

BETTER THAN HEARSAY

The More Grog the Merrier

By Michael Ryan

PRATTSVILLE - Trash spies have feelings too so my old coot buddies Jake and Gus want to invite Hughes Energy chief executive officer Dane McSpedon for a friendly sit down and pint (or three) of grog. Hughes Energy, of course, is trying to get regulatory approvals for a steam-based, garbage treatment facility in Grand Gorge, tapping into Prattsville's sewer system for disposal of its waste waters.

Several agencies including the Department of Environmental Conservation, Department of Health, Department of Environmental Protection and Department of Transportation are involved in that process.

DEC is the lead oversight agency and an increasing number of area folks, whom I affectionately call Trash Spies, are telling DEC and the rest they are looking in the wrong places for answers.

Jake and Gus like to stay in the loop but they aren't cloak-and-dagger types so they weren't offended by what McSpedon wrote in a February 25 letter-to-the-editor at this newspaper.

McSpedon wrote that Hughes Energy will continue to, "keep the community informed with facts rather than some nonsense about "Trash Spies."

"There are no secrets here despite local reporters breathlessly stating that their "Trash Spies" are seeking information," McSpedon wrote.

"The concept of a Spy is a sneaky individual who pretends to have one motivation but who really has another motivation," McSpedon wrote.

"Rather than entertain spies," McSpedon wrote, "HEG prefers to share the truth of our opportunity to address climate change while providing jobs and opportunity to your families and the local community."

"A man after my own heart," Jake said.

"Makes me all warm and fuzzy," said Gus.

McSpedon showed up in Prattsville a couple of years ago, laying out their plan while saying this autoclave technology, while nothing

new under the sun, would transform the garbage industry worldwide.

He said there were similar successful operations overseas so it was simply a matter of America jumping on the Good Ship Lollipop and putting Grand Gorge and Prattsville on the environmental leadership map.

Local citizens embraced the idea of saving the planet, fewer landfills, more jobs and gobs of tax revenues but a pesky problem keeps popping up.

Nobody can find out if any of this is true. McSpedon has refused to provide definitive information or contact numbers for what have now become alleged overseas operations.

Which is where the Trash Spies entered the picture, some pretty smart and respected people looking for the elusive overseas plants on their own.

What they've found is this...nothing exists even close to what McSpedon claims or Hughes Energy says it will build...in fact, the company is now totally disassociating themselves from anything overseas.

In his letter, McSpedon wrote that Hughes Energy is the, "exclusive North American license holder for Wilson System, invented in 1998 in the [United Kingdom] and has been deployed in the UK and Ireland five times since."

"Tom Wilson, the inventor, sold and installed his system to private companies who then operated the system as they saw fit."

"Just like a farmer will buy equipment to milk cows or a quarry will buy crushers to process stone, the clients own and operate Tom's equipment," McSpedon wrote.

"Please tell me they ain't steam-blasting cows," Jake said.

"For heaven's sake, be

serious," said Gus.

McSpedon continued, "Hughes Energy was established by Brendan Hughes, a 30-year part-time resident of the Catskills, to sell Tom Wilson's technology in North America."

"We have nothing to do with Tom's customers in Europe or where or how they run their businesses," McSpedon wrote.

"Well, that's puttin' it bluntly," Jake said.

"Cards on the table," said Gus.

However, when asked for contact info on these businesses to get the scoop straight from the source, McSpedon claims strict non-disclosure agreements are in place, preventing it.

"How's he know that? Thought he had nuthin' to do with 'em," Jake said.

"No secrets don't mean absolutely none, I guess," said Gus.

Explaining why Hughes Energy picked the rural mountains for their project, McSpedon wrote, "the reasoning was quite simple. We chose the site in Grand Gorge to establish our first plant in North America."

"First plant in the good 'ol U.S. of A. or first anywhere's?" Jake said.

"Hard to pin this stuff down, aint it," said Gus.

"Brendan lives in the area [and] saw an opportunity to upgrade the current older transfer station with his technology in a town which he loves," wrote McSpedon, meaning Greene-Del, between Grand Gorge and Prattsville.

"Nuthin' says luvin' like sharin' slop and rubble," Jake said.

"Yup," said Gus. "Every day is Valentine's Day."

"Guess we'd better invite Brendan and this Tommy fella' too," Jake said.

"The more grog the merrier," said Gus.

(MUCH) BETTER THAN HEARSAY

An Invitation to Hughes Energy

By Michael Ryan

Dear Mr. McSpedon;

This is Jake and Gus, askin' to sit and schmooze about the garbage transmogrifier you want to put in these here rural mountains.

Grog will be served, and since you're the CEO at Hughes Energy and seem to like educatin' folks about steam autoclaves and such, we have a yarn to spin.

300 years ago, a British admiral found a way to stop seafaring sailors from getting scurvy and, at the same time, stay drunk enough on watered-down rum to keep merrily scrubbing the poop decks.

It was a sweet grog that saved the Royal Navy. Not sure if that's true but you're peddling a garbage-changing contraption you say got started Across the Pond too so there you have it.

You say it will help save Earth. Sure hope you're right and we're also hoping you won't mind dropping by to unscramble our minds.

We read the letter you wrote in this newspaper, last week, saying the trash spies are sneaky varmints. We think they're sorta' cuddly.

