

# CHEYENNE HERALD

the local advocacy journal

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## There's no accounting for the credit card shenanigans taking place at LCCC

**ARE THEY SLOPPY, DISHONEST, OR JUST ETHICALLY-CHALLENGED ???**

by  
**Jim Mathewson**  
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Some combinations are almost guaranteed to cause trouble. Drinking and driving. Cellphones and movie theaters. Public employees and credit cards.

One needn't look very far to find examples of the third problem.

The former high school principal and a female employee of the local school system were recently indicted in Gillette, Wyoming. They were charged with using school credit cards to purchase exercise equipment, electronic gizmos, and other items which were found in their possession, not the school's.

The Elbert County Assessor down in Colorado was arrested and arraigned in September. She's being charged with using the county's credit cards to purchase thousands of dollars worth of gift cards with which she then purchased nice things for her-

self, her friends, and members of her family.

Like the Gillette principal, her career as a public servant is over and a relationship with an appropriate corrections official may be beginning soon.

Closer to home, we have the case of Maggie Carter, who sacrificed a cushy \$52,000 per year secretarial job at the Cheyenne City Council because of her misuse of City credit cards.

As we first reported here in the CHEYENNE HERALD, Ms. Carter used one of the 170 credit cards issued to City employees to purchase cosmetics and "vitamins" for herself on the internet and to pay for a motel room in Concordia, Kansas.

Then she compounded the mistake by deliberately falsifying the vouchers she turned into the City

Treasurer's office for payment of the VISA bills. To hide her personal purchases using the City's credit card, she miscoded the expenditures on the vouchers as "in-town travel", "office supplies", etc.

It was that deliberate miscoding of the purchases which triggered five felony charges against Ms. Carter. In signing the false vouchers, she had sworn under penalty of perjury that the expenditures of public money were true and honest and that all information on the voucher was correct. It wasn't, as we discovered.

She ultimately resigned her job with the Cheyenne City Council, accepted a plea bargain for her five felonies, and was given probation in lieu of a two-year prison sentence.



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## Elect **TIM THORSON** Laramie County Clerk

### OPEN AND ACCOUNTABLE

**You have a choice to make for Laramie County's future!**

My opponent was first elected County Clerk in 1994 – the same year as Bill Clinton's first State of the Union speech and *Time's* cover story: "The Strange New World of the Internet."

The world has changed a lot in sixteen years. With NCAR, Archer, Swan Ranch and the Niobrara Play all coming to Laramie County, it's time for business sense, not business-as-usual.

As Vice President of Cheyenne LEADS, I was part of the team that recruited the Wal-Mart Distribution Center, All-State and NCAR to Cheyenne – over 900 good-quality and long-lasting jobs.

I have written and managed over \$40 million in grants – bringing money to Laramie County for law enforcement, our small towns, road maintenance and economic development.

In the past three years working for Laramie County, I have seen first-hand how badly we need new ideas and greater accountability at the Courthouse.

With your vote, I will open the closed doors of your local government, follow the spirit and the letter of the law and protect your tax dollars. You can find specifics at [www.VoteThorson.org](http://www.VoteThorson.org) or email me at [tim@votethorson.com](mailto:tim@votethorson.com).

Make your vote count this election!

**VoteThorson.org**

*Elect Tim Thorson paid for this ad because for the first time since 1998 you have a choice in this race. Please cast your vote for Laramie County's future and vote Tim Thorson for Laramie County Clerk.*



Recently, a citizen with a connection to Laramie County Community College asked us here at the CHEYENNE HERALD to take a look at credit card purchases at LCCC. The tipster gave no specific clue about the nature of his suspicions other than to say, "you may be surprised at what you find".

That citizen was only partially right. Yes, I'm surprised, but I'm also stunned, flabbergasted, and amazed at what I've seen so far ... and, as a resident of Laramie County, downright appalled at the unprofessional, haphazard way the College accounts for hundreds of thousands of dollars of credit card purchases.

