it will work with Vera Sun Energy of Brookings, S.D., to change existing fuel pumps to E85 fuel. Popular at the pump is a 10 percent blend of ethanol in traditional gasoline. E85 is the abbreviation for an 85 percent blend.

Ford's decision comes at an appropriate time. For nearly two years, gasoline prices have risen sharply and car owners are either making the switch to a better fuel economy car, or just not driving as much. Ethanol fuel is usually less in price than traditional gasoline. Some ag-heavy states use a tax incentive for stations to sell ethanol less than traditional gasoline.

Ethanol reduces the need for foreign oil used to produce gasoline. Ethanol, made from corn, is a renewable energy source grown across the United States and right here in Northwest Kansas.

More ethanol won't necessarily mean an end to using foreign oil, but could significantly reduce the worry and panic when hurricanes cripple the oil-rich Gulf Coast region as we learned a couple of months ago.

Creating more E85 gas stations and cars that use E85 is critical. E85 has made its presence in the Midwest but is slow to grow, compared to the 10 percent blend. Special underground storage tanks are needed for E85 and car manufacturers only make a handful of models that use E85.

The gasoline storage industry, car manufacturers and ethanol scientists all need to work on growing ethanol at the same time.

With their record billions in profit, oil companies need to help fund the construction and installation of the underground storage tanks. (Oil will still be needed and those companies will still make a buck.) The auto manufacturers and ethanol creators need to make more cars that use more ethanol. It would be great if the car manufacturers could find a way for existing cars to use E85.

There is some fuel economy loss using E85, but when the price of E85 can be 60 cents per gallon less than traditional gasoline, that loss won't feel as bad.

Oil lobbyists and CEOs will still want to preserve those record profits, so the change to more ethanol will probably be a long, bitter fight. But imagine the positive public relations those companies will have when they do help out with ethanol projects.

When Ford Motor Company, one of the many auto manufacturers around the world, acknowledges the concern of gasoline prices and is doing something about it, those oil companies should heed the call.

Others need to step forward too.

John Van Nostrand

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail jvannostrand@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nwkansas.com.

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701

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State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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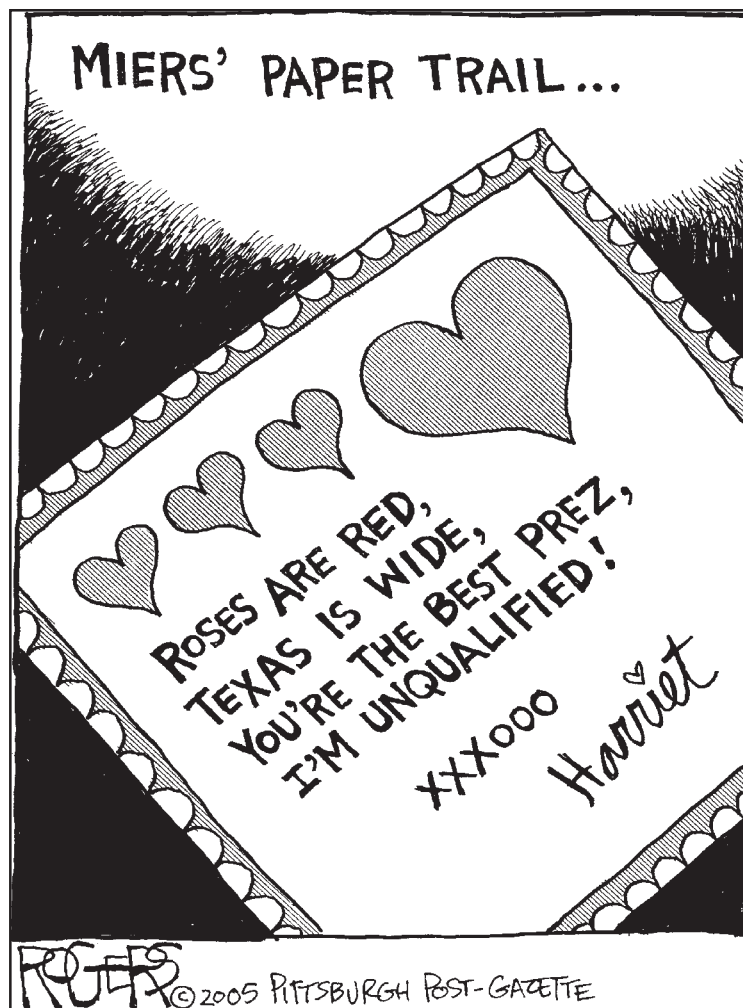
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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701. THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news credited to it or not otherwise herein. Member Kansas Press Association, Inland Press Association and National Newspaper Association. **SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$38, 8 months \$53, 12 months \$70. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$50, 8 months \$62, 12 months \$78. Other Kansas counties: 4 months \$57, 8 months \$67, 12 months \$81. All other states, \$81, 12 months.

Nor'West Newspapers

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Time to ax things

Skyrocketing energy costs, massive storms and thinly veiled paranoia and panic. Sound like a movie? No, it's just an average day in America the past month or so.

They say life imitates art?

Insanity, I know, but reality is definitely more surreal than anything anyone could ever write.

History is even repeating itself. Although the CIA leak that resulted in the indictment and resignation of Vice President Dick Cheney's chief of staff isn't on the scale of say, Watergate, I think it should make people sit up and take notice.

