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In the U.S., if you’re a skilled worker, a driver or a teacher, you may have the best shot at getting employed.

Dallas: America’s friendliest city for business

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An important Dow divergence is ominous for stocks

When the Transports lag the broader market, a correction usually sets in, says Mark Hulbert.
The real ‘Deflategate’ may have been the Fed taking the air out of the economy

Lindsey Graham: 'I'm running' because the world is falling apart

As 'Mad Men' ends, one legacy is new awareness of iconic American brands

Dollar starts off the week strong

The Republicans’ dumb 'no bailout' pledge

What to look for in Wal-Mart earnings

Juncker proposes deal to end Greek debt deadlock: report

The best summer show to see: Pope's Morality vs. Capitalism

Target to promote healthier foods over options from brand-name suppliers
Oil mixed as traders eye violence in Iraq, Yemen

Oil futures are mixed as clashes in Iraq and Yemen spur fears of supply disruptions and traders worry about the potential for an increase in U.S. shale-oil output.

Builders lose confidence in current home sales

Builders lost some confidence this month in current sales of single-family homes, signaling wariness over whether families are ready to take the plunge into the new-home-buying pool.

The real 'Deflategate' may have been the Fed taking the air out of the economy

Economists are casting about for culprits as the U.S. economy continues to disappoint. Could the fault lie with the Fed?

Dollar starts off the week strong

The dollar trades higher Monday, starting the week off with a bounce after losing ground against the currencies of every other industrialized nation last week.
Mon., May 18: Watch Endo Stock on Pharma Deal


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Need investment income? This group of stocks yields up to 10.4%

Little-known business-development companies pay high dividends even as interest rates remain near historic lows, says Phil van Doom.

Here's the advice you get from Vanguard's new robot-human hybrid

Vanguard's response to the robo-adviser boom went into wide release this month, pitched as a hybrid offering that combines human advisers and Web-based automated investing. Also see what it...
Opinion: 3 ‘no-brainer’ oil stocks to consider buying now

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Mauro Gregorio of Dow Chemical

Rex Tillerson, Chairman & CEO of ExxonMobil

Robert Dudley of BP
By Mark Hulbert
Published: May 12, 2015 8:48 a.m. ET

These companies are attractive even if oil declines to new lows

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (MarketWatch) — You ought to hold the oil stocks you bought earlier this year when crude hit its low around $45 per barrel.

That, at least, is the advice Kelley Wright is giving to clients who think crude's 30-plus percent rally in only two months' time is too good to be true — and who therefore want to sell the oil shares they bought at lower prices. Wright is editor of the Investment Quality Trends advisory service, which the Hulbert Financial Digest reports to be one of the top-performing advisory services over three decades.
When I last checked in with Wright in mid-December, he was recommending four oil stocks. Even though crude oil's price at the time was in the mid-$50s, and would subsequently drop another 20% before recovering to around $60 today, those four stocks have risen an average of 6.8%.

That's not bad for a five-month trade, of course, which is why some skittish traders are wondering if it's time to take some money off the table, especially given that some oil analysts are predicting that crude could proceed to fall precipitously from current levels and hit new lows in the $30s.

Wright, however, insists that now is not the time to give up on good-quality oil stocks. Interestingly, though, his rationale for holding them is not that oil's price will continue to rise at anywhere near the pace it has over the past two months. Rather, he believes that a select group of oil stocks are in such strong financial shape that they represent good value and, notably, will continue to pay dividends, even if oil's price were to pull back.

To come up with his list of compelling oil stocks, Wright eliminates from consideration any that don't jump over at least five of the following six hurdles:

- Has increased its dividend at least five times over the past dozen years
- Has an S&P Quality Ranking in the "A" category
- Has at least 5 million shares outstanding
- Has at least 80 institutional investors
- Has paid dividends for at least 25 straight years
- Has produced higher earnings per share in at least seven of the past dozen years

Wright then narrows down his list even more by excluding those whose dividend yields are not at, or near, the high ends of their historical ranges. That's on the theory that the stocks with those high yields will be the most undervalued.

Which oil stocks remain after Wright applies these demanding criteria? In an email, he identified three as "no brainers."

— ConocoPhillips COP, -0.56%

— Exxon Mobil XOM, -0.27%

— Schlumberger SLB, -0.18%

By the way, I should stress that even though Wright believes those stocks would represent good value even if the spot crude price were to fall a bit, he is not forecasting such a pullback. On the contrary, he believes oil's average price over the next several years will be higher than it is today.

In that regard, it's worth revisiting another column I wrote, this one in mid-January, in which I pointed out that, while oil's spot price had plunged over the prior six months, a futures contract for delivery several years hence had fallen by only half as much. I quoted Campbell Harvey, a Duke University finance professor, who argued that investors should be focusing on the longer-term futures price rather than the spot market.

Harvey was right. Even as the spot price has roared 30% over the past couple of months, the long-term futures price has remained remarkably steady — quite similar to where it was in mid-January, in fact. That reinforces Harvey's argument, and puts the burden of proof on those who believe spot oil will plunge again to even lower lows.

Of course anything is possible, Harvey told me earlier this week, since oil's spot price often will fluctuate wildly even while the longer-term futures price remains relatively stable. But the market's best guess is that oil's price is headed higher over the longer term and, as we know all too well from everything we do in the investment arena, the market far more often than not is right.

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**QUOTE REFERENCES**

COP
-0.37 -0.56%

XOM
-0.24 -0.27%

SLB
-0.17 -0.18%

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Interest Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 yr CD</td>
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*National averages from Bankrate.com*