A request to inspect a year's worth of credit card statements was emailed to Carol Hogle, LCCC's Vice President of Administration and Finance. Eventually, redacted copies of over 200 monthly statements were made available together with the College's rules and regulations for credit card usage and a list of the 20 LCCC employees to whom VISA credit cards have been issued.

**Only 20 cardholders but dozens of users**

The list of cardholders includes: **Harold Andrews**, LCCC's Director of Accounting Services; **Bradley Barker**, Admissions Representative; **David Browder**, Rodeo Team Head Coach; **Ken Bunya**, Director of Systems and Technology Support; **Jason Ficca**, Athletic Director and Head Basketball Coach; **Sara Fleenor**, Coordinator of International and Diversity Studies; **David Gaer**, Instructor in Theater and Communications; **James Gardner**, Women's Soccer Head Coach; **Vince Gibson**, Men's Soccer Head Coach; **William Golden**, Equine Studies Instructor; **Kelli Griffith**, Agriculture Instructor; **Darrel Hammon**, LCCC President; **Sarah Hannes**, E-recruiting and Web Specialist; **Lanae Koons**, Coach of the Equine Show Team; **Karen Lange**, LCCC's Library Director; **Wayne Miller**, Equine Studies Instructor; **Joshua Nighswonger**, Admissions Representative; **Jason Pasqua**, Instructor in Theater and Communications; **Lynn Stalnaker**, Dean of LCCC's Albany County branch in Laramie; and **Travis Ward**, Women's Volleyball Head Coach.

A first look at the 200+ monthly credit card statements suggested that there were some LCCC employees who didn't understand that they weren't supposed to be using the cards for personal purchases. It certainly appeared from an examination of just the monthly bills that there was widespread abuse among many of the 20 cardholders.

Fortunately, a closer look at the supporting documents and receipts revealed that almost all of those to whom the credit cards have been issued were NOT violating the rules about personal purchases, although you can certainly question whether some of their non-personal purchases on behalf of the College were prudent.

No, the problem appears to be closer to the Accounting Services department under the direction of Harold Andrews and LCCC's Vice President for Administration and Finance, Carol Hogle. What's lacking is a very healthy dose of "internal control".

Internal control is a key accounting concept which should be readily embraced by any organization like LCCC with its yearly budget of almost seventy million dollars.

As one expert in accounting put it: "Internal control is the process designed to ensure reliable financial reporting, effective and efficient operations, and compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Safeguarding assets against theft and unauthorized use, acquisition, or disposal is also part of internal control."

The use of credit cards by public entities is not new. It's been happening on an ever-increasing scale since the 70's and 80's. Because it's not a new practice, some well-publicized standards concerning the use of credit cards by public employees have been developed and adopted by large and small public entities around the United States.

Common to these standards are the following:

1. Use of a credit card by anyone other than the person to whom the card has been issued is to be prohibited.
2. Copies of monthly statements should be provided to every cardholder so that he/she can determine whether the card has been used by someone else to make purchases.
3. Duplicate credit cards should not be ordered from the issuing bank unless a cardholder loses the card which has been issued to him/her.
4. No charge on any monthly should be paid by a public entity unless and until the named cardholder provides a printed receipt or other document which matches and validates the purchase.

A review of LCCC's credit card statements and supporting documents for the 2009-2010 school year has revealed scores of transactions which violate the principles of good internal control and the College's own rules and regulations for credit card use.

Here are just a few of many questionable transactions, plus some shocking examples of how some people at LCCC seem to have no clue what it might mean to use scarce public funds wisely.

