

October 3, 2000

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

113592

Docket Management Facility
(OST-2000-8013) - 17
U. S. Dept. of Transportation
Room PL-401
400 7th St. SW
Washington, D. C. 20590-0001

Gentlemen:

I was unable to attend the meeting held in Beulah, North Dakota on September 28, 2000 regarding the petition by the Mercer County Board of Commissioner to adopt central time for the County of Mercer, State of North Dakota. I would like to express my views and offer an article that was written for Delta Sky Magazine.

I have been a life long resident of Beulah, Mercer County, North Dakota and have experienced some of the ramifications of working in and around two (2) time zones. Beulah is approximately 90 miles from the major cities of Bismarck and Minot which are both located in the Central Time Zone. Beulah has been established as an industrial hub of the so-called western North Dakota. Trying to arrange for flight reservations either leaving Bismarck or Minot are near impossible due to the variance of time. In order to connect with flights going to the east of Minneapolis, which is the Northwest hub, to leave Bismarck in the morning as person living in the mountain time zone either must go to Bismarck or Minot the evening before, which involves additional costs or leave home by 3:00 or 4:00 a.m. to catch a flight. Other draw backs with the time difference are medical appointments when made in Beulah at 9:00 mean that it is scheduled for 10:00 in Bismarck or Minot, to many of our senior citizens this can be greatly confusing.

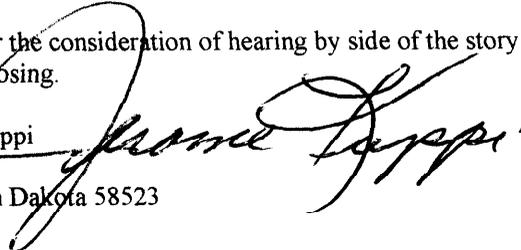
I think the biggest misconception of the time issue would be a complete misnomer had it not been for the advent of the railroad system, when established in North Dakota. It was the Northern Pacific Railroad that changed the ORIGINAL time zone boundaries, for their convenience. I refer to the original time zone boundaries as set forth on an original map of the United States.

I understand that some people testifying at the hearing in Beulah stated that getting to town to vote was impossible because they were in the field or milking cows or whatever. I am sure that it did not stop them from coming in for coffee that morning or come to town for parts or whatever activity, other than voting was taking place. If I sound bitter, I am. I am tired of the lame excuses that my cows won't milk and the chickens won't lay eggs. I did have a child in school, getting on the bus at daylight to come to school and coming home in the dark in the dead of winter was very agonizing to a parent, knowing that it is only going to get darker, if there was transportation trouble or a blizzard, hampering travel. Getting on a bus in the morning at dark only means that while traveling it is going to get lighter coming to school and the chance of getting home before dark is greatly increased.

We are an island surrounded by a sea of Central Time located to the East, South, North and Northwest. Consider traveling 80 miles to the north west of Mercer County and entering Central Time, such as Watford City and Williston.

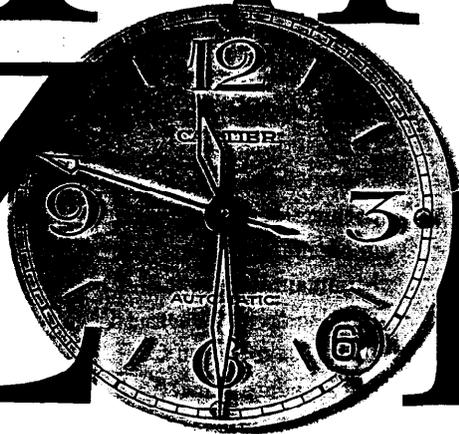
Thank you for the consideration of hearing by side of the story and I hope you also appreciate the article that I am enclosing.

Jerome G. Koppi
P.O.Box 562
Beulah, North Dakota 58523



By Brad Herzog

Time Zones



In principle, they should be easy to understand. In practice, well...

Mick Jagger said it best: "Ti-i-i-me is on my side, yes, it is." And it's on the other side, too. Only it's different there. That's why they call them time zones.