On the subject of the Bush administration, it has effectively tipped the balance in their favor and the government no longer works the way it's intended.

The form of government used in this country was made to protect the minority. Now a minority is suddenly the majority and foisting its beliefs off on everyone else.

Is there any wonder insurgents in the Middle East can whip up a frenzy and religious fervor when they feel like it?

They just have to point their finger to the West and off they go.

Government in the United States is supposed to be for the people, by the people, not the will of one person in its highest office, or whoever is pulling his strings.

The president's job is to protect the American people and its interests, not his own and those of his business associates.

Call me naive, but the way things are right now isn't how I was brought up to know how things are supposed to work.

Some of Bush's decisions have even caused conservatives to question things the Harriet Miers nomination for the Supreme Court.

Most people probably fall under the definition



Tisha Cox

• Off The Beaten Path

of the word "conservative."

Despite my own personal views, I have some views that could go under the "C" word.

Webster's definition of conservative is "tending to preserve established traditions or institutions and to resist or oppose any changes in these."

Even people who are considered liberals can admit that the real definition of conservative means "traditional." That is not a bad thing.

Inherently, that is good, but the ideology of people who tend to call themselves politically conservative is what I would sometimes call questionable.

I am talking about the people in Washington, D.C., the ones we should all hold accountable for the state of the world right now.

Americans are despised or laughed at abroad.

Take a look at the non-American press on the Iraq war and you'll see that people outside the United States are just as ticked off about it as are many people here at home.

The British press calls it Tony Blair's "illegal war" and are having a field day covering the CIA leak.

I was amazed to see that they're covering a lot of the same stories as most of the major American media outlets, although with much more fervor and bias.

It's just funny how many people who aren't Americans finally agree with a lot of Americans.

Over the past five years, they've pointed out that we're finally getting a taste of what they've been putting up with for years — terrorist attacks, political unrest and skyrocketing fuel prices.

However, unlike those countries, we once had the public mindset to take it into our own hands and fix the problems.

I've always heard "if you don't like who's in office, vote them out."

Yes. Tried that last year. It didn't work too well.

And that is what makes me angry. That so many people voted against their own best interests and here we are.

High energy prices, a bureaucracy that failed its people in a time of crisis (Hurricane Katrina) and has spent thousands of lives for its own end.

We have the means to fix things. The power is in our hands. The founding fathers of this country uttered the words in the act that gave birth to the nation:

"But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security."

Maybe it's time to think about those words again and what they mean. And to do something about fixing all that is wrong with the United States.

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More to family dinner than eating

In today's harried world, seems like everyone's schedule is filled to the brim with activities. Both parents work, kids go to school and participate in student government, sports or any number of events. Seems families meet each other coming and going. Still, most parents believe it's more important than ever to dedicate the dinner hour to developing and nurturing relationships with family members.

While most of us are fortunate enough to eat every day, the abundance of food in our country is still something to be thankful for and not taken for granted. Farmers and ranchers provide us with the meat, vegetables, fruits, milk, juice and other items we eat each day.

Our food is safe and wholesome. It is also a real bargain with most families paying less than 11 percent of their annual income on food.

That said, it is important that time spent at the dinner table should also be something we as families look forward to and appreciate. It is a time to give thanks for the bounty we enjoy. Make each and every evening meal memorable with your family.

Carve out a few moments of peace and quiet for these family gatherings. It's important to limit distractions during mealtime. Turn off the television, radio or both.

Establish a quiet place for meals and make a habit of temporarily eliminating interruptions such as telephones and toys. Make the family the

John Schlageck

• Guest Commentary

center of attention not a distraction.

Have each member of the family talk about an activity in his or her day and discuss it within the family. This initiates conversation and helps keep the family connected. By carving out a moment of peace in the day, you communicate that dinner is a special, family time.

Mark milestones at meals. Throw away the old rules of calendar holidays and make family dinner a time to remember. Use place mats and table decorations and easy themed meals to note special days including birthdays, test days and any other significant event worth highlighting. Remember it's about spending time with your family.

Include teamwork at the table. Everyone should play a part. This includes menu planning so children will have a voice. They can search for recipes in cookbooks and online as well as meal preparation such as setting the table, washing vegetable and clean up after the dinner meal is complete.

Packing the pantry is a key to dinner success. This means having an assortment of condiments on hand including plenty of mustard, barbecue sauce, salad dressing, jams and jellies, herbs, spices, olives and garlic. These will all help pull a flavorful meal together. Today with all of the convenient ingredients available at our fingertips, this provides an easy way for children to participate in whipping up sauces and marinades.

Don't forget to create a bevy of flavors. This means adding variety to meals that also encourage youngsters to select and eat different foods. Remember to add color to the dinner table. By filling a plate with fruit and vegetables, colors like green, orange and red will ensure a meal that's rich in key vitamins and nutrients. Hopefully the kids will eat and enjoy these foods too.

No doubt there are plenty of other ideas and tips that will foster family togetherness through meal preparations, rituals and traditions. These are simply a handful that are tried and true. Come up with your own. Make them part of your own family's tradition. More importantly enjoy the food and time with your family.

John Schlageck has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for 25 years. He is the managing editor of Kansas Living, a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