**Example #1 ... PLAY BALL!!!**

*When the Colorado Rockies hosted the New York Mets on April 15th of this year, a big crowd was at Coors Field.*

*Among them that day were several dozen people sitting in \$60 seats paid for on Lynn Stalnaker's LCCC VISA.*

*Total cost of the game tickets alone was \$3490. Other expenses associated with the game, including meals and the bus to transport LCCC's baseball fans, probably pushed the total cost of the happy outing to about \$5000.*

*No doubt Mr. Stalnaker will say that the trip and ballgame had significant "educational value" for the dozens of participants. Perhaps it would have been even more educational if the Mets hadn't skunked the Rockies 5-0.*

**Example #7 ... Why the library?**

*There's certainly nothing wrong with a community college paying for background checks on potential employees. Sadly, in this day and age, it's often more prudent than wasteful.*

*But why does LCCC seem to always charge these many background checks totalling thousands of dollars on the VISA card issued to Karen Lange, the Director of LCCC's library?*

*An attempt was made to ask Ms. Lange if she was aware of the MANY charges on her VISA card which were made by MANY other LCCC employees, but she didn't respond.*

**Example #12 ... PICK A CARD, ANY CARD**

*Librarian Karen Lange's VISA was just one of the cards utilized by someone named Jay O'Halloran, who's listed on LCCC's website as a mechanic in its vehicle maintenance department.*

*Mr. O'Halloran used Ms. Lange's card to buy \$537 worth of truck parts from a company in Missouri.*

*He was also allowed to make multiple purchases totalling almost \$1400 from four different vendors using Ken Bunya's VISA account number.*

*One of the several Purchase Orders submitted for payment and signed by Mr. O'Halloran and his supervisor, Tim Macnamara, contains the following cryptic note: "KEN BUNYA'S VISA CARD WAS GIVEN TO JAY TO USE".*

*But Macnamara and O'Halloran are equal opportunity chargers. They also made purchases using the VISA account supposedly belonging to Accounting Services Director, Harold Andrews, although on one PO they said his name was "Harold Anderson".*

*Tip to Jay and Tim ... if you're going to charge things to someone else's VISA, at least learn how to spell his name. It's just common courtesy, after all.*

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**It's good to have rules and procedures.**

**It's even better to follow them once in a while.**

Each person issued an LCCC credit card is supposedly required to sign an agreement certifying that they understand and accept the following rules.

**Laramie County Community College CREDIT CARD USE / PROCEDURES**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The college maintains credit cards primarily to be used for approved expenses as listed below. Credit cards may only be used for these purposes. It is understood that there may be circumstances that might require an exception, those exceptions must be agreed upon in advance with Accounting Services. *The use of these credit cards is a privilege, not a right.*

**2. CREDIT CARD TYPES -- PROCEDURAL USE**

**A. Gasoline Credit cards**

- 1) Gasoline credit cards are distributed by the secretary of Physical Plant at the time a vehicle is checked out for travel.
- 2) Each credit card transaction requires that a detailed receipt be obtained and submitted to the Physical Plant Administrative Assistant upon your return to campus. The individual trip ticket and all receipts must be submitted collectively at this time.

**B. MasterCard and VISA credit cards**

- 1) The MasterCard and VISA credit cards are limited to the following:
  - Student group travel expenses (accompanied by an advisor/coach)
  - College recruiting trips -- travel expenses
  - College President and Board of Trustees travel
  - Dean/Division Directors expenses -- interviewing applicants
- 2) Requests for changes to existing cards and/or additional cards should be made thru Accounting Services.
- 3) Lost or stolen cards must be reported immediately to Accounting Services.
- 4) Credit cards are secured in the Accounting Service's office safe when not in use.
- 5) When credit cards are checked out/in the user's name and date are logged by Accounting Services personnel.
- 6) Each credit card transaction requires that a detailed receipt be obtained and submitted to the Accounting Services upon your return to campus. The individual Travel Expense Form and all receipts must be submitted collectively within 48 hours upon return to campus (exception: weekends).

**3. EXCEPTIONS & ABUSE**

- A. Any exceptions to the above procedures or use of credit cards must be reviewed and approved by Accounting Services.
- B. Credit card use by College employees is not intended to be a means of procurement or purchasing.



5. ALL receipts submitted to validate a credit card purchase should be signed by the person who made the purchase. The absence of a signature on the receipt prevents the identification of the person responsible for the purchase and results in a lack of accountability for expenses incurred by the public entity.

6. Government credit cards should be used for government business purposes and not for personal use. Expenditures for entertainment or other non-business purposes do not represent a proper use of public funds, and such entertainment expenditures, in any amount, should not be paid by the public entity.

