



Free Press
Viewpoint

Why are dealers
on federal hit list?

Financial advisors used to tell widows that, no matter what happens, they could depend on the “blue chips” in their stock portfolios: you know, solid companies like AT&T, Chrysler, General Motors.

Only now, AT&T is gone, gobbled up by one of its “Baby Bell” offspring. Chrysler and GM, both in bankruptcy.

What is this world coming to?

The car business, for one, just isn’t what is used to be. And when the administration gets done “saving” GM and Chrysler, it’ll be even more changed.

There’s an agenda here, lots of them, in fact: Smaller cars, more gas mileage, no more big SUVs. Bond holders were treated, not as banks or people with money invested, but like speculators with no real interest in the companies.

The administration wants the firms to build the cars it *thinks* people should have, not the ones they might want.

One wag said, when people decide they want big pickups again, Ford (unburdened by bankruptcy and federal “aid”) should be in a good position to make them – and make a lot of money.

Americans have shown that they will drive what they want, however, and they pay little heed to what they “should” drive – for the good of the economy or the environment.

One of the strangest agendas is the idea that to make money, the big automakers need to get rid of thousands of dealers.

Congress and the administration have bought into this plan, which supposedly would get rid of nearly a third of all the dealerships with each big firm. How that will help them recover is uncertain.

All the “Big 3” automakers have been slimming their dealer list for years, refusing to replace those – especially those in small towns – that close or go broke. That was a process of attrition, because state laws and dealer franchise contracts made it tough to get rid of a dealer who wanted to stay.

Bankruptcy changes all the rules, however, and with the power of a federal judge to void contracts, the companies could call the shots.

Their choices seemed to make little sense, though. Small, barely profitable dealers got a pass in some cases while larger firms in bigger towns were told they’d have to close. No one could, or would, say why.

One pattern did emerge: many dealer contracts to be voided seemed to involve dealerships that sold more than one auto-makers’ products under the same roof. That was the case with Colby’s Taylor Motors, which while retained by Chrysler, faces loss of its GM territory next year.

Are the automakers using bankruptcy to achieve ends that would be difficult, maybe even illegal, otherwise? Could be.

Why would they close profitable dealers, dealers who were moving cars for them?

This is not something the government should be pushing. Why close dealerships that employ thousands when the country is trying to push recovery and create jobs?

Our congressman, Jerry Moran, has questioned this type of action. We all should be. Rural America, in particular, does not need to lose any more jobs. Dealers who can make the grade should be allowed to live.

Our communities and the dealers’ employees depend on them. The administration and Congress should defend these dealers, not abandon them. – *Steve Haynes*

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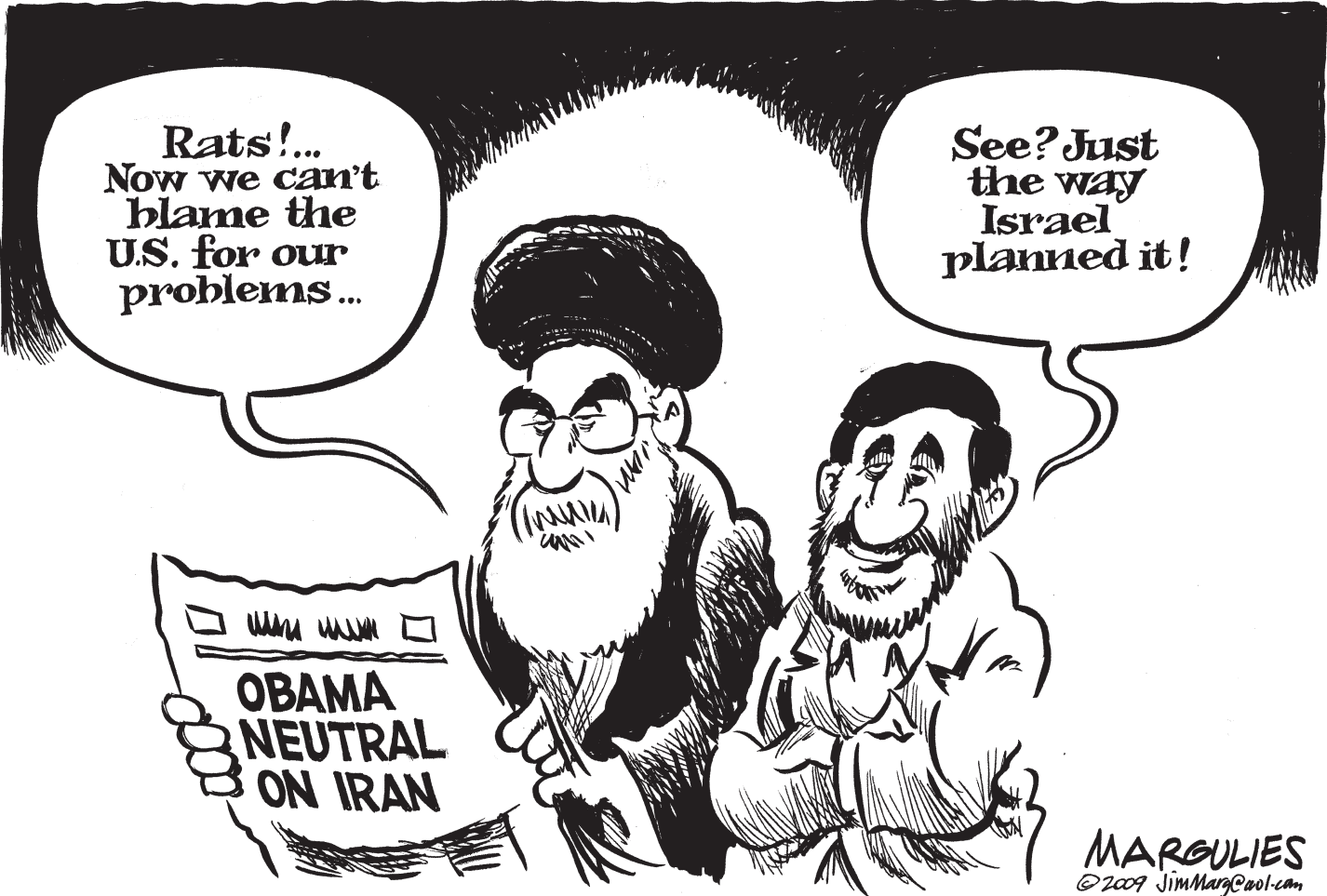
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Post office makes off with scarves?

