

As cost of gasoline rises, driving habits changing

So finally, when gasoline approaches \$4 a gallon, Americans are starting to change their habits.

About time, some might say.

Way too late, others will chorus.

The truth is, people will do what people need to do.

Driving is an economic decision.

Most Americans drive too much, but that's partly because fuel has been so cheap for so long.

Cheap, you say? At \$3 per gallon?

Well, yeah, gas might have been 21 cents a gallon in the 1960s, but by the mid-1970s it had jumped to \$1 or more. And still people kept on driving.

Oh, there was a gas crisis or two, and we had to wait in line for fuel.

People sought houses closer to town. People talked about saving energy.

But life was good. Times were easy. And we began to think of \$2 gas as affordable.

Then the world got smaller, China got bigger and gas hit \$3. Americans bought more big trucks, more huge "sports utility vehicles."

But as oil topped \$125 per barrel and fuel shot past \$4, Americans began paying attention. Something happened that all the Al Gore harangues, all the government programs, all the talk could not force: people started to look for ways to drive less and spend less.

The free market works like that. Guilt and knowledge will only drive us so far. But at some point, fuel becomes so expensive that people actually take note.

And we may be at that point, if the dealers' lots and manufacturers' yards full of big trucks are any sign, the time to size down and save has finally come upon us.

There is only so much oil in the world, after all. The more we use, the less that will

be left.

It isn't American excess that's driving this market, though. It's a growing world at our doorstep that finally has the money and the economic muscle to use a lot more of the resources we've taken for granted: oil, coal, food, water, you name it.

China, India, the rest of Asia, all clamoring for the things we in the West have.

And finally having the cash to buy them.

The price of oil isn't going down, not any time soon. It may dip and fluctuate, but the trend is going to be ever upward from here. The Third World has arrived, and it's hungry for what we have.

What does that mean for Americans?

We're going to have to think in terms of sustainable living. Smaller cars. New fuel sources.

The government won't have to make us do that. The cost of fuel will drive us.

Eventually, we'll have to stop burning oil. It'll be too valuable as a feed stock for chemicals, plastics and the like to just burn up, and like they say, they're not making any more.

We'll have to find ways to use wind, sun, hydrogen from the ocean and, yes, even dirty old coal and dangerous nuclear to fuel our daily lives. The good news is whatever we turn to will be cleaner and safer than any energy source we know today.

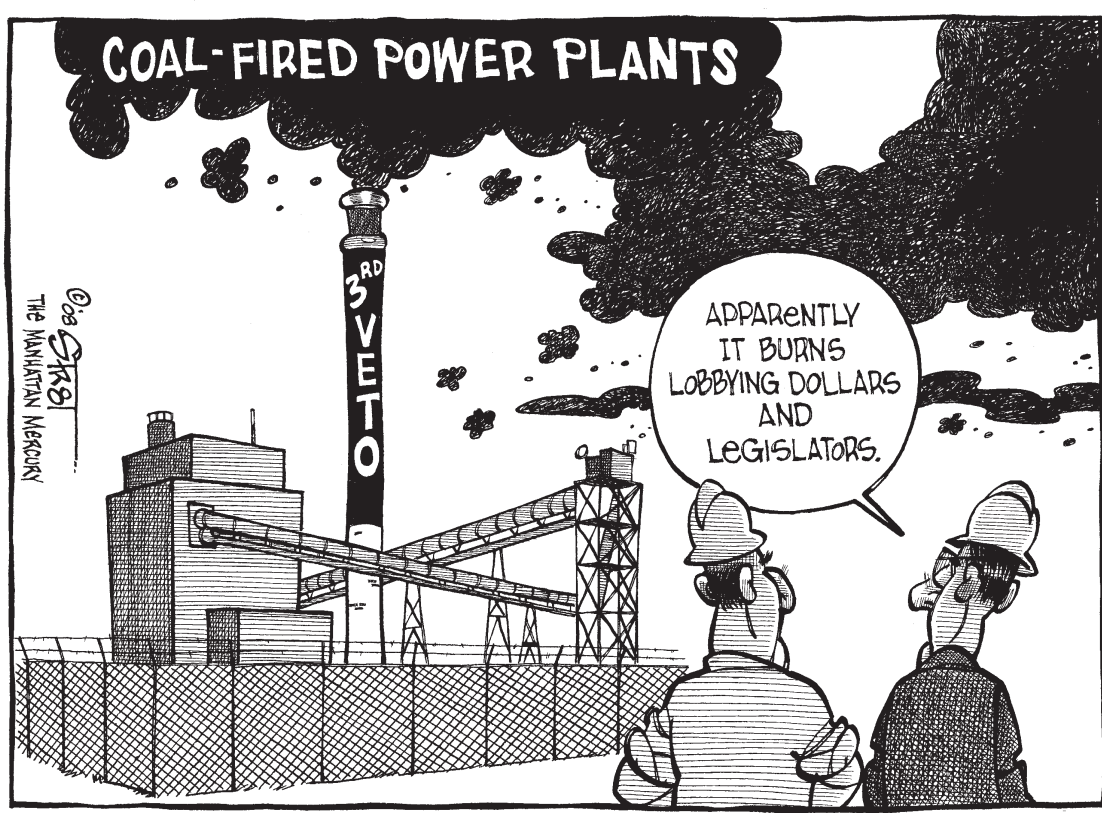
The bad news is all of it will cost more. We really do need to learn to live a simple life, with less excess and more purpose.

