

Anything two people know is not a secret

# THE CHEYENNE HERALD

FREE - TAKE ONE

the local advocacy journal

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## The end of our 9<sup>th</sup> year

It has been quite an amazing adventure.

In the first year or so, I didn't set an advance schedule because I wanted to confuse the daily newspaper editor and his city government cronies. In recent years, the next year's schedule has been published in November and 24 annual issues have been published - a total now of 210.

The issue you are reading marks the final one in our ninth year. As I said, it's been quite an amazing adventure.

Since I wrote that I might walk into the sunset, hand in hand, with Oprah Winfrey at the end of 2011, I have received many entreaties from those who rely on the Cheyenne Herald to rethink that possibility. To reconsider. I once wrote that I didn't want readers to take the Cheyenne Herald more seriously than I do. I have fun. I try to educate, inform, entertain a bit and, most importantly, to provoke thought. If you agree with my stands, good. If you don't, good also. Either way, I'm okay.

Probably the most satisfying accomplishment in the nine years of writing and producing this publication is the dent it has made in the daily newspaper. The stale, staid and tired, albeit financially secure, relic of a print publication has taken a backseat to the upstart and informative Cheyenne Herald. Regarded as a maverick before anyone in the Lower 48 knew Sarah Palin's name, this biweekly publication has received international attention for its efforts.

Some who are dedicated readers, and would deny ever seeing a Herald, still don't get it. They do but pretend they don't. Other local media, not just the tired Tribune, can't figure out if this is a newspaper, a journal, a chronicle, a tabloid or what it is. And that's what I want. I do not like labels. I have opposed the use of Ritalin because I think it labels children in a potentially damaging way. So, I don't want a label placed on what I do here.

Thanks to the editor of the daily, I have taken the slur he once intended for the Cheyenne Herald and embraced it. Embarrassed because his outfit cannot keep up with the exclusive presented here by Jim Mathewson and myself, he derisively dubbed the Cheyenne Herald "the local advocacy journal." I could not be prouder. I have used that tag every since it was applied. It used to be a lot easier to recite the people, causes and issues for whom and what I have used these pages to advocate. The frequency has made it impossible to list or even remember them.

Other local media could list their major

journalistic achievements over the same nine years on a small Post-It, with room left over for their grocery list.

The first two issues of the Cheyenne Herald covered the downtown parking garage and the illegal annexations being approved by the former mayor and members of his city council. I was asked after a few months if I would run out of stories. No, I said, that will not happen. And it has not. Should stories about city government and issues at that level start to dwindle, I will move to more state issues and if those start to dry up, federal.

**Bribery charge filed against mayor, chief of police and two patrolmen.**

Story on page 6

I had no thoughts when I started this publication that some would come to consider the Herald as a "Court of Last Resort." Again last week, I received a lengthy letter from an inmate in Rawlins who claimed a wrongful disposition of his case. Unintended, I have become the Erle Stanley Gardner / F. Lee Bailey to some in prison or about to be sent there. I have exposed errors made by local judges and the DA's office in hopes it would make them better at their jobs. Sometimes, I think it did.

Some do not agree with me. Some do not appreciate what I offer. That's okay. Some do not understand what I do and just can't separate my serious offerings from my hyperbole or wit. Complaints come about my sarcasm, barbs and writing style. I am NOT a journalist. Those who still don't understand what that means will have to look elsewhere for an explanation. I am NOT a reporter. I do NOT seek multiple sources. I produce much of what I write from public records. I don't need a second source to confirm that a guy beats women - the case files prove that when he pleads guilty to those charges. I take chances. I risk my reputation and the future of the Cheyenne Herald with my stands. I do not get conned. If readers found my positions, my words, my insults, etc., to be wrong, they would not read what appears on these pages. Some people disagree with my offerings. Few people find errors. My advice to those who just don't like what I offer - **PLEASE DON'T READ THE CHEYENNE HERALD!** To the approximately 10,000 people who read the Cheyenne Herald, thank you. As long as I do this, I'll do the best job I can. That's all I promise.

## Smart meters

Smart meters are supposed to measure power usage with precision and wirelessly transmit data to the utility company.

Customers are convinced it can do much more and experience has shown that the precision part of the equation isn't always delivered. In California, where Pacific Gas & Electric had installed nearly 6 million smart meters by early summer, consumers have alleged that the meters can be inaccurate and State energy regulators have launched an independent investigation as the result of many complaints.

The California public utility has defended itself by claiming that the smart meters are not overcharging customers - that the doubling or tripling of rates is the result of consumers not using electricity when the variable rates are lowest but rather when they needed it. PG&E's goal is to force customers to use power when it is cheapest to produce, not when customers most need it - like for air conditioning at night in the never cooling Bakersfield. Nice trick if you can pull it off. The premium to use air conditioning may be great but can't be avoided. While someday there may be, there are currently no inside meters to inform customers of the usage rates for different times of the day.

The named plaintiff in the Bakersfield class action suit claims his average electric bill jumped from about \$200 a month to \$500 - \$600 a month. Some customers have dubbed the smart meters "fraud meters" because no matter how they try to reduce consumption, their bills have risen. PG&E countered by claiming they have never found a faulty meter among 1.7 million electric smart meters they have installed. They later retreated from that assertion and admitted 43,300 faulty meters of 5.7 million installed.

It is interesting that Wyoming lawmakers and state executive branch officeholders are selling the State as having abundant cheap power. It wouldn't seem that Black Hills would need to install smart meters to conserve or monitor energy consumption while trying to sell even more.

Once consumption monitors are provided to customers, consumers may have to change their consumption habits. For example, laundry may have to be done between midnight and 3:00 am and school children's baths/showers will have to be taken at 4:00 am, before rates go up. Schools may have to run after dark. Again, consumption is not a problem in Wyoming. Perhaps producers want to sell more power to distant places and only by forcing reduction of local consumption can they sell their power at much higher prices to California and other places.

The public's exposure to "microwave and radiowave radiation from these meters is involuntary and continuous." On the question of whether the radiofrequency radiation from smart meters pose a health risk, the EPA wrote, "Therefore, the generalization by many that the guidelines protect human beings from harm by any or all mechanisms is not justified." Health issues from smart meters will be addressed in the next issue.

A trade industry article stated, "The problems raised by the massive PG&E smart grid installation in California will serve as a valuable lesson for other utilities around the world when they begin similar endeavors. Utilities must ensure that customers understand how to fully utilize their new smart meters before they are installed."

*I would have asked the "head" of Cheyenne Light, Fuel & Power what kind of information was provided to local customers before the smart meters were installed but I couldn't reach him on Friday afternoon. I called the phone no. shown on the CLF&P website and asked the male who took the call (after a lengthy hold) to speak with the manager of the Cheyenne operation. He asked if I wanted the corporate head and I told him, no, I wanted the guy who was in charge in Cheyenne. He said he didn't know who that would be. I asked him where he was sitting as I had dialed a Cheyenne telephone no. He said he was NOT in Cheyenne. The suggestion on the CLF&P website is that you would be talking with a customer service rep who was in Cheyenne. I didn't have time to drive downtown that late in the day so I couldn't get answers to my questions.*

*Black Hills Corporation is not that large. People who answer customer service calls should know the operating VP of Cheyenne Light is Mark Stege.*

A customer backlash in Bakersfield resulted in a class-action lawsuit representing thousands of customers, demanding damages from the utility and third parties involved in PG&E's 2.2 billion project.

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