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**All Things Nebraska**

Paul Hammel, retired senior reporter for Nebraska Examiner

**And now for something completely different…**

As we all know, state legislators have been called back to Lincoln for a special session this summer to tackle the state’s high property taxes.

As has been written here before, good luck with that.

It’s easy to gripe about property taxes being too high; much more difficult to lower them without shifting the tax load onto someone else.

But we need to talk about something that we also all gripe about – gasoline prices.

I’m one of those guys who scans the countryside for the cheapest gas possible. I’ll risk running my tank to empty if I know I can save a couple of cents per gallon in the next town.

This is a game I know others play, like my uncle-via-marriage Larry out in Osceola, and my distant cousin Jerry up in Wakefield.

They each have done the calculus, and each had some advice on where to find the cheapest tank of gas (Larry suggested a Cenex store out in Yutan; Jerry the stations on the Winnebago Reservation).

This game of “finding the lowest-priced petrol” is almost as popular as the contest over “who should be the quarterback for the Huskers?” (I feel sorry for the starter, who, after throwing one interception or fumbling once, will be the target of a deluge of second guessing.)

Anyway, I live in Lincoln, which, according to my extensive research, has gas that is always at least 15 cents a gallon more expensive than in Omaha.

Why that is the case is beyond me. But if I’m driving to Omaha and need gas, I’ll wait to fill up until I get to River City because I know it will be cheaper.

Come on, 15 cents a gallon adds up when you’re filling a 17-gallon tank on a gas-guzzling pickup!

I know, I know, there is an “app” for this. Something called “Gas Buddy” will tell you where the cheapest gas is in your neighborhood. AAA has some fuel finder map that guides you to the least-expensive fill up.

But that’s cheating for some old-school dude like me. It’s much more fun to just scan the roadsides and drive alternative routes to seek out the best deals.

It was on one of those drives of cheap-gas discovery that I came upon that station in Yutan, which is just west of Omaha. I could not believe that they were advertising unleaded, 10% ethanol for $2.99 a gallon earlier this summer, when everyone else was at $3.29 or higher.

Harp music played in my head as I pulled in and discovered that this wasn’t Saunders County, it was cheap gas heaven. The owner, the clerk told me, just liked to give people a break. The harp music swelled.

Ditto for another Cenex station along Highway 77 just south of the railroad viaduct in Fremont. It was $2.99 just the other day, 20 cents a gallon cheaper than other outlets just down the road (and 30 cents cheaper than in my neighborhood of Lincoln).

Of course this game really gets interesting if you travel across the state on Interstate 80. There’s a truck stop at the Wood River Exit that is always cheaper. And, on a recent trip to Fort Robinson, there was a station at the Sidney Exit, within eyesight of Cabela’s, that was $2.84 a gallon!

I could not believe my good luck, because once we got off I-80, we were paying 20-25 cents more for petrol.

Anyone can play this challenging game as they drive down the state’s highways. It’s much more entertaining than counting windmills like we used to do as kids.

 Why this hasn’t risen to an Olympic sport is beyond me.

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*Paul Hammel has covered the Nebraska state government and the state for decades. He retired in April as senior contributor with the Nebraska Examiner. He was previously with the Omaha World-Herald, Lincoln Journal Star and Omaha Sun.  A native of Ralston, Nebraska, he loves traveling and writing about the state.*