Ah, but that's preaching.

The reality of the market will enforce our decisions. Some days the choices won't be so pleasant, but life will go on.

And who knows, we might just like the results, once we get used to them.

— Steve Haynes



Old South city quite romantic

SAVANNAH, Ga. — The Spanish moss, like thick bunches of gray hair, drips down out of the live oaks, which stretch their twisted and slightly spooky limbs from one side of the squares to the other.

We're in one of the most historical, romantic cities of the Old South for work and pleasure.

Daughter Felicia is at *The Savannah* Tribune working. We sent her off this morning after breakfast, telling her she was consulting, insulting and assaulting the staff at the paper. She laughed and drove off, leaving us on foot in one of the great walking cities, by day at least. (At night, they say, you could get mugged, but by day, tourists are perfectly safe.)

Old Savannah is built around squares, starting near the waterfront and heading slightly uphill to the south. There are 24 of them now, spread over a square mile. There used to be more, but development and neglect gobbled a few. The city hopes to create some new ones, though, so the number could go up.

Each square is a block of park surrounded by buildings — historic homes, offices, shops, restaurants and churches.

The parks are islands of shade, flowers and tranquility amidst the brick, asphalt and cement of the streets and buildings. In them, people meander, read historical markers or just sit in the shade.

We're in Wright Square now. Steve has his laptop open and he is editing copy while I wander around



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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and watch the squirrels frolic on the ground and jump from tree to tree.

In the middle of the square stands a huge stone marker erected in 1882 and dedicated to William Washington Gordon, founder and first president of Georgia's earliest railroad — the Central Railroad and Banking Co. A eulogy to Gordon is on one side of the marker while the opposite side is dedicated to Tomo-chi-chi, the Yamacraw chief, who helped William Oglethorpe found the colony of Georgia back in 1733.

People watching is great in this shaded corner.

Girls from the Savannah College of Art and Design, affectionately known as SCAD, walk by in low-cut tops, leggings and short skirts. Big men walk by with little dogs and tiny women jog by with Great Danes. So much for people and their dogs looking alike.

The bench next to ours has a gaggle of school kids. They're from northern Georgia and they're on a four-day school trip. Right now, they're more interested in showing off for each other than historic homes, statues and museums.

They're nice and polite and offer shy smiles to the nosy lady on the next bench.

Next we head for a coffee shop with wireless Internet access. Son-in-law Nik is already there, working on whatever it is he does on his computer. Like an engineer, Nik works really hard, but what he does is a mystery. It keeps his bosses happy and pays well, so I'm not going to try to figure it out.

The coffee shop asks you to buy something if you're occupying their space. That seems fair, and since it's lunch time, sandwiches and coffee fill the bill.

Our laptops join dozens of others on tables around the room as we write and edit. Parts of this job, you can do from anywhere in the world today.

Before you know it, oldest daughter has arrived, noting that it's 4:30 p.m. and do we want to do anything else or just go home?

Home — back to Augusta — is good. Savannah has been a delightful oasis of calm and we even got some work done, but it's time to pack up. Soon it'll be time to head home to Kansas.

There's no place like home

Dorothy from "The Wizard of Oz" was right: "There's no place like home. There's no place like home."

Whether you came from a wealthy family with every convenience or from a poor farm family where the "convenience" was out back, every Memorial Day the Decatur Community High Alumni Banquet brings people back home.

It doesn't matter if someone else owns the old house now or even if the house is long gone. That place — that exact spot in the world — is home. Perhaps that thought is what "grounds" us.

My brother Jim and his wife Linda came from Lawrence for his 50th high school reunion this weekend. They thought they had a real good time, even Linda, who is from eastern Kansas and didn't know but a few people.

