

from our viewpoint...

Postal changes tip of iceberg

The potential processing changes in Colby will have an affect to all the surrounding post offices who deliver mail to Colby to be processed before it goes further east.

The study being done would move the processing of mail to Salina for both Colby and Hays sectional centers. The Post Office official was quick to say this would not close the Colby Post Office.

What he did admit is the change would move the collection times for surrounding post offices up by as much as three hours. That means – if the proposed change is approved – any mail not at the Goodland post office by 1:45 p.m. would not go out until the next day. Currently the truck leaves Goodland at 4:40 p.m. with the mail going to Colby.

The proposed change would not mean all the mail would go to Salina to be processed. Mail for the 677 zip code would remain in Colby to be processed. For businesses in most of northwest Kansas a majority of the mail stays in that zip code, but it would have to be on the same truck as the mail going on to Salina.

Businesses, and this newspaper, depend on timely delivery by the United States Postal Service, but the collection time change may cause some delivery problems. 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.

For those who want to enter an opinion about the changes letters can be mailed – by Tuesday, May 24 – to Consumer Affairs Manager, Central Plains District, Box 19904, Omaha, Neb., 68119.

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

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

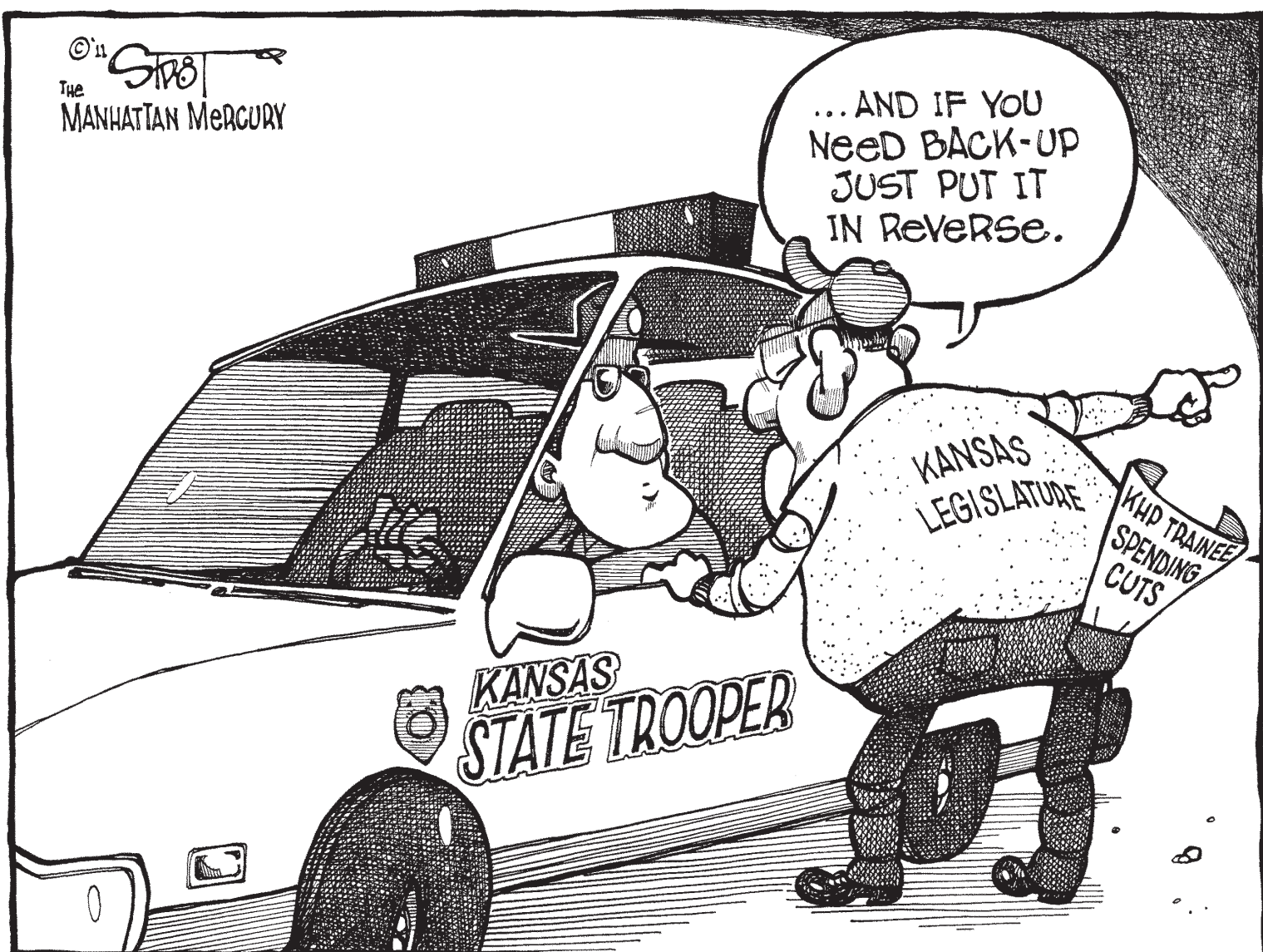
In 1970 the Department of the Post Office was transformed into the United States Postal Service and became an independent government corporation that was to run independently and hopefully make money or at least break even when President Richard Nixon signed the Post Office Reorganization Act.