7. Expenditures for alcohol, expenditures for most meals purchased locally (rather than meals purchased when traveling out of town), and expenditures for entertainment-related activities do not represent a proper use of public funds and should not be permitted.

After reviewing over 2000 of LCCC's credit card expenditures during the 2009-2010 school year, there is no other conclusion that can be drawn than that LCCC has virtually NO INTERNAL CONTROL over credit card purchases by its employees.

When you see LOCAL expenditures on a specific credit card for restaurant meals or gasoline, for example, at the exact same time that the person to whom the card was issued is hundreds or thousands of miles from Cheyenne using the same card, it suggests that LCCC's Accounting Services department might be distributing multiple copies of the same VISA cards. They won't confirm or deny.

LCCC's own published Rules and Regulations say that a log is kept showing when each cardholder checks out the card assigned to him or her and when they check it back in. When a request was made to see such logs to verify

**FRAUDS + SCAMS + LATE FEES + FINANCE CHARGES + OVERLIMIT FEES**  
**Is anyone in LCCC's Accounting Services department actually paying attention?**

LCCC's Accounting Services Department is headed by **Harold Andrews** who apparently claims to have some experience as an auditor. According to one website, prior to coming to Cheyenne he was the County Administrator and Controller in Alamosa, Colorado. Impressive.

Mr. Andrews' boss is **Carol Hoglund**, LCCC's Vice President of Administration and Finance. She came to LCCC from Aims Community College in Greeley. One of Aims' old websites suggests that Ms. Hoglund has even passed the exam required to become a CPA. Even more impressive.

That's why it's so surprising to see such sloppiness, unprofessionalism, and lack of concern for using the public's money responsibly at LCCC.

Each month, a bankcard company in Omaha prepares a statement for each of LCCC's 20 VISA cardholders, although it's unclear whether the statements are ever actually shown to those whose names appear on the cards. All of the statements have the same due date for payment, usually the 22nd-25th day of the next month. Plenty of time, you'd think, for an organization with plenty of staff in the accounting office to get the bills paid on time. You'd be dead wrong.

Even a casual look at the monthly statements shows scores of **LATE FEES, FINANCE CHARGES, and OVERLIMIT FEES** needlessly eating up literally thousands of dollars per year.

And then there are the many examples of outright scams finding their way onto LCCC's monthly bills with no one in Mr. Andrews' department the least bit concerned about paying for something for which there is no receipt or other supporting document.

Take **EASY SAVER**, for example, which is seen on many of LCCC's monthly statements. It first appears on a credit card bill as an innocuous \$1.95 charge. If it's not challenged, it becomes a monthly charge of \$14.95 which nicks the cardholder (in this case the citizens of Laramie County) month after month after inattentive month.

I found out about the scam by typing "EASY SAVER" into Google. Mr. Andrews' people apparently don't have time to do that. Perhaps they're much too busy trying to find some account in their system to which they can post the expense. After all, what's a lousy \$14.95 every month on several different cards? It is, after all, just the public's money ... not Harold Andrews' or Carol Hoglund's.

that only the named cardholders get ahold of the cards, the response from LCCC was both swift and laughable to the point that a reasonable citizen might conclude that such logs probably don't really exist after all. VP Carol Hoglund wrote: "I am required to deny your request for the log.... The Logs are kept for the sole purpose of enforcing our internal personnel rules regarding credit cards."

A logical question --- what personnel rules??? It certainly appears that anything goes out there at LCCC when it comes to the use of credit cards. Multiple people using the same cards (or card numbers), missing receipts and supporting documentation, thousands of dollars spent in local restaurants and grocery stores, misposting of tens of thousands of dollars of travel expenses as "Miscellaneous Expenses", and the misposting of President Darrel Hammond's own numerous charges in LOCAL restaurants to out-of-town travel accounts.

In a nutshell, fellow citizens, it's a credit card mess out there ... and you're paying dearly for it.

Sometimes I have to keep reminding myself that LCCC is an institution of higher learning with an ELECTED Board of Trustees demonstrating almost no interest in looking into such financial problems.

