

Postal service heading down road of no return?

The management of the U.S. Postal Service may have the best of intentions, but we all know where that road leads.

The venerable agency appears headed, if not for outright oblivion, at least to an obscure corner of the economy where it won't bother anybody much.

Except those of use who've always depended on it.

The Post Office was not exactly the first of federal agencies; it came before. The founders thought it so important to bind the states together that the postal department predates the Constitution by about a year.

Since 1775, the Post Office and later the Postal Service have provided what is called "universal service," the idea that you could send a letter anywhere in the country for the price of a stamp.

Today, however, that very bedrock idea is in danger.

With first-class mail, and the profits it once brought, fading fast, the service seems to believe it can restore its financial health by cutting service and driving even more mail out of the system.

That's not much of a "business model," but it seems to be what management has left. First, the leadership decreed that mail sorting in small towns could be done more inexpensively in larger cities.

Thus, across the country, mail "processing" was moved wholesale from smaller section centers such as Colby and Hays to the next-largest town, Salina in our case. The service estimated it would save \$139,000 a year by eliminating the equivalent of four jobs in the two smaller towns.

All that was part of a plan to save \$1 billion nationwide, out of a projected loss of around \$8 billion this year. Later, however, the service said it had hired 13 people in Salina to replace the four jobs eliminated by the change.

At the same time, headquarters decreed a plan to close mail processing plants in all but one or maybe two cities in each state. So those new hires in Salina face a dim future as their work is moved

to Wichita, along with whatever processing is left in places like Colby.

In Kansas, mail processing work would be moved from Liberal, Dodge City, Hutchinson, Colby, Hays, Topeka and Salina to Amarillo, Wichita, Kansas City and perhaps even Denver. The work will be moved to places where mail does not flow. A letter to your next-door neighbor will travel so much, it will take two to three days to deliver.

Is the service about to abandon rural America? Already, 3,700 post offices are on schedule to be closed, with another 7,000 to be put up for "study." That means closing nearly one-third of all post offices, including many in towns you have heard of.

The implication of this is staggering. It means the end of overnight delivery for first-class mail. Businesses, banks, cities and counties that count on the post office to promptly deliver checks and bills will have to find some other way to send them.

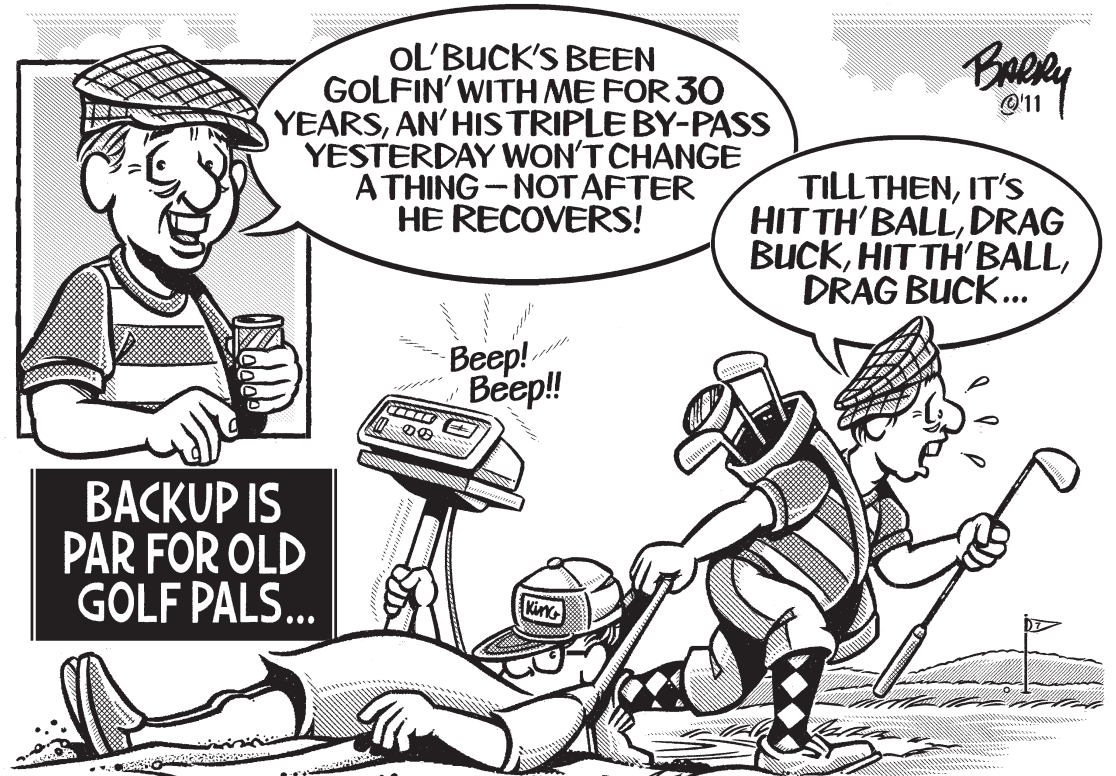
Newspapers won't be able to count on the Postal Service to deliver their product on time, and they'll have to bail out. "Service" will no longer be a part of the agency's product, even if it remains in the name.