Changes in technology and rising costs have eaten into the amount of mail the post office moves. At the meeting in Colby the postal 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 mail from Hays and Colby in Salina.

Benjamin Franklin was the first Post Master 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.

Today there are more forms of delivery, and some are certainly more efficient, but when one thinks about the cost of cell phones, computers and an Internet connection the cost 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 being written, and as a priority the nation needs to step up and this is a corporation that is "too big to fail." While the country is looking at a horrendous debt if we do not help the postal service we may find ourselves back in the days of weekly rather than daily delivery. – Tom Betz



Making choices when two needs meet

Let's just call this a little story about two categories of need, meeting head on.

It's a true story. I happen to know that because I'm the character involved.

The two categories of need are (1) groceries, the stuff that keeps us alive, and (2) prescription medication, the stuff that, well, keeps us alive.

And both of these categories of need were purchased by this Man of the Plains in the very same building on the very same day just a few days ago.

The groceries, 32 items in all, totaled \$81.10.

The prescriptions, 2 only, totaled \$82.46.

You often hear people say, especially those who are on really fixed incomes, as am I, they find themselves choosing between food and prescription medication. I hadn't given that much thought until I came face to face with that realization. I had to cut my grocery bill in half to accommodate my prescription medication needs.

My only support, as I've mentioned before, is that thing called Social Security. Not many bucks but it's better than nothing. And I warn those politicians who think they are going to put their carving knives into Social Security, I will personally hunt them down and use my carving knife on each of their fingers. I'll whack off their thumbs to boot! It's no laughing matter but there are some crazies in the House of Representatives and in the United States Senate who have an eye on Social Security as one of their targets.

I am not alone in this fight for survival. I spent my life working for a noble, very noble cause – the right to know – newspapering, in other words. Many of those community newspapers I worked for were not so blessed as to be able to offer their employees a retirement plan. Of course it wasn't just newspaper employees faced with this negative, but employees of many other occupations as well. There was a time, it might be worth noting, when you landed a job the package included a vacation, but not always paid. Retirement compensation? What's that?

I loved working as a journalist for 44 years, and proof I still love writing can be seen in my



tom dreiling

• man of the plains

frequent columns that appear in your favorite newspaper(s). Yep, ink still runs through my veins, although retirement dollars don't. But that's just the way it is.

Yes, there are people who still count pennies as part of their survival plan. And they give thanks for that allotment, knowing there are people worse off who wish they had pennies to count!

Someone some time back, over a cup of coffee, offered this during a conversation about God, "I would rather believe there is a God and then find out there isn't, then to believe there isn't a God and then find out there is!" Interesting.

American Idol is a good example of turning singing into screaming. Many a good song falls short because some performers try reaching for notes way beyond their capability, yet knowing this will bring the unruly crowd out of their seats and on their feet with screams of their own. I always shake my head as the judges declare those performances, "Beautiful..." I still don't quite understand the role of the judges because America picks the winners. The advice the judges give is shallow, except for Randy Jackson who often tells it like it is, despite boos from the audience.