Also worth noting is that LCCC actually teaches accounting to 18-, 19-, and 20-year olds. With that in mind, here are three questions which may be worth considering during the coming weeks:

1. If LCCC's accounting students did class work comparable to the way LCCC administers its credit card program, what grade would you give them?
2. If you hired one of their graduates to keep the books at your business and they consistently misposted expenditures to inappropriate expense accounts, resulting in balance sheets and income statements which were misleading or downright deceptive, would you keep them or fire them?
3. What potential donor in their right mind would consider donating their money or other assets to a community college which has such sloppy or non-existent internal control and whose Board-approved budget and other financial reports might be a partial or total sham?

**Example #21... SIS-BOOM-BAH!**

Information Technology Manager **Ken Bunya's** VISA account number was used over and over to purchase everything under the sun by other LCCC employees. The pattern of usage certainly suggests that there might be multiple VISA cards floating around the LCCC campus with Mr. Bunya's name thoughtfully embossed on them.

One of Mr. Bunya's charges was to pay a \$635 deposit on a cheerleading class. While it's entirely possible that the IT department has organized its own squad to cheer on its programmers and technicians, the paperwork suggests that the athletic department just didn't want to pay for this using Athletic Director **Jason Ficca's** LCCC VISA, which might still be excessive but at least a little more appropriate.

The one-day cheerleading "clinic" apparently cost significantly more than the \$635 charged on Ken Bunya's card.

**Example #33 ... SAY IT WITH FLOWERS**

When the big spenders on LCCC's Board of Trustees wanted to send a \$40.00 bouquet to someone's memorial service down in Cortez, Colorado, they could have just taken up a collection among themselves. It would have been less than six bucks each.

But why take money out of your own pocket when you (a) want to show what kind and thoughtful people you are AND (b) want to let the citizens of Laramie County pay for it.

Librarian **Karen Lange's** popular VISA once again took the hit ... and when it came time to post the \$40.00 to an expense account, it was charged to an "OFFICE SUPPLIES" account.

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**GIVE THAT MAN A FINE CIGAR ... AND LET THE CITIZENS OF LARAMIE COUNTY PAY FOR IT**

There are a lot of big VISA purchases on LCCC's credit cards. The credit limits for each of the 20 cardholders averages about \$8000 ... but sometimes it's the teeny, tiny purchases which give you clues about whether a public entity or its individual employees have integrity and competence, or neither.

Last November, a group of LCCC students traveled to Louisville, Kentucky. The group was led by Equine Instructor **Wayne Miller**. Along the way they stopped at the Gateway Arch in St. Louis and toured the Four Roses Distillery in Kentucky. Credit card charges document their traveling and entertaining.

At the bottom of the monthly statement where that trip's charges are itemized was a strange one ...

**Kentucky Gentlemen Cigar Co.**  
 502-839-9226 \$24.00

The company's website says their cigars are cured in whiskey barrels to give them a special flavor.

When I looked for a matching receipt in LCCC's files, however, I found the one pictured at the right. >>>>>

It's a restaurant receipt from a place called **Shorty Small's** (famous for its deep-fried Twinkies).

The receipt seems to have been deliberately altered to make it appear to be for an identical \$24.00 credit card charge. The problem is the Oklahoma City restaurant is 815 miles from the cigar company in Kentucky where someone used Wayne Miller's VISA to buy cigars.

Where did the Shorty Small's receipt come from? Don't know, but other VISA receipts show that **William Golden**, LCCC's other equine instructor, just happened to be in Oklahoma City that day.

An accident or a deliberate deception by someone. None at LCCC seem to care. The bill got paid anyway. Light up, boys. The citizens are paying for this.





**Example #40... THAT'S SOME RENT-A-CAR**

When LCCC sent five people to San Jose, California, for a Rotary Club Convention (don't ask), the leader of the pack filed a TRAVEL REQUEST which included an estimate of the costs.

Included in the estimated costs was a charge of \$635 for "car rental".

