



Free Press Viewpoint

Postal changes tip of the iceberg

Proposed changes in mail processing will affect all the surrounding post offices that send mail to Colby to be sorted before it goes out of the area.

The U.S. Postal Service is studying a plan move the processing of outbound mail to Salina for both Colby and Hays sectional centers. A Postal Service official was quick to say this would not close the Colby post office, which is the hub of a 11-county area.

What he did say is the change would move the collection times for surrounding post offices up by two to three hours. The truck leaving Colby for Hays and Salina also will be moved up.

That means – if the change is approved – any mail not at the Colby post office by 4 p.m. would not go out until the next day. Currently, the truck leaves here at 7 p.m. with mail going east.

The proposed change would not mean all the mail would go to Salina to be processed. Local mail would stay in town. Mail for the 677 zip code would remain in Colby to be processed. For businesses in most of northwest Kansas, though, a majority of the mail stays in this zip area, but it will have to be on the same outbound trucks as the mail going on to Salina.

Businesses, and this newspaper, depend on timely delivery by the Postal Service, but the collection time change may cause some serious problems. The change amounts to moving the mail deadline into the middle of the business day, rather than near the end. It will disrupt many offices.

At the newspaper, we will be looking at options. It is hard to think about moving everything up three hours to get the same delivery as we enjoy now. It could be expensive, too.

This is the latest in a long line of problems facing the U.S. Postal Service and the millions who depend on the delivery of mail around the country.

Benjamin Franklin was the first postmaster general, appointed by the Continental Congress, and he worked to make improvements in postal routes and improved frequency of delivery. Franklin believed the post office was an important link in keeping the colonies informed and for delivering the news.

The Department of the Post Office, authorized in article I of the U.S. Constitution, lost money for 139 of the first 161 years. Congress provided a subsidy of up to 20 percent to help the service break even.

In 1970, the department was transformed into the U.S. Postal Service and became a government corporation, to run independently and, hopefully, make money, or at least break even.

Since then, changes in technology and rising costs have eaten into the amount of mail the post office moves. At a meeting in Colby, one official said the reason for moving the processing to Salina was to save money because that office has excess capacity and it would be more efficient to process outbound mail from Hays and Colby in Salina.

Today there are newer forms of delivery, and some are certainly faster or more efficient, but when you think about the cost of cell phones, computers or an Internet connection, the price of mailing something tangible to a friend is cheaper and more personal.

We believe the Postal Service is as vital today as when the Constitution was written. The corporation may “too big to fail” with the country looking at a horrendous debt, but if we do not help the Postal Service, we may find ourselves back in the days of weekly rather than daily delivery.

– Tom Betz

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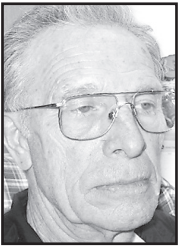
Faith community falls down on actions

Our Christian religious community should be embarrassed. We, apparently, do not practice what we preach.

We've been hearing all kinds of complaints about the government removing God from our schools. But, when a religious service honoring and encouraging our 2011 High School Seniors was scheduled, less than a hundred people showed up and maybe about a dozen seniors. If that is all the committed Christians we have that are involved with school, then we are in a sad state of affairs. Surely, more than a dozen out of nearly one hundred seniors identify themselves as Christian.

I'm pretty confident that if I were to present to all Christian churches in the community a petition calling for prayer and Bible reading in our public school, I would get far more than one hundred signatures. It is easy to sign your name to a petition, but ideology isn't very convincing if we can't back it up with action.

I haven't been involved with high school graduation for about thirty years. I don't know who or what organization is responsible for setting up the baccalaureate service. Separation of church and state does not allow school authority to promote purely religious exercises. Does the Ministerial Association sponsor the program? If so, they didn't show much com-



Ken Poland

- Ken's World

mitment. If not, they are missing an opportunity to witness to the world their recognition that God is present in the midst of Christians whether in the classroom or outside the formal public institution.

I didn't recognize but one minister in attendance. I apologize for not recognizing any others if they were there. The youth pastor of one of our Colby churches gave a very inspiring and challenging message for the few who were in attendance.

We seem to have a little problem with consistent Christian witness in our state legislative body as well. It appears that some think that the end justifies the means even when the means is contrary to rules and regulations. Someone has said, "If the majority wants something, they have no problem with ignoring rules of procedure." That seems to be true in politics, regardless of political party.

