

from our viewpoint...

Your pennies worth more melted down

Proving once again that government knows what's best for us, the U.S. Mint has issued regulations against melting down coins to sell the metal for scrap.

"We are taking this action because the nation needs its coinage for commerce," said Director Edmund Moy. "We don't want to see our pennies and nickels melted down so a few individuals can take advantage of the American taxpayer."

Our bet is someone out there already is taking advantage, given the fact that the copper and zinc in a new nickel cost the government 6.9 cents and the metal in a penny is worth 1.12 cents.

Only your government could come up with economics like that: Making coins that it sells for 60 percent of the cost of production. (The Mint says a nickel costs 8.34 cents to make and a penny 1.73 cents.)

A penny isn't worth picking up at today's prices. A nickel is an executive decision.

So why does the Mint keep making money-losing coins? Apparently, because Americans hate change in the system and want to hang onto their coins. There are some alternatives.

The government could just stop making pennies and nickels. The ones in circulation would disappear rather quickly, and we'd make do with dimes, quarters and the new dollar coin.

Maybe the Mint could come up with a \$5 or \$10 coin to ease the burden on our pockets. That'd save the Treasury the cost of printing billions of \$1 bills every year.

That's too sensible, though. Consumers and retailers already know a penny isn't worth counting. That's why stores have a "penny tray": if you're short, just take one.

We already know that a dime today will hardly buy what a penny would get you when most of us were kids. If a dime was the smallest coin we had, why people would just make change in dimes. Credit card transactions could still count penny, but why bother?

Good question. Tradition, mostly. Fear that merchants would beat us out of a penny when rounding up prices.

Nothing worth the enormous cost of producing small change each year.

Another plan involves redenominating the dollar: Making \$1 worth \$10 in today's money. Mexico did that a few years back, and it helped stabilize the peso. Of course, they had the trade something like \$1,000 in old pesos in for \$1 new.

Either solution probably is way too sensible for Washington, so we'll continue to drag pennies around — and the government will keep making them — until some smart guy melts them all down.

Oh, did we mention that older pennies, made before 1982, were 95 percent copper? Those, if you can find 'em, are worth 2.13 cents melted down.

What a system. — Steve Haynes

Letter Policy

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The Sherman
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Founded by Thomas McCants

1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY
STAR

Founded by Eric and

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1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company

FIRST CAME THE WINDS,
THEN FREEZING RAIN.
SNOW BROKE THE TREE LIMBS
AND DARKNESS REMAINED.

OUR ELECTRICITY WAS DOWN.
THE KANSAS LANDSCAPE WAS DARK,
WHEN THE KIDS STARTED SHOUTING
AND THE DOG GAVE A BARK.

THERE, DOWN THE ROAD,
FOR NEARLY AN HOUR,
ON A POLE STOOD A LINEMAN
RESTORING OUR POWER.

HE REACHED UP WITH HIS HOTSTICK,
A SWITCH WAS HIS MARK,
AND GLAMMED CLOSE THE FUSE
WITH A SMALL, BRIGHT SPARK.

GOD SAID "LET THERE BE LIGHT."
OF THIS THERE'S NO DOUBT.
BUT THEN, HE SURELY CREATED LINEMEN
TO TURN ON WHAT GOES OUT.

©'07 STR8
THE MANHATTAN MERCURY



Getting to Lawrence wasn't the problem

Looking back on it, going to Lawrence on Saturday wasn't the smartest move we've made all year.

Still, we had tickets to see the Kansas Jayhawks play the Rhode Island Rams in Allen Field house — and a cat to deliver.

I'm not sure which was the deciding factor. We looked outside at the snow and ice, checked the weather and road conditions on the Kansas Department of Transportation's website and decided that if we could get to Norcat, we could make it.

We decided to worry about getting back when the time came. As I said earlier, this wasn't our all-time bright idea of the year.

Frank, the cat, had come to stay with us when he was evicted from son's apartment in Lawrence for poor hygiene.

He mended his ways here. Again I'm not sure why. He was let outdoors when he wanted to go, he didn't want to live outdoors and if he sprayed at my house, he was a garage cat, or maybe he just didn't like that apartment.

Whatever the reason, Frank became a really great addition to our menagerie. His mother,



**cynthia
haynes**

● open season

April Alice, liked to play with him, Mollie Monster fought with him and Jezebel hissed at him. Of course, Jez hisses at everyone and everything, so that's not surprising. Annie, the dog, just ignored him, the same as she ignores all the cats except Mollie, who thinks she's a dog and likes to hang out with her.