At the outset of this year's Idol, I picked a kid during the auditions who plays a guitar and sings mostly country with a range as deep as the Grand Canyon and as high as needed to capture the hearts of the millions of Americans who vote each week. His first name is Scotty, and I think the last name is McCreery. He and two young ladies will battle it out for the title of Idol.

Time for a few Snippets

"Snoot" Gingrich for president? May as well

toss in 'Terrible Trump' as his running mate. Maybe this will bring Americans to their knees in prayer!"

"Welcome to Colorful Colorado," somewhere under all that smoke!"

"Aurora (Colo.) is what it is, despite one newspaper's effort to change it's image. Too many years of adversity is embedded in its history to suddenly wipe all the bad stuff away."

"Is it Bush or Obama we thank for Ben Laden's demise? It's not clear."

"If Pakistan's leadership knew Ben Laden was living a life of luxury, with three wives, inside their borders, how can we trust that country? ... Wake up Obama!"

"... Our children go to private schools and they aren't laying off anyone. Maybe the public sector needs to look into how we do it.... It's all about living within your means."

"... I saw a thing on television about the seriousness of head injuries to football players in high school. Did our schools see that? ... That's a real wake up call for every parent who has a child on that football field!"

"Can I wish someone a happy birthday in your Snippets?" (Note: No!)

"The I-70-Vine Street Interchange in Hays (Kan.) is a classic study of an engineering student who flunked. That's as big a mess as you'll find along the interstate from Denver to Topeka. We usually pull off at Russell to eat our McDonald's hamburgers..."

(Snippets to my email address. Keep them short, no more than four sentences, or I'll do the cutting.)

I will close today with love to Lance and Tobie and Alyssa and Caleb; Todd and Darci and Grayson and Kennadi; and Denise and Darren and Samantha. (I knew I'd eventually slide my kids and grandkids' names in the column.) If you've got a name of someone you'd like me to sign this column off with, please e-mail it to me. It's free...on me!

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To the Editor:

Tom, I don't know if you did anything for National Hospital Week, May 8-14, or not, but I received this from Tom Bell, CEO of the Kansas Hospital Association. I serve on the Board of Directors and also on a task force assessing community healthcare needs.

Brenda McCants, Goodland Regional Medical Center board chairman.

National Hospital Week dates back to 1921, when it was suggested by a magazine editor who hoped a community-wide celebration would alleviate public fears about hospitals. The celebration, launched in Chicago, succeeded in promoting trust and goodwill among members of the public and eventually spread to facilities across the country. Now, it provides a great opportunity to recognize the important role that Kansas hospitals play in their communities.

Kansas hospitals are open day and night, 365 days a year, to care for everyone who walks through our doors. But we're not here just when you need us. The staff in Kansas hospitals are always working, caring and innovating - strengthening our communities.

Economic Contributors

Kansas hospitals employ approximately 62,500 people, or 3.4 percent of all job holders, making them one of the largest employers in



from our readers

• to the editor

most areas of the state.

Centers of Innovation

We're bringing the latest medical innovation and technology to patients, providing highly specialized health care.

Gateways to Care

Kansas hospitals serve every type of community: urban, rural, large and small. We are constantly working to improve access to care for all patients, from newborns to seniors.

Improving Community Health

Our mission goes beyond treating illness. We strengthen communities by working not just to mend bodies, but to make people and communities healthier.

Committed to Quality and Safety

We're dedicated to improving patient quality and safety in every community.

During this week in which we celebrate hospitals, the staff at the Kansas Hospital Association would like to salute all hospital employees in Kansas who are truly champions of care. We recognize that a hospital is more than a place where people go to heal, it is a part of the community that fosters health and

represents hope. From providing treatment and comfort to the sick, to welcoming new life into the world, hospitals are central to a healthy and optimistic community. That's the message of this year's National Hospital Week theme, Champions of Care.

We hope you all had a happy Hospital Week!

– Tom Bell, Kansas Hospital Association
 Brenda McCants
 Goodland

Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters and letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: star.news@nwkansas.com.