We found an abortion issue tacked onto another bill, after the agreed-upon deadline for new bills. Whether you are pro or con on the abortion issue, it isn't good Christian witness to violate rules and principles in order to circumvent honest debate. This issue failed to pass in the house when presented on a stand-alone bill. But, by ignoring the principles agreed upon previously, a legislator tacked it onto another bill and it went through without even any debate.

Maybe it just depends upon the situation. Does it? About 35 or 40 years ago, the Christian community was involved in a serious argument over "situation ethics." The fundamental conservatives declared that "situation" had no bearing on ethics. Right is right and wrong is wrong, regardless of situation.

It seems to be much easier to preach ethics than it is to practice ethical behavior. Our actions speak much louder than our words, in both of the above issues.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semiretired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at rcwine@cheerful.com.

Boomers keep on rolling

Being a Baby Boomer there's plenty to talk about from my early lifetime. My generation has been praised and pummeled throughout this 60-year period.

Regardless of the circumstances and events, many of us took an active role in what was "going down." We were young and wanted to make a difference. We believed we could change the world.

During the '60s, we were some of the first Americans to publicly call for banning the bomb and stopping the war in Vietnam. Some of us served in the armed forces and were proud of it.

We watched in horror at the assassination of our president, John F. Kennedy. We also witnessed the beginning of integration and watched the first man walk on the moon.

In grade school, we volunteered to be the first vaccine recipients in the fight against polio. We stood in long lines and accepted sugar cubes that contained the first polio serum.

My generation was among the first to eat frozen food and TV dinners. I never liked either, but preferred Mom's home-cooked meals made from scratch.

Copying machines from Xerox showed up for the first time in office buildings. We drank our sodas out of 12-ounce glass bottles. Plastic containers had yet to hit the market. And if you were smart, you were investing in plastic.

During my sophomore year at Sheridan Community High School, "Tab," the one-calorie diet soda made its debut. It was banned a couple years later, because the saccharine that made it sweet without the calories killed lab rats.

Five and dime stores still flourished – there were no convenience stores. We could buy a candy bar for a nickel and a soda for a dime. Daily newspapers sold for a nickel and you could mail a letter for four cents.

My older cousin, Freddie, bought a Mercury two-door coupe for less than two grand when he returned from the Navy.



John Schlageck

- Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

Cool? You better believe it.

People were also buying homes for less than \$10,000 and moving to a new place called the suburbs. Horn-rimmed glasses were all the rage and contact lenses a novelty. Teens tossed Frisbees and popped the pill for the first time.

The '60s – war, civil unrest, revolution, integration, college, freedom and making our own way – far from home and the oversight of family, neighbors and the small rural communities where we grew up.

And the music. Every year musicians like the Animals, Beatles, Stones, Dylan, Airplane, Doors, Hendrix, Orbison, Janis and Elvis released new albums. Talk about classic rock. There's not a thing like it today. And we listened to this music on AM radio; FM was still in its infancy.

Yes, the times they were a changin'. Still, most of my contemporaries married first and then lived together. Manners still meant something and every contemporary of mine used the words; "Yes ma'am" and "Thank you." They also took their hats or caps off when they entered a home or building.

Designer jeans were still scheming girls named Jean or Jeanne. We thought fast food was what we ate during Lent, not something we ate every day. House-husbands, computer dating, dual careers and commuter marriages were still a decade into the future.

As Boomers, we arrived on the scene long before day-care centers, group therapy and nursing homes.

For us, time-sharing meant togetherness – not condominiums. Software wasn't even a

word. When we were kids, "made in Japan," meant junk and the term, "making out" referred to how you did on your exam.

In our day, cigarette smoking was still fashionable. Grass was mowed, Coke was a cold drink and pot was something you cooked in.

Today, the golden age of boomers has become a distant memory. Instead of country clubs and Club Meds, many of us are looking at the prospect of hearing aids, lens transplants and assisted living.

But hey, we once had the world by the tail. We kicked up our heels and lived like there was no tomorrow. Now that tomorrow is here, many of us are still living large.

We continue to work, play, dream and experience each and every day with the same zest and exuberance for life that we once enjoyed in our youth. And if you think about all of the events going on in 2011, it's really not that much different than the '60s.

Peace, brother.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