For most of us, time zones are hardly a daily concern. They're a pause before a long-distance telephone call, a wristwatch adjustment after a four-hour flight, a brief moment of awareness on New Year's Eve. We may go days, even weeks, without giving the change in hours a second thought.

But time zones are like Tijuana: The closer you get to the border, the farther you get from reality. And the lines themselves seem as if they've been drawn by a drunken cartographer. The swerves and dodges can make for some strange pairings (sections of Florida and South Dakota share a time zone), bizarre juxtapositions (part

The Midnight Hour

When a new day is beginning in Walden, Tennessee, on a mountain outside Chattanooga, it's still an hour to midnight in Lone Oak, on the same mountain. Watches: left, Seiko, Arctura (men's), \$675; right, Baume & Mercier, Atlantis (men's), \$1,990



of Oregon is on Mountain time, while part of Idaho is on Pacific time) and suspect divisions (El Paso seems to have been kidnapped from the Central time zone).

More important, the quirks of intangible lines can make those who live on the margins question the very immutability of time.

Residence on the fringes of time zones means that Fairview, Montana, and its sister community of East Fairview, North Dakota, are one block and one hour apart. It means that you can close down a bar at 2 a.m. in Riggins, Idaho, cross a bridge spanning the Salmon River and close down another watering hole at 2 a.m. in the town of White Bird, Idaho. And it means that from November to March, a resident of South



Very High Noon

When it's noon in Mexico Beach, Florida, Warren Buffett's watch is set to the same hour—in Omaha, Nebraska. Watches: left, *Maurice Lacroix, Masterpiece Collection* (men's), \$1,990; right, *Raymond Weil, Parsifal* (women's), \$2,895

Bend, Indiana, could conceivably leave home at 9 a.m. for a 9 a.m. appointment in Gary, Indiana—and make it in plenty of time. (Are you still with me?)

But for the most part, it means confusion. Take North Dakota, for instance. The boundary line between the Central and Mountain time zones cuts right through the heart of the state. It follows the course of the Missouri River—except at Sitting Bull's burial site, which it swerves around. And except at the city of Mandan on the outskirts of Bismarck, where it makes a sharp westward turn. And except at sparsely populated Oliver County, which it detours to avoid completely. Then there's the point where the time-zone line leaves the Missouri River and follows the Little Missouri instead. A boundary line that entered the state going due north leaves it heading west.

The result is widespread bewilderment on the wide-open plains. Consider an attempt to schedule a simple meeting among the affiliate sites of Theodore Roosevelt National Park in western North Dakota. The south unit of the park is located comfortably in the Mountain time zone. The north unit is located just 40 miles away, but it is bisected by the

Little Missouri River. Because the visitor center and facilities are located on the north side of the river, the entire north unit is managed as if it's in the Central time zone. "We're always having staff meetings," says chief naturalist Bruce Kaye, "and people are guessing, 'Did they mean Central or Mountain time?'"

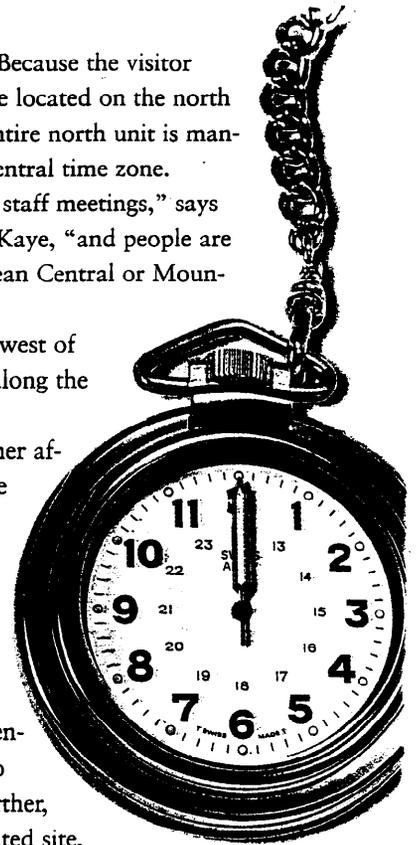
Forty miles northwest of the north unit, along the North Dakota-Montana line, is another affiliated destination, the Fort Union National Historic Site. The parking lot is in Montana—in the Mountain time zone. Fort Union itself is in North Dakota—on Central Standard Time. To complicate matters further, there is a fourth affiliated site, Knife River Indian Village. Although it is some 125 miles east of Fort Union, the Indian Village is on the west bank of the Missouri River. So it goes by Mountain time.