Good jobs will leave smaller towns, moving work to big towns where the work ethic is poor and labor problems abound. What business is left will flee the mails, leaving only advertising fliers (what people call junk mail), Christmas cards and the less-profitable end of the package business. Saturday delivery will end, followed most likely by a shift to every-other-day mail.

How the system will sustain itself on this meager cash flow, who knows. Once the idea of universal service has been abandoned, Congress will have little incentive to save what is left.

What the founders valued highly, it seems, could become just one more wreck on the Internet highway. We all will suffer the consequences.

- Steve Haynes



Government squanders blessings

Letter to the Editor:

When America came into being, God blessed us because we were grounded in Christian values. We, the people have strayed and allowed our government (federal, state, county, city) squander our belief and our blessings! I believe God still gives many blessings to some, but not the nation as a whole anymore, though God's agape love is still available to all!

The special election was held to OK aid from the taxpayers to keep Good Sam here, but in this week's paper, the intent was to make up the loss from cuts in Medicaid and Medicare that are coming down the pike. They are coming because of massive Healthcare abuse and fraud as well as the flood of immigrants without proper paperwork.

Remember the Bible story of the Good Samaritan, he did what he did from the inner urging of God, never with any thought of profit! Good Sam started out years ago the same way, but sadly profit is now more important. We haven't heard what percentage of profit our 6 mills is needed to help them maintain their goal!

In an earlier letter I maintained that the mill levy was but the tip of the iceberg. I did not see on the bal-

Letters to the Editor

lot where we authorized the county commissioners to buy for ONE Dollar the GREAT PRIVILEGE to maintain, repair, update, and add \$3,500,000 (probably more like 5) in new construction! Good Sam suggests we have a bond election to raise the funds.

I doubt Cheyenne County, on this issue, will get a triple A bond rating so interest will be an issue. After Good Sam gets their profit, there may not be enough left to service the Bond. Oh well go back and raise the county budget to cover it, WE OWN IT NOW! I doubt if all the main supporters of this will live to see it paid off, I won't, but so what leave the mortgage to our children and grandchildren! The iceberg is much bigger now! Titanic watch out, we're coming!

Here is a great news flash---If it is such a great deal, How about Good Sam sell bonds and retain ownership---Oops I forgot, maybe not as much profit! Maybe get a grant from the federal government, then all the people in America can help pay for it!

On a happier note I have now achieved what I have been work-

ing for all these many years, I am now on our governments latest list - Poverty Level! This makes me happy. Why? I would rather be poor with God's blessing than rich without them!

I just wish we could use some common sense, which there seem to be little of anymore. Sixty to 70 percent of the rest home clients in this country are there because they are paid for by the government, charity begins at home and I would give to Good Sam if it was still as it started. To be mandated to support a "Private for Profit" enterprise doesn't fit God's purpose! With a debt of \$15 trillion I believe America is broke!