Do these people have absolutely no respect for the fact that PUBLIC money is being used to fund their junkets or was RENT-A-LAMBORGINI the only available option that week?

**Example #54 ... FUN IN THE FLORIDA SUN**

Ken Bunya's VISA was also used to purchase airline tickets to send 24 LCCC coaches and soccer players to Winter Haven, Florida, for three days last fall.

It's reported that they had a really wonderful time.

The \$4000 charge on Mr. Bunya's VISA statement apparently paid for only about 30% of the total cost of the trip.

**NOTE:** If you'd like to see a PDF file showing all of the VISA charges which have been reviewed so far, just send a message to [jmat44691@gmail.com](mailto:jmat44691@gmail.com)

**WHERE, OH WHERE, IN THE WORLD IS PHINEAS KELLY NOW?**

Every few months, Laramie County Community College publishes a slick catalog which lists all the courses which will be offered during the next few months. Every home, post office box, and gopher hole in the County probably gets at least one of them.

For years such catalogs have consistently listed courses which teach PHOTOSHOP at both the introductory and more advanced levels. They seem to be quite popular courses.

The local availability of such training at a reasonable cost (or perhaps even free to LCCC employees) was what made one specific set of credit card transactions particularly interesting and a little questionable.

Librarian Karen Lange's VISA bill last February contained two charges totalling \$1145.00 payable to a company called Sonic Training. Sonic's website indicates that they offer various kinds of software training around the country on a regular basis. Their courses include INTRODUCTORY and INTERMEDIATE PHOTOSHOP which Mr. Kelly signed up for.

A closer look at the supporting documents showed that the payment to Sonic Training was for a fellow named Phineas Kelly, who was listed at the time as LCCC's "technology coordinator".

Even though Sonic was giving the same INTRODUCTORY PHOTOSHOP and INTERMEDIATE

PHOTOSHOP classes in Denver at almost exactly the same time, Mr. Kelly opted to take the courses in San Francisco for a higher per-student cost.

Mr. Kelly's TRAVEL REQUEST (which was approved by his supervisor, Chad Marley) indicated that, although the class was being held on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, he wanted to leave on the previous Friday and return the following Thursday. Seven days gone to San Francisco for the same three-day class which was being offered in Denver at almost exactly the same time? Well, duh. Who wouldn't opt for that, especially if the clueless citizens of Laramie County are paying for most or all of it.

Total cost of Mr. Kelly's Photoshop training in beautiful downtown San Francisco appears to be in the neighborhood of \$2600.00.

And where is Mr. Kelly using that training now? About six weeks after returning from San Francisco, he apparently quit LCCC and took a job with a college in Hawaii.

Did we yokels get snookered into paying a lot for someone's recruiting trip to the West Coast and maybe a lot farther? The paper trail suggests that it's highly likely. Mr. Kelly isn't answering questions.

**THIS JUST IN ... DON'T EVEN THINK OF ASKING ANY MORE QUESTIONS, MR. MATHEWSON**  
As this edition of THE CHEYENNE HERALD was being wrapped up, word came from VP Carol Hoglund that I will no longer be permitted to ask questions of LCCC employees about ANY public documents. What's next ... a restraining order? Reminds me of the immortal words of Reed Eckhardt: "If I never hear from you again, Jim, it will be too soon."

*One Citizen's Opinion*

Those of us directly or indirectly connected to THE CHEYENNE HERALD receive a lot of tips from time to time. Many of the people who supply such suggestions for stories or investigations tell us about misdeeds being committed by private companies or organizations or private citizens against whom they may have a beef.

As fascinating as those nuggets of information may be at times, we've pretty much held to our original guideline which said that we were only interested in looking into how PUBLIC business was being conducted and PUBLIC money was being spent (or misspent, as is too often the case around here).

Earlier this year, we started getting tips about some fiscal funny-business going on at Laramie County Community College. One source even used the word "corrupt" to bolster his tip.