"It's just a pain in the butt," says Ken Woody, chief ranger at Knife River, who can look out his office window and see an hour into the future. "Every time we talk about anything . . . just anything in conversation during the day that applies to time, you have to emphasize Mountain

time. It's just a part of your vocabulary." But wait, there's more.

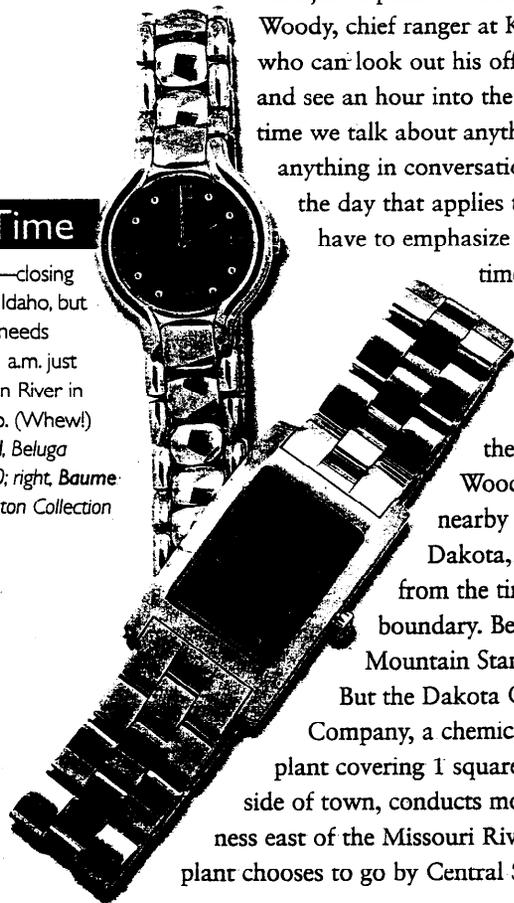
Woody lives in nearby Beulah, North Dakota, just 23 miles from the time-zone boundary. Beulah goes by Mountain Standard Time.

But the Dakota Gasification Company, a chemical-processing plant covering 1 square mile just outside of town, conducts most of its business east of the Missouri River. So the plant chooses to go by Central Standard Time



Back In Time

When it's 2 a.m.—closing time—in Riggins, Idaho, but your whistle still needs wettin', it's only 1 a.m. just across the Salmon River in White Bird, Idaho. (Whew!) Watches: left, *Ebel, Beluga* (women's), \$1,450; right, *Baume & Mercier, Hampton Collection* (men's), \$1,150