I welcome your comments if they are signed, but to the people sending hate mail, be forewarned, I have a grandson who is a forensic scientist, your DNA and finger prints were inside the envelopes, harassment can become very expensive! He loves the work and it is cheap for Granddad.

May we wake up soon and again receive the multitude of God's blessing he is waiting to give us!

Larry Wilson
St. Francis

The Gardener

Kay Melia
Master Gardener

Alright all you backyard gardeners...it's time to grab your bathroom scales and head out to the pumpkin patch to find out if you have a record setting pumpkin out there!

Wait a minute...you say you don't have a pumpkin patch? You say you don't even have a bathroom scales?

No problem. You are not alone as 94 percent of all backyard gardeners do not have pumpkin patches, although surely most Northwest Kansans have bathroom scales!

We are nearing that time of year when the world's pumpkin growers are simply going nuts. Hundreds and hundreds of pumpkin growers all over the world are anxiously watching their pumpkin patches to see if that big yellow gourd is going to be big enough to capture the award for the biggest pumpkin of the year, at least in their block or township. County fairs, fall festivals of all kinds, and even areas where there is no organized event, find pumpkin producers nervously watching their pumpkin patch.

It seems that with each passing year, more and more gardeners have become pumpkin fanatics, and pull out all the stops to grow big pumpkins that will hopefully assure them of bragging rights for the coming year. As you read these words, there are pumpkins

out there that are gaining up to 25 pounds a day as growers are feeding their plants all kinds of magic elixirs that they hope will win them the big prize.

The current world record for pumpkins is 1,810 pounds, 5 ounces. The pumpkin was grown by Chris Stevens of New Richmond, Wis., and was exhibited at the Stillwater, Minn., Harvest Festival on Oct. 9 last year. Stillwater, a suburb of Minneapolis-St. Paul, is located just a few miles across the state line. It broke the previous world record by almost 50 pounds. Surely, a new record will emerge this fall.

Steven's huge pumpkin was a Dill's Atlantic Giant. We can all buy Dill's Atlantic Giant seed off the rack in the spring at just about every store, generally for about \$1.49 a packet. But if you were so lucky to buy one seed produced by Chris Stevens world record pumpkin, you would have to pay

upwards of \$300!

That's why a few growers, who strive to produce a record breaker, are wealthy. The late Howard Dill was one such man. He worked for 30 years by crossbreeding all kinds of pumpkins before he came up with the now patented Dill's Atlantic Giant variety, which is now the most popular variety available to those who want to try their hand at growing the big ones.

Strangely enough, Mr. Dill's pumpkin farm is located near Windsor, Nova Scotia, just northwest of Halifax, in a very fertile valley. The farm continues their pumpkin producing by Mr. Dill's family.

We probably will never see a world record vegetable specimen grown in Northwest Kansas. But if you have a hankering to try the great big pumpkin thing, pick up a packet of Dill's Atlantic Giant seed next spring, and have a go at it.

GOD SAYS

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

I John 1:8,9

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A group in Massachusetts, the Brookline Political Action for Peace, is pushing for the Pledge of Allegiance to be removed from their schools. Their argument is that the pledge has no educational value, is a loyalty oath reminiscent of McCarthyism and is at odds with America's most important traditions.

I don't have a clue what any of their position has to do with recognizing the country where we live or with the price of tea in China, for that matter. It doesn't make sense.

As far as having educational value, here's a quick history lesson.

Francis Bellamy (1855-1931) wrote the pledge for the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of the New World. It was first published in The Youth's Companion, a Boston publication, on Sept. 8, 1892.

In 1923 the "flag" was added. In the 1950s, President Dwight Eisenhower encouraged Congress to include "under God." Perhaps this did have something to do with McCarthyism, as plenty of people were concerned about the godless Communists then.

But I think Ike's motivation was

more basic than that.

He said, "In this way we are reflecting the transcendence of religious faith in America's heritage and future; in this way we shall constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country's most powerful resource in peace and war."

So what could be wrong with that?

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