Initially I thought he must be overstating the case a lot. The word "corrupt" certainly has a more menacing connotation than terms like "sloppy" or "creative accounting". Now that I've had a chance to look more closely at one small aspect of LCCC's fiscal management --- namely, credit card usage --- I'm still not prepared to use the word "corrupt" to describe what I found, but words like "highly unprofessional", "suspicious", and "loosey-goosey" seem more than appropriate.

**Who are you and what do you plan to do with this information?**

When I decided to look closer at LCCC's fiscal operation, I limited my initial request for review of public documents to those which mainly related to the use of credit cards. I asked to look at monthly statements for the 2009-2010 school year plus any written rules or regulations governing credit card use by employees.

The response I got back from LCCC to my initial inquiries was not surprising. President Darrel Hammon asked, "Would you please let me know who you are?" Carol Hoglund, the VP for Administration and Finance, wanted to know what I intended to do with the information.

I responded in the only appropriate way. I explained that I was just a poor dumb citizen of Laramie County who's keenly interested in how public money is being spent. Nutty, I know, but entirely true.

*(An aside ... some people wonder why I do such things. I try to explain that while other normal or semi-normal people play golf, fish, bowl, or pursue other ENJOYABLE hobbies, because of a very limited set of personal skills I find myself spending way too much of my free time looking at public documents, often to the considerable consternation of way too many people on the public payroll.*

*Good news for public officials in and around Laramie County who're concerned about what unflattering information might be lurking undisturbed in their own office files. Next spring I'm going to take up the game of golf as my primary leisure time activity. Really, how tough can it be?)*

The next communication I received was from LCCC's attorney, who cited the Wyoming Public Records Act as possible justification for charging nosy citizens

like me sometimes hefty sums for research and computer usage.

"LCCC is obligated to notify you," he wrote, "that the information requested is primarily in electronic format." He then cited the Public Records Act which says: "The costs may include the cost of producing a copy of the public record and the cost of constructing the record, including the cost of programming and computer services."

Gee, if I only had a dollar for every time an attorney on the public payroll has sent me that citation in hopes of nipping one of my information requests in the bud. I'm sure it even works once in a while. Otherwise they'd stop using it.

As I pointed out to Vice President Hoglund, I have my own portable copier, lots of copy paper, and a really fine extension cord. I don't need to have public employees do my research for me or to "construct" documents from other forms of information. As sick as it sounds, I rather enjoy digging through the original documents and doing my own "constructing". Until next spring when I take up golf, it's what passes for therapy in my pathetic world.

Here's the distinction when it comes to "constructing" a public document. If I ask LCCC to produce a report which will show how many thousands of dollars the citizens of Laramie County have spent since July 2006 to have Darrel Hammon's wife accompany him on his MANY trips to places like Santa Fe, San Francisco, Provo, Seattle, Scottsdale, Washington DC, Whitefish, Montana and countless other nice places, then I should expect to pay for the staff's time and trouble.

If on the other hand, I'm dumb enough to sift through receipts and vouchers and other scraps of public documents to "construct" the information I'm looking for myself, there are no charges to me for their "research".

Am I really dumb enough to spend some of my free time that way? Apparently so ... at least until next spring when I take up golf. FORE!!!

One final thought ... as this nasty election season finally draws to a close (thank goodness), it's nice to have a feel-good story dominating the news for a change.

Who among us doesn't appreciate what's been taking place down in Chile for the past couple of months where 33 tough-as-nails miners waited patiently for a rescue shaft to be drilled to them? VIVA CHILE! Well done, amigos. Well done!!

Perhaps the only person who looked like an utter fool during that whole episode was the owner of the mine where 33 of his employees were trapped. When it was discovered after 17 days that they were still alive, the best guess by the experts was that it would take four months of incredibly hard work to get them out alive.

It was then that the mine owner apparently announced that the men would not be paid for any time they were trapped underground but unable to do any productive work to bring copper- and gold-bearing ore to the surface.

Let's hope he's had a change of heart in the intervening seven weeks. If not, then it suggests that Abraham Lincoln's keen observation about integrity might apply equally well to community college executives AND mining officials alike.

As Honest Abe said, "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."

*Jim Mathewson*

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