Jim is a retired teacher, and this is one of the few reunions he has made because, in the past, he was always finishing up the school year and couldn't get away. The rest of the world does not always end the school term as early as we do out here.

As many times as we have "bummed" a free night's stay with Jim and Linda, we were glad to finally be able to return the favor.



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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Of course, we stayed up too late talking. But one of the advantages of reaching our "golden years" is no one argues very much when someone finally suggests, "Why don't we call it a night." And, everyone understands when someone asks, "Is it OK if we leave the bathroom light on?"

Besides home, there's nothing like "family," either. A wise man told me, "It takes people living in a house to make it a home."

This morning, Jim said, "I don't care if they call me a sissy. I'm turning the heat on."

What's up with this? It's the end of May. Usually, I'm battling with my inner self to resist kicking on the air conditioning. (I have a personal goal of "No air conditioning before June 1) But, it's really hard to accept the "Global Warming" theory when you're grabbing for the covers on May 26.

Not that I do accept the theory

(and, it is just a theory), coming from a man who claimed to have invented the Internet. However, I may not be the best person to discuss current events. I haven't seen a news broadcast in days.

Is "SHE" still in the running or did that General Electric light bulb go off over her head and she finally got the idea that it's over?

From the Bible

Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer.

From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelming; lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

For though hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.

Psalm 61:1-3

Rain makes huge difference

Amazing what a difference four inches of rain makes, isn't it?

Wheat that was just hanging on looks absolutely lush. Corn springs up from bare stubble. Leaves pop out on all the trees.

And the creeks are flowing. How long has it been since that happened?

I don't know where you were when the storms struck Thursday night and Friday. I was in China, getting a blow-by-blow description of Weather Service reports by Instant Messenger from home.

It's a little strange trying to track tornadoes from halfway around the world, but then I was in a high-rise hotel in Taipei, and Cynthia was under the big, heavy tables in the basement where we take shelter.

OK, I was a little jealous. It only rains a couple of times a year, and I hate to miss it. I hate to miss any of the spring here, with the flowers, the new green leaves and all the, ah, interesting weather. Or the excitement of storm season, as long as it's not too exciting.

I got back to Denver on Saturday and she picked me up at the airport. We knew it would be late, since we were leaving the airport after 8 p.m. Colorado time, but we both wanted to be home. Especially me.

Despite having been up for most of 30 hours already, I drove the first leg. It felt good to be behind the wheel after spending much of the week getting on and off a tour bus, eating Chinese food and listening to Chinese officials talk in passable English.

Cynthia has to drive the last lap, but as we cruise into Atwood, I tell her to stop. Something is different.

The lake — it's full for the first time in a couple of years. There's water on both sides of the highway, water in the main lake and the east lake. Water pouring over the spillway. Water everywhere, in fact.

We drive over to the dam to take it all in: The roar of the water — we're not about to drive through that, though someone obviously has — the chorus of frogs, the deep croaking of the bullfrogs, all revived from hibernation in the lake-bottom mud for goodness-knows how long. Bullfrogs, really. And all that



Along the Sappa

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sparkling water. It'll be interesting to see if the clay liner they've been installing holds the water for long. Last time the lake came up, it filled only to drain out within a few days. The water table still isn't very high.

Back in Oberlin the next day, Sappa Lake indeed is full, but the drain cock was open and the water would soon be a thing of the past. That made me jealous.

How is it one town saw the value of its lake and revived it, while the next let the water slip away? A difference in vision?

Sappa Park looks good anyway, at least, the part that's still above water. Most of the new trails are impassable, mired in mud or under water, but that will change soon enough. The bridge below the dam was under water as the lake drained, as were most of those upstream. No one was walking the lake bed.

By Tuesday, most of the water was gone, leaving behind plenty of mud. A turkey, driven off the lake bed by the water, fled the parking area by the dam as visitors ap-

proached. Everything is green. It will take days to dry it all out.

Then the trails will reappear, as will the walkers, joggers and dog owners who populate the park most days.

The birds will return to cover, the deer to the timber, the turkeys to the roosts. The creek may flow all summer, though, now that ground is saturated. The dry cycle is gone, and we could get plenty of rain.

Or none at all.

The weather here is hard to know. The only thing that's certain is that wet years will be followed by dry, and just when we think it'll never rain, we'll get too much.

That's the way it's always been. This year, though, the frogs will reproduce and the corn will have moisture to get up, the creeks will run and the roads may be muddy all summer.

By July, people may be complaining about too much moisture.

Is that possible? Of course. In Kansas, anything is possible with weather. Until it changes.

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