

Prepare yourselves for postal hikes

Benjamin Disraeli, a 19th century British diplomat and prime minister, once said, "There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics."

Then there are letters from Postal Service public relations men. One of those wrote a response last week to our May 31 editorial warning of planned steep increases in postage.

Wrapping himself in the cloak of Founding Father Ben Franklin, our country's first postmaster general and also a noted newspaper publisher, Postal Service Vice President Azeezaly S. Jaffer tried to make light of rate increases planned for newspaper subscribers.

It's pure bunk, backed up by statistics.

If you look past the breezy references to poor old Ben, you'll note that the writer does not deal with the arguments about declining mail volume, diversion of profitable first class traffic to electronic delivery and the death spiral initiated by ever-increasing price increases on the remaining mail.

Because that's all true.

Soon, the service will be delivering mostly what we call junk mail. Soon, it will be hauling a letter you mail to someone across town to Wichita to be sorted at an "efficient" automated center and hauled back across the state.

The letter does not deal with the horrible service out-of-area readers get, because the Postal Service hasn't done anything about that so far. Higher prices for worse service, that's been the rule.

Then come the statistics. The editorial warned of a coming 24.2 percent increase on newspapers mailed in the county where published.

Why, that's a bargain, he claims. Those rates haven't gone up, they've gone down. The rate would be "only" 9 to 11 cents a paper — which is true.

It's also true that the rate today averages about 8 cents a paper, and 2 cents is a 25 percent increase.

The writer claims a dime to deliver a paper sounds like a bargain. He claims newspapers are getting "Express Mail" service for just pennies.

Except that no one pays Express Mail rates to get a letter across town overnight. That's what we expect from the Postal Service for ordinary mail — next-day delivery in town.

Uh-oh. Does that mean we'll soon have to pay \$14 for Express Mail just to get a letter delivered to a neighbor?

The fact is, newspaper readers are facing an unwarranted 25 percent increase in delivery charges. It'll cost them a buck or two a year. And they can expect more and more to come.

A dime to deliver a paper might seem like a bargain, but the current rate is a fair price. Publishers sort and deliver papers in walk-sequence order so carriers don't have to "work" them. They just open the bundle and pass them out.

Newspapers, one industry spokesman points out, don't use much of the postal system's infrastructure — just the carrier: "Not the blue boxes, not the transportation, not the mail processing plants nor the machines nor air freight nor rail nor most of the rest of the huge infrastructure. Most of this mail does everything but tie the carrier's shoelaces."

Postal delivery is preferred by publishers and readers, but it costs just 5 to 6 cents apiece to hire carriers to deliver the same paper. That's an alternative many publishers will have to consider.

Is a 25 percent increase in costs a bargain, as Mr. Jaffer says? I don't know anyone who'd buy that statistic. Publishers' experts say the Postal Service doesn't have valid cost data to back up that rate.

Newspaper readers will have to swallow it, though, unless something changes.

And we all better get ready to pay more and more for other postage, too.

—Steve Haynes



North Korean missile mess touches home

Now they are tossing missiles around like crazy. Not a total surprise. They've said time and again they have a missile capable of traveling 6,000+ miles and is on the pad waiting to be sent up and away. What did catch us by surprise, however was the number of missiles they peppered the sky with on July 4.: Seven! The big boy of the seven, the 6,000+-mile traveler, capable of hitting our beloved country, malfunctioned after about 40 seconds into flight. The others, called scuds, ended up in the Sea of Japan. This is North Korean insanity.

I am concerned. We should all be, regardless of the spin some of the experts are putting on this most serious provocation. "Nothing to worry about," they say. "We now know their capabilities," they offer. Our so called missile defense system apparently isn't quite up to where it should be and its ability, or lack of, to shoot down an incoming missile has raised a lot of eyebrows. Lots of money, little to show. While North Korea's president goofy huddles with his missile masters to see what went wrong with Tuesday's effort, we might be best served by redoubling our efforts to make sure we're ready with our missile defense system when the need arises.

Some argue that North Korea took the action it did on our country's 230th birthday, to get our attention. We've pretty much ignored that country as we focus on

Good Evening Norton Tom Dreiling



the war on terror, on Iraq, on Afghanistan, on Iran.

One of the analysts said Tuesday that the big missile might have been aimed at Seattle and Spokane, Washington. Personally, that thought shook me. My oldest son, Air Force T/Sgt. Lance Dreiling, returned in late April from the Middle East, and a year prior he was just a stone's throw from the 38th Parallel dividing South and North Korea. He and his family are currently stationed at Fairchild AFB, Spokane. I will be interested in his assessment of Tuesday's missile launchings. Oh, my, we certainly have an overflowing plate. If you are into prayer, it might not be a bad idea to double that effort and ask the recipient of your prayers to give our leaders the wisdom necessary to pull all these strings together. Awesome task. There have to be a lot of restless nights at the White House.