Out there somewhere, I’m sure, is a crazy gypsy making people put their valuables in a big plastic trash bag and threatening them with a screwdriver.

OK, you don’t like that scenario? How about this one?

A post office somewhere between here and Augusta, Ga., has a dozen really nice trash bags, a screwdriver and a dozen colorful head-scarves and doesn’t really know what to do with them.

Now, I’ve never had any problems mailing packages before. Many times, I send things to the children using United Parcel Service. However, despite recent price increases, the good old American Postal Service is still the cheapest way to send most small stuff.

But, if it gets lost in the system — it’s really lost.

My tale begins with youngest daughter. She found a craft project that uses scarves to make clothing. She immediately remembered the many colorful head scarves I had. My ears are sensitive to the wind, so when I walk, I frequently wear a scarf, just like the ones my mother wore back in 1950.

I made a trip to China in 2002 and brought



Cynthia Haynes

- Open Season

back a bunch of scarves as presents, so Lindsay figured I might be able to supply her with some of my extra scarves. Seems she was sentimentally hoping to be wearing the scarves she remembered from her youth.

“Oh, yes, and could you send me some Rotary trash bags, Mom?”

The Oberlin Rotary Club buys and resells wonderful, big tan trash bags. They are perfect for yard waste because they are both big and tough.

One year, Steve and I gave a case of trash bags to each of our brothers and sisters as Christmas presents. Maybe it wasn’t the most romantic present in the world, but very practical.

At the same time, Steve had purchased a screw driver for Lindsay because she didn’t

have the kind he liked when we were down visiting last month and he was helping her with some home improvement projects.

So, I took what I thought was a pretty sturdy box, put two packages of a dozen trash bags each in the bottom, added the screw driver in the middle and filled the top with head scarves — about a dozen or so.

I secured the box with tape and mailed it.

Better than a week later, daughter called to say that the box had arrived but somewhere in transit, it appeared, an elephant had sat on it, a truck had run over it and it contained one package of trash bags — no scarves, no screwdriver no second package of bags for her sister.

The loss isn’t great in terms of money. None of that stuff was worth much, so you wouldn’t figure anyone would steal it.

We all figure the box was damaged and the contents came out, but where in the world are those scarves, screwdriver and trash bags? And what is that gypsy doing with them?

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor’West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes @ nwkansas.com

She nearly gave her all for her art

Two of my many great-grandchildren are training to be rodeo riders.

Brayclen, 6, is learning to run barrels – on a horse of course – and Braiden, 9, rode a steer in a rodeo the other day and won first place.

Actually, Brayclen rode a sheep, but that didn’t turn out too well, because she fell off and it stepped on her. But she is ready to try again. They are real roughnecks.