Now son has a new roommate and a new place to live. It was time for Frank to go home. We took him to Lawrence and left him with his favorite black blanket — all the better to shed on.

We were right about the trip to Lawrence. Once we got out of Decatur County, the snow decreased and we could go a little faster, although the roads were icy through Norton County. By Phillipsburg, it was just wet, and it stayed rainy the whole trip. Little did we

know how much water was coming down as snow back home, or that our backyard was being buried under a drift.

The game was fun. We won, so what's not to like?

At the hotel, Steve spotted two bald eagles right outside, a mature bird and a young one. They winter on the river and the hotel doesn't allow anyone on the walkway near their trees during the winter and spring.

The mature eagle was across the river feasting on a dead fish while the young one — a huge bird but with splotchy brown and white feathers that will eventually mature into a beautiful white-headed specimen — was right next to our window on a tree branch. He was wonderful.

The drive back was mixed. The weather was good, the roads were mostly good until we got into the snow zone near Norton, but I missed Frank. Now we only have a dog and 2 1/2 cats. (I'm only counting Jez as half since we seldom see her.)

But thanks anyway, I don't need any donations.

Belated 2006 Christmas wish list

Bah, humbug everybody. Consider that uttered in the spirit of those of us familiar with the soft dark underbelly of the happiest time of the year. The ones regularly washed over by the holiday faucet of red and green bile, dreading the solstice celebration as it drips down the drain of melancholy revealing the regurgitated fruit of our greed and gluttony.

But then again, what the hell. Pass me a cookie and another glass of nog and let's just enjoy the whole thing, shall we? And go easy on the nutmeg and heavy on the whiskey, mister. Because it's time to just sit back and relax. Xmas is still with us, as we are repeatedly reminded by the televised images of gift returns partially obscured by the coffee-table-high wrapping paper detritus.

So to honor all you brave and steadfast consumers who set new records this year in your patriotic quest to sink heavily into debt to honor the birth of that Jewish hippie kid, let me offer up to the least-deserving of us my annual, scathingly incisive yet perennially trenchant, Will Durst's Xma\$ Gift Wi\$h Li\$t.

•For the Iraqi people: an end to their civil war before the Bush Administration starts calling it that.

•For Rush Limbaugh: mint flavored shoe laces for the next time he puts his foot in mouth.

•For Mary Cheney's child: kindly faced, wise and sage other grandparents to neutralize Dick & Lynne.

•For British Prime Minister Tony Blair: a gift certificate good for one operation to disconnect him from his co-joined twin George Bush.

•For Donald Trump & Rosie O'Donnell: muzzles.

•For George Bush: who said he was going to stay the course in Iraq even if only Barney and Laura were supporting him; some dog treats for Barney.

•For prospective Democratic Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton: thicker skirts, so voters aren't distracted by the sight of her testicles when she speaks on a stage with back lighting.

•For Princess Diana: on the tenth anniversary of her death, a moment's peace for crum's sake.

•For OJ Simpson: a one-way ticket to a deserted island populated predominantly by poisonous pampas grass.

•For International Tyrannical Despot Saddam Hussein: a loophole. A big honking loophole.

•For Michael Richards: now that his career in Hollywood is over; a gubernatorial bid from



**will
durst**

● raging moderate

the great state of Idaho.

•For Mel Gibson: many more in a continuing series of Michael Richards-like incidents.

•For Britney Spears: a reciprocal arrangement with Victoria's Secret.

•For Harry Whittington: trigger locks for all his friends.

•For the once and future Democratic Presidential candidate John Kerry: a flip flop from the overwhelming majority of Republicans who want him to run for the presidency, to an overwhelming majority of Democrats. And a first edition, signed copy of Milton Berle's Joke File.

•For Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman: some of Hillary Clinton's testosterone.

•For Taco Bell: a new advertising campaign that drops the focus on "Run for the Border."

•For Jason Alexander and Julia Louis-Dreyfus: a good agent to say "no" to whatever scheme the Seinfeld team comes up with to promote the next release of DVDs after Michael Richards' exploits resulted in higher-than-expected sales.

•For Democratic New Orleans Congressional Representative William Jefferson: a home safe disguised as one of those mini refrigerators.

Comic, actor, writer, former radio talk show host and porno bookstore clerk, Will Durst, wonders why can't everyday be Xmas?

Will Durst is a political comedian who has performed around the world, and is a familiar pundit on television and radio. Email Will.durst@willdurst.com.