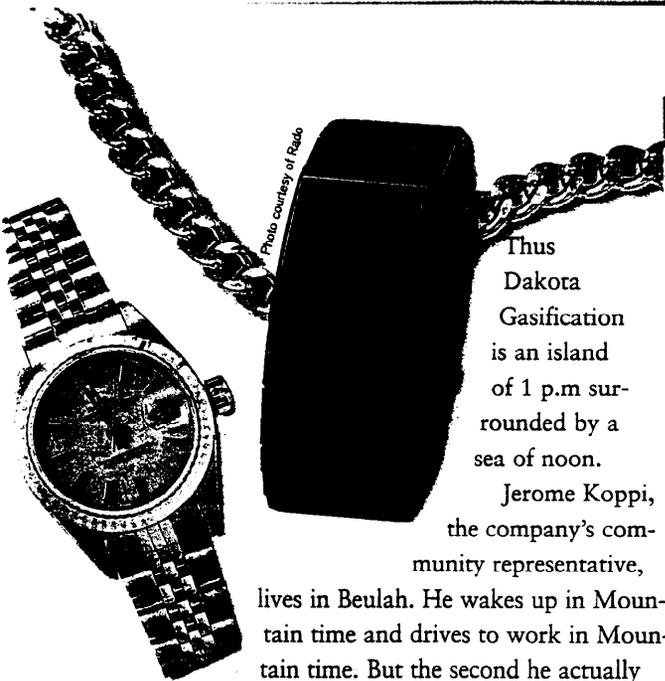


Photo courtesy of Rado

A New York Minute

In the 1800s, the time was whatever the locals—and their view of the sun—said it was. If it was noon in Albany, New York, it might be 11:58 in Schenectady and 11:52 in Utica. Watches: left, Swiss Army, Pocket Watch, \$125; center, Rolex, Datejust (women's), \$4,200; right, Rado, Ceramica (men's), \$1,390

Thus
Dakota
Gasification
is an island
of 1 p.m.
surrounded by a
sea of noon.

Jerome Koppi, the company's community representative, lives in Beulah. He wakes up in Mountain time and drives to work in Mountain time. But the second he actually arrives at the office, it becomes Central time.

degrees of longitude (the distance the sun appears to travel in one hour) and each based on Greenwich Mean Time (later called Universal Time). Greenwich, England, had already been established as 0 degrees longitude. For every 15-degree zone away from Greenwich, a location would adjust its clock one hour forward (east) or back (west). Within the confines of each zone, the exact time would be the same. The plan was launched in the United States on November 18, 1883.

The following year, delegates from 25 nations met at

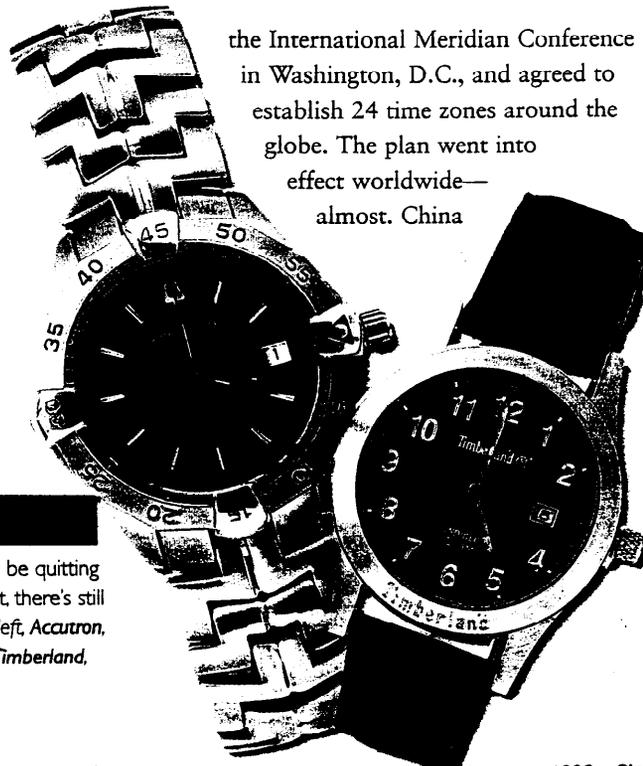
"So I have a clock in my office, which is set on Central time," he explains, "and I have my wristwatch, which is on Mountain." Of course, as the community rep, he spends much of his time in the community, which takes him to Mountain time again. He changes time zones more often in a day than most of us do in a year.

Residence on the fringes of time zones means that Fairview, Montana, and its sister community of East Fairview, North Dakota, are one block and one hour apart.

Confused? Who wouldn't be? The funny thing is, time zones were designed to make life far less complicated. And for most of us, they do. Before railroad travel arrived in the mid-1800s, local time was whatever the locals—and their view of the sun—said it was. If it was noon in Albany, New York, it might be 11:58 a.m. in Schenectady, 11:52 in Utica and 11:45 in Syracuse. If you were traveling east, a New York minute could last a full day. But with the advent of faster transportation, time couldn't keep up. When railroads tried to ease the confusion by establishing their own times, they only confused the issue more.