I guess they come by it naturally, because their dad, Jerry Lynn, and their grandpa, Clair Schrock, are both former rodeo guys. However, I’ll bet they would be surprised to find out that their great-grandma Marj once almost had to fight a bull.

I was 10 and living in Bethany, Okla., a small town near Oklahoma City. It was December when my Mom decided to make a sugar-plum-tree to decorate our table. She asked me to find two or three twigs with thorns. Her plan was to spray the branches silver, place a large gum drop on each thorn and stand them in a vase.

I remembered seeing some bushes with thorns in the woods behind the Krales’ house. They were a large family that lived just up the road from us, and there was a wooded area behind their place with a creek where we often went crawdad fishing with our bare hands.

Mom said I had to take the younger kids with me, so I called for 4-year-old Dick and 7-year-old Annie, and we ran off on our thorn-bush mission. My 13-year-old sister Shirley was on the phone, and didn’t care to go along.

When we arrived at the Krales’ and told them what we needed, the two older Krales, Donnie and Susie, decided to go along with us. I talked Dick into staying at the house to play with the younger kids.

After discussing the situation, we all agreed that we had seen bushes with thorns in the woods, but couldn’t remember just where, so we had to search for them.

It was a crispy, cold day, and everything was covered with frost. After searching for about half an hour, we found a thicket of thorny bushes, but there was a problem. They were



Marj Brown

- Marj’s Snippets

on the other side of a barbed-wire fence, and the fence was there to keep in a very large, very mean bull. Every one of us had been cautioned not to go inside that fence, but the more I looked at those bushes, the more they looked like just what I needed.

I surveyed the area, looking for the bull. He was grazing on the other side of the field, a long distance from us. Having made up my mind not to go home without those thorn branches, I turned to the Krales and said, “Hold up that fence while I crawl under it, will ya?”

Susie backed away cautiously saying, “You ain’t really goin’ in there — are ya?” Annie screwed up her face and said, “You better not or I’ll tell Momma!” But Donnie just pulled up the barbed wire, and with that crooked smile of his, said, “Go ahead. I dare ya.”

I didn’t say anything. I just fell down and crawled through to the other side.

When I stood up, I checked the bull’s location again. No problem, he was still grazing on the other side of the field. I hurried to the bushes, picked out three branches and started trying to pull off the first one, but it wouldn’t come off. Finally, after a great deal of tugging and twisting, I was able to pull it off — getting some scratches and snags in my gloves in the process. Luckily, the second branch came right off, but the third one held on tight. I pulled and pulled, trying to hold it between the thorns and getting them tangled in my gloves.

Suddenly, Annie and the Krales started jumping up and down and screaming, “Here comes the bull!” When I looked up, I saw that monster of an animal running, head down, snorting foam, and heading right for me. I felt my stomach do a flip-flop, but I was determined not to give up the thorn branch, so I gave a hard jerk

on the branch and it broke loose — CRACK, sending me backwards onto the ground, right smack onto my behind. (Did I mention that my coat was red?)

By this time, both Krales had the fence pulled up and Annie was jumping up and down with tears streaming from her eyes and her blond curls bouncing in the air. She was screaming, “Margie, you get out-a there right now, or I’m goin’ to tell Momma!”

My heart racing, I rolled under the fence clutching the branches. Going under the fence, I ripped a large tear in my coat sleeve.

I had just reached safety when the bull screeched to a halt, just before hitting the wire. He must have had experience with it, and was wise enough to stop.

I jumped up, and all four of us stood there staring into the bull’s fiery eyes. That red-eyed monster glared at us for a minute or two, snorted once or twice, scratched the ground with his hoof, and then went lazily on his way.

Finally, when we were able to move and speak, Donnie shook his head, whistled, and said, “Boy, that was a close call. You coulda been killed.” However, I thought I saw admiration in his eyes. And then, triumphantly, with the branches in my hand, we headed for the Krales’ house.

Later, I lectured Annie all the way to our house on the many reasons why she shouldn’t tell Mom about the bull. She delighted in tattling, especially if it was bad.

“Don’t tell Mom,” I pleaded, “She might have a heart attack or somethin’, and she might not let us go to the Krale’s again.”

Sure enough, as soon as we entered the house, the first words out of Annie’s mouth were, “Momma, Margie crawled under the fence, an’ that big ol’ bull almost killed her, and she tore her coat too!”

I knew I was doomed.

That was my last experience with anything taller than me with four legs. I’m sure I wouldn’t have been much of a bull fighter anyway.

Mallard
Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

