

## Black gold, Texas tea

by BRIAN LOCKHART

?Come and listen to my story about a man named Jed, A poor mountaineer who barely kept his family fed. And then one day he was shootin' at some food, And up through the ground come a bubblin' crude.

Oil, that is, Black gold, Texas tea.?

Black gold, indeed. Whether we like it or not, petroleum is an important part of our civilization.

For all those people who denounce automobiles as bad for the environment and protest against oil, consider this: That vacation you went on to Cuba and posted photos of online to brag to your friends ? the jet fuel that got you there, the tar mac you landed on, the road you drove on to your resort, the iPhone you used to take the photos, and the memory chip that made it possible, are all related to the petroleum industry in one way or another.

During that trip, you also used all sorts of other petroleum-based products. From the plastic cups you drank from to the rubber tires on the golf cart when you played 18 holes ? all petroleum based. And the list goes on.

If you really wanted to eliminate petroleum products from your life, you would be living a very frugal existence. You would have to eliminate your computer, your refrigerator, your phone, a lot of your furniture, food containers, and a lot of your kid's toys. And that's just to name a few.

The natural gas you most likely use to heat your home is also a by-product of the petroleum industry. Try turning off the gas and hauling coal or firewood into your home in the middle of February, then decide if you think using natural gas is a good method of staying warm.

I was watching a movie that was set in the outskirts of Los Angeles. Shirley MacLaine woman had an oil rig pumping away, almost in her backyard. The hilly area surrounding her house was covered with oil rigs, all pumping oil a litre at a time.

I was curious about this and posted a question on a forum I frequent, asking Los Angeles residents about oil rigs in that city.

Sure enough, the city has hundreds of the rigs pumping out black gold every day. In more urban areas, they are disguised under buildings, so you can't see them ? but they are there.

The heyday for oil in Los Angeles is over, but the wells that are there are still producing oil.

Whether we like it or not, we are still dependent on fossil fuels and will be for the foreseeable future.

Canada has the fourth largest oil reserves in the world, with just over 177 billion barrels. While Iran is third with 208 billion, and Saudi Arabia second with 258 billion, it is Venezuela that tops the list with a whopping 303 billion untapped barrels of oil.

It is estimated that Canada has 111 years of production left. Iran is listed as 214 years, while Venezuela is estimated to continue producing for 1,578 years.

Just this past week, I wrote a story on the ?Auto Mayors? conference. This was a conference for mayors of towns and cities in Ontario who auto manufacturers heavily impact.

This is a huge industry in Ontario and is really the base of manufacturing in the province. The automotive industry may be changing,

but it's not going away.

The number of Canadian oil refineries has decreased over the past 40 years while the capacity of existing refiners has increased. Small, less efficient facilities have been replaced with more efficient, cleaner, and expanded facilities.

We should have cheap gas and home heating oil, but we don't have the infrastructure in place.

The majority of oil produced in Western Canada is sent to the United States in the form of crude oil. Canada is a net producer of oil. From a business standpoint, this can be a good thing.

However, on the East Coast, oil is imported. In 2020, the nation imported \$11.5 billion of foreign oil ? in a country with the world's third-largest reserve of the same product.

That just doesn't seem to make a lot of sense.

Even if the entire world starts driving electric cars, we will still need oil in some form. A thousand years from now, there will still be machines, and all moving parts need to be lubricated.

Hopefully, industry chemists will someday be able to use a plant-based solution to replicate crude oil.

Jed Clampett got rich off of Texas tea; the rest of us just need it to survive.