A Connecticut schoolteacher saved the day—quite literally. Charles Dowd suggested that the United States be divided into four time zones, each spanning roughly 15 de-

the International Meridian Conference in Washington, D.C., and agreed to establish 24 time zones around the globe. The plan went into effect worldwide—almost. China



Quittin' Time

When it's quitting time (or what used to be quitting time) inside the Dakota Gasification plant, there's still an hour to go directly outside. Watches: left, Accutron, Nantucket Collection (men's), \$575; right, Timberland, Indiglo (men's), \$75

decided to use one enormous time zone. India, Uruguay and a handful of other nations opted for half-hour intervals. Geographic and political factors also influenced the boundaries themselves. In the United States, lines often zigged and zagged according to the whims of the powerful railroads.

The federal government officially became involved with the Standard Time Act of 1918, which essentially codified what the railroads had created. Today, Congress and the U.S. Department of Transportation are the keepers of the clocks. The former has infrequently made time-zone alterations, usually for political reasons; the latter is overseen by Joanne Petrie, who for 14 years has been known as Mother Time.

Petrie, senior attorney in the office of general counsel, is the one who fields regional requests to move the time line. The process begins when the highest governmental body in the area, often a county commissioner, counts the residents' votes and sends Petrie a petition to alter time. Petrie then schedules a hearing in the affected area about the proposed change, which can get quite contentious, she says, because "time is a very intimate thing."

The hearing is followed by a period in which Petrie accepts written public comments about the issue—sometimes thousands of them. She then makes a decision based on a mandate to make a change if it "suits the convenience of commerce."

"We interpret that to mean: Where do people work? Where is their local airport? Where do they get their TV stations? Things like that," says Petrie.

If a change is made, it's generally scheduled to coincide with a change to or from daylight-saving time, which was introduced by an act of Congress (the Uniform Time Act) in 1967. In general, Petrie tries to toe the line as much as possible, balancing the basic geographical blueprint of time zones with the local-residents' concerns. "We won't make islands of time, and we try not to have lines that are totally crazy," she explains. "We're trying to give the people what they want."

Of course, you can't please everybody. Becky Grusing, who has lived in Kendall, Kansas, for 30 years, has seen the boundary creep westward like a covered wagon. "The time zone stopped at Dodge City when I was a kid," she says. "Then it moved to Garden City. Then it moved to between the towns of Deerfield and Lakin, because Deerfield wanted Central time but Lakin wanted Mountain time.

Now it's here. They just decide in Washington what's best for us, you know? They thought they were solving the problem by moving it farther west. All they did was move the problem."

In fact, most communities in what we might call the time-zone red-zone have taken to using shorthand for time reference, such as *my time* and *your time*. "Fast time and slow time are what they're commonly known as around here,"

State Of The Fort Union

When it's 10:30 a.m. in the parking lot at the Fort Union National Historical Site, which is in Montana, it's 11:30 a.m. at Fort Union itself, which is in North Dakota. Watches: left, *Cyma* (women's), \$595; right, *Cartier, Pasha C Series* (men's), \$3,150



says Charlie Parker, a 49-year resident of Mexico Beach, Florida, 1¼ miles west of a boundary between Eastern and Central time.

In places like Mexico Beach and East Fairview and White Bird, residents have come to the realization that time-zone boundaries aren't really boundaries at all but more like suggestions. To many red-zoners, time is a state of mind, depending primarily on where one's attentions are focused. If you do everything but sleep

in time-zone A, then most likely your watch is on A time, boundaries be damned.

"You determine what time zone the majority of your population functions on and go by that," says Margrett Stephens, director of the after-school program at the Lone Oak Community Center in Lone Oak, Tennessee, a rural community atop Walden Ridge, outside Chattanooga. There are two other towns on the mountain, Walden and Signal Mountain, both located in the Eastern time zone. Lone Oak is in Central time, but because the community center serves the residents of the mountaintop, meaning mostly an Eastern-zone community, Stephens keeps *fast time* on her watch.

Sure, the time-zone line indicates she's in Central Standard Time, and sure, the government draws the line for a reason. But the denizens of the red zone, the people on the edge of the hour hand, aren't going to let a silly little thing like time get in the way of life. "That," says Stephens, "is what 'livin on the edge' means."

Frequent Sky contributor Brad Herzog, a resident of California's Monterey Peninsula, has vowed to live his life on slow time.