The fireworks, the watermelon, the fellowship...it was a neatly tied July 4th

package for those who took advantage of the activities out at the big lake southwest of town. The weather co-operated. This is an activity many hundreds of folks look forward to each year. Some people plan their vacations around this day. You could feel the hype with the discharge of each firecracker leading up to the ultimate date on the calendar. It was our country's 230th birthday. And, for a change, there wasn't enough wind here on the 4th to blow out any of those candles!

Please do me a favor. In your own words (and don't feel obligated to sign your submission), tell me what you consider to be the "values" that you hear all these politicians talk about. Don't categorize your thoughts as being from a Republican or a Democrat or an Independent, etc. Just simply jot down what you see as American values. (I heard a politician last week talk about "Midwest" values.) I would like to compile a file and pass this information along to my readers. Remember, no signature required. And if you want your name mentioned with your creation, include it and tell me it's OK to use it. E-mail me at tommd@nwkansas.com, fax 877-3732, regular mail to me at 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton 67654, or drop it by the office. Don't let me down.

Have a good evening and a good weekend. Follow the crowd to church.

Rolling thoughts from a farmer's wife

Our farm management field man is originally from Clay County but now resides in Thomas County. When we meet there is always discussion about the weather. He will speculate about what will happen if we should return to "normal" weather.

Recently he said, "I've lived out here about 20 years and I've come to realize the only thing normal about the weather is it isn't normal."

So, how concerned should we be about that? I have long believed that if we humans had been alive at the time the Jurassic Era was ending some fools would have been running around passing laws to protect the endangered dinosaurs. No one knows what happened to them or why. But the dinosaurs are gone and I, for one, am glad.

A book I read once talked about a beetle that was taken to Australia for some grand purpose, it caused an unanticipated problem. The author asked, "Do you suppose God even gets tired of our meddling?"

This June has been about as perfect as any I can remember. What glorious harvest weather. Our air conditioner barely ran. At night we closed the windows against the too-cool breeze.

Was the price of this nice weather the drought? Could we have prevented the drought?

Religious leaders sometimes say natural disasters occur because of God's judgment. This is wrong thinking to me, but if it is true why did God send drought right

here to all the true believers in the heart of the Bible belt?

Environmentalists say the Global Warming is caused by fossil fuels. Farmers are big offenders as users of fossil fuels. Then there is the flatulent/belching cow pollution. We'd like to do our part to cut down on the emission of green house gases.

But to get our old fleet of tractors and trucks converted to a better system would put us out of farming. We are guilty on the cow thing, too.

At least I don't drive an SUV. (We humans are such interesting creatures; we can always justify our own actions if it doesn't suit us to change them!)

Wind power ought to be the perfect energy source for the High Plains. But it ruins the view, kills birds, and makes noise. We can't have nuclear energy because we worry about radiation hazards. Some old hydroelectric dams have actually been demolished because they had a negative environmental impact above or below the dams.

Back Home Nancy Hagman



You may have heard of the BANANA protests of power generation. Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anyone. It limits the options.

There is also the old adage: If you try to please everyone you won't please anyone.

Most of us do enjoy mild winters. But they come at a price. For instance, we had insect problems this spring that are usually not an issue because cold weather kills the bugs.

The warm weather brings wheat out of dormancy earlier perhaps increasing the likelihood that there will be freeze damage to the crop. Lack of snow or rain has obvious ramifications for a crop.

No doubt there are those who think Washington D.C. deserves to be swept away in a flood. However, let's keep in mind though we are all responsible for the government, we elected it!

How does our hatred and intolerance of each other help solve the problem? It almost seems like some of us think of our fellow Americans like al-Qaeda does. We are willing to wage a holy war against the infidels that disagree with us.

We may never have normal weather again. Our weather was quite possibly never as normal as we thought. But it preys on the mind.

I enjoyed June. We enjoy farming. We want the world to go on. Let's just hope there is someone out there smarter than I who can help us decide if we are just meddling or if there is something practical we can do.

THUMBS UP, TO . . .

√Steve Mathes and Jim Ray, for how nice the state park looked for the 4th of July. (phoned in)

√Maxine Carr, on your 90th birthday! (from a whole bunch of folks)

√Norton BB Gun Team, on your super showing at the International Championships.

√Whispering Pines, and here's a root beer float toast

to you, too!

√Almena PRIDE, and good luck with your Saturday home-made ice cream social. (e-mail)

√Norton Car Show, may this be the best yet!

(Send your submission to: tommd@nwkansas.com, fax 877-3732, mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton 67654 or drop by the office.)

Share your thoughts with a Letter to the Editor

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

Office hours:
8 a.m.- 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (785) 877-3361
Fax: (785) 877-3732
E-mail: telegram@nwkansas.com

STAFF

Tom Dreiling editor and publisher
Veronica Monier staff reporter
Dick Boyd Blue Jay sports
Carolyn Plotts society editor
Sherry Hickman bookkeeping/circulation
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Hypatia Day advertising

ISSN 1063-701X
215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654
Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.
Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654
Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

Nor'West Newspapers

Dick and Mary Beth Boyd
Publishers, 1970-2002
Incorporating the Norton County Champion
Marion R. Krehbiel, editor