But we do agree that local folks have the "bucket of talent" you say is needed to get a good-paying job at your garbage-changer. Never heard of puttin' talent in a pail before but there's a twang to it.

Sadly, between the two of us, we don't possess the good sense the Good Lord gave a shoe box. So please. Help un-muddle us.

You nicely point out that everything about your garbage-changers and the steam autoclave you're sellin' is available online. Thanks for that tip. Like I said, we're not working with a full poop deck (LOL).

In your letter you say you are the, "exclusive North American license holder" for Tommy Wilson's steam technology. Congratulations.

Pardon our ignorance, but who the heck is this ECI Group down in the Swamp and Gators State, or as ya'll call it, Louisiana?

We went on google, like you suggested, and their website says, "ECI Group signs Exclusive Partnership Agreement With Wilson Bio-Chemical Ltd For Wilson System."

They also say they have, "signed an agreement to license and offer the Wilson System® for waste processing" and that "ECI Group and Wilson are already engaged in several projects around the world."

What in tarnation is goin' on? Are they kin of yours? Sure would like to know more about all them projects. You in on 'em or what?

In your letter, you trashed the trash spies, calling them "nonsense," saying that instead of wasting valuable time on them you wish to, "share the truth about our opportunity to address climate change."

We googled "climate change" too and learnt it ain't particular about where it causes trouble so if this Tommy Wilson fella' invented this doodad 24 years ago, like you say, and if it's everything you're vouching for, why ain't they jumpin' off the shelves?

And why are you separatin' yourselves from anything to do with Tommy's autoclaves over in the United Kingdom and Ireland?

When you first got here, they were the reason you said folks in Grand Gorge and Prattsville oughta' welcome them - and you - as saviors.

Now you say you wouldn't know 'em if you tripped over 'em. Guess that's why you say "No" whenever that slippery reporter from the Mountain Eagle asks for their phone numbers to say howdy.

We know you're a busy man, trying to drum up 90 million greenbacks from industrial development agencies and other green technology investors for your sight-unseen garbage-changer.

So we won't bother asking you again to help spread the truth on how much rubbish is actually being kept out of landfills by those steam gizmos you say that Tommy fella' is involved in overseas.

But we will ask if we misread your numbers on the cost of tipping fees in Greene County which you say are \$115 per ton, claiming you will save taxpayers a bundle if the county sells our trash to you instead.

We haven't been dipping into the grog but we could swear we heard county officials tell that same pesty reporter that their tipping fee is only \$55 per ton, which is less than half the number you gave.

Those \$55 tipping fees are what's paid to ship trash from Greene County to the Seneca Meadows landfill in western New York, including household trash and construction debris (C&D).

We assume you're aware that your nifty garage-changer won't handle C&D, so the county would have to separate its garbage to suit your purposes and find another buyer for all them 2 by 4's.

Whew! That'll cost somebody - taxpayers? - a slew of dough. We also assume you know that the \$115 per ton fee is just for somebody bringing C&D to the dump. Otherwise it's two bucks a satchel.

There are "5's" in both those tonnages, so if your team is as bad at math as we are, we understand how you got 'em mixed up.

Then again, you keep repeating 'em but anyway, we're hoping you and Brendan, and maybe Tommy too, can swing by our place.

We live in the middle of nowhere but it turns out we're not as hard to find as those overseas garbage-changers (a bit of humor there).

And here's the really funny thing. We've got this Irish Sunday Times article from 2009 with the cutest little headline, "Where There's Muck There's A Green Machine," mentioning one of Tommy's thingamajigs.

The article, dug up by a Trash Spy, talks about a Wilson autoclave in Limerick, Ireland, callin' it, "the holy grail in terms of sustainable waste management," the same kind Hughes Energy is sellin'.

At least we think it's the same but you keep sayin' you can't help that pesty reporter find out which leaves the sleuths holding the bag.

In your letter, you mourn the demise of quality journalism, saying that local reporters, "have preferred to try to make headlines rather than do their job reporting well researched facts" about Hughes Energy.

"That seems to be the way journalism has gone these days in our country, but it does not make it the right thing to do," you wrote.

So it's probably just more bad newspapering that the Sunday Times says an investor in the autoclave in Ireland was one, "Brendan Hughes, a U.S.-based property developer." That your guy?

And we're not real smart, but Isn't that one of the five autoclaves you mention in your letter, saying you've got, "nothing to do with Tom's customers in Europe or where or how they run their businesses."

We're not gamblers, but we figure the odds are pretty good there are a lot of folks hereabouts interested in hearing a lot more. We'll keep the fire burnin' and the grog steamin'.

The Mountain Top Historical Society Presents "Three Extraordinary Ordinary Women of the Mountain Top"

In celebration of Women's History Month, join the Mountain Top Historical Society for an evening on Zoom to celebrate three exceptional Mountain Top women: Justine Hommel, Hunter Historian for 3 decades and co-founder of the MTHS, Bernadine Wesley, engineer and civil rights activist, as well as a member of the Hunter Planning Board for ten years, and Sidonia Palace, managing editor of the Windham Journal for 28 years and a community volunteer extraordinaire. Deborah Allen, Johanna Titus and Cyndi LaPierre, will speak about these three Mountain Top women from very different backgrounds whose leadership, accomplishments, and legacy helped to make the Mountain Top what it is today. Cost of Attendance: Free. Register in advance for this webinar at mths.org/events



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