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Wednesday's letters

Wood boilers save oil

Outdoor wood-fired boilers have been getting a lot of bad publicity recently. There are movements afoot to ban them due to the pollution they allegedly cause. I think it's time a few good words were said about them.

I bought an outdoor wood-fired boiler about two years ago. It and the sun have been my heating sources since then. My boiler heats my hot water and generally keeps my house pleasantly warm. There is work involved, which may be anathema to some, but I don't mind feeding it once to thrice a day.

I will agree that sometimes my boiler smokes more than I want it to. When I started driving, I drove a 1953

car that smoked more than I wanted it to, got poor gas mileage and polluted egregiously. However, we didn't ban cars in 1953. We improved them, and my current car gets triple the gas mileage with a fraction of the pollution and no noticeable smoke.

I don't know how much oil I have saved, but it is hundreds of gallons. Those hundreds of gallons did not have to be removed from the ground in the Middle East, where terrorists threaten oil facilities. They did not have to be shipped to this country in huge tankers, risking ecological disasters from spills. They did not have to pass through refineries that spew all sorts of pollutants into the air. They did not have to be trucked or barged or sent

through a pipeline, all of which have ecological costs and potentials for disaster.

Oil boilers may be directly producing fewer particulates than my wood boiler, but how much pollution and global warming should we allow and how many soldiers should we sacrifice to keep oil flowing to them? I say we should improve wood boilers, but banning them would be foolish.

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