

Small business caught in federal fax-rule bind

American businesses face yet another assault on their ability to communicate, one that could eliminate most uses of the fax machine.

The deadline is less than a month away, July 1. Many have not heard of the pending regulation, though a quiet struggle has been going on in Washington for nearly three years.

The Federal Communication Commission is set to require signed permission forms for many business faxes which could be considered advertising, and the definition of advertising is broad.

That means that if a customer asks your business for a price quote, you won't be able to reply unless you have a form on file. You can't fax the form to the customer. It has to be mailed or hand carried.

Forms have to list the specific fax number, though customers may have several, must be signed and are valid for only three years.

For a typical business with 200-300 customers, that means checking a computer database to see if you have permission to fax the rates. If you don't, a sales person (maybe the owner) will have to run one out. If the customer is a long way off, surface mail could take days.

It also means the typical small business will have to hire someone to build and run the database. The cost, including a computer program and labor, is estimated at \$8,000 per year. Fines start at \$500 per fax.

For most businesses, that means a third to half the time of one productive employee will be lost to this bureaucratic nightmare.

A coalition of business groups, including the National Newspaper Association, has been

fighting this rule since it was handed down a couple of years ago under Chairman Michael Powell, better known for his decency campaign after the Janet Jackson incident.

Mr. Powell is gone now, and the commission has new members. It so far has not backed off its stand on this rule, however, because the "privacy" lobby is powerful in Washington.

Unsolicited "junk" faxes are illegal now. They have been illegal for years, but fly-by-night operators keep cranking them out because they work. This rule won't stop them.

It won't produce any benefit to business or society, but it will punish thousands of legitimate businesses across the country.

"We're from the government; we're here to help you."

Our Rep. Jerry Moran has supported efforts to repeal this rule, as have Kansas senators. The bill passed both the House and Senate last year, but in different forms. It had to start over this year, and it's stalled behind judicial appointments in the Senate.

The commission has a request to stay the regulation, as it has the last two years, until Congress can act. It's holding off, waiting on the Senate.

The truth is, it's too late for the Senate to move. Too late for businesses to build a database.

What can we do?

Call, fax (yes, that's still OK) or e-mail your senators. Call, fax or e-mail the commission. Explain that businesses can't afford this kind of protection for a non-existent problem.

But do it now. Time is short. — Steve Haynes

Sister-in-law had that touch

It was late Thursday evening when my cell phone rang. My brother Jim was calling with the news that our sister-in-law, Liz Kelley, had died.

Mom always thought with a beautiful name like "Elizabeth," it was almost a sin to shorten it to "Liz." I just thought she was the most beautiful woman, period.

My brother Don met her when he was stationed at the Air Force base in Little Rock, Arkansas.

It was easy to see why he was attracted to her. She was a petite, southern beauty with black hair and snappy black eyes.

And then there was her southern drawl. It only added to her charm.

I was 7 or 8 when they got married. Mom took the bus to Little Rock for the wedding, and I remember looking at the pictures she brought back.

Later, Don brought her to the farm to meet the rest of the family. He must have told her that his little sister collected dolls.

He had certainly brought me enough from his world travels as a pilot.

Liz had a present for me, the most beautiful doll in the world. I called her my "Indian princess."

She stood six-inches tall and wore a white leather, beaded, fringed dress. She had matching moccasins and a headband with two tiny feathers.

I couldn't believe something so special could be mine. She was too



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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pretty to play with.

I remember asking my mother to line the box she came in with cotton and material to protect her.

That doll was so special. I never let anyone touch it. I never really played with it. I would just take her out of her box and admire her.

Do I still have her? Of course, I do. Still in the original box, on her little bed of cotton from Mom's first-aid box.

Now, she will hold an even more special place as a reminder of a sister and a dear friend lost.

Liz was the one who prepared me for seeing my dad right before he died. "Carolyn, your Daddy's not good," she said. "He's real sick."

No one prepared us for Liz's death. We all thought she was getting better.

After their last year of struggling with health issues, Don's last e-mail to the family said, "Things are looking up here."

We were so hopeful.

Now, the family is gathering as families do. There's nothing we can do, except be there. But it's some-

thing we have to do.

—ob—

Little Taylor is here for her summer stay. Plans were made for her to stay with her Aunt Jennifer while we go for the funeral.

She is so adaptable, she just announced that Grandma and Pa-Pa would be gone for three days and she would see us when we got back. Bye.

Her first week here was so hectic, I felt like all I said to her was, "Come on, Taylor. Hurry up. Get dressed, get in the car, we've got to go. Grandma is late now."

We had a quiet moment, though, one night before bed. She was wrapped up in her blanket, snuggled on my lap.

I said, "Oh, Taylor. We've been so busy I haven't washed your hair all week and you've only taken one bath. Your mom and dad are going to fire me."

She turned and looked me in the eye, "Oh, no. They can't fire you. You're the Grandma."

Nothing like job security.



She got there, back on the Metro

I've never felt comfortable about public transportation.

I'm always nervous. I always feel that I'm going to get on the wrong bus, train or plane and end up in Frostbite Falls, Manitoba, instead of Augusta, Ga.

I have no sense of direction at all, and that might be part of the problem.

When I get on board a bus, it could head west when I want to go to Kansas City, and I'd never know.

I can't navigate by the sun or the stars, and while I don't mind letting someone else do the job, I'm always a little loath to show my total ignorance by asking where this plane goes, and could they drop me off at Colby?

Last week, though, I got fairly good at using the subway system in Washington.

We were staying at a Holiday Inn about a block from the metro station in Rosslyn, part of Alexandria, and we needed to get to the National Press Club downtown, near the station at Metro Center.

Steve showed me how to put my \$1.35 in the slots and get my ticket, then duck down the escalators to the tracks.

Follow the little symbols until you get to the one for Metro Center and wait for a train.

Get on and watch the stops — there's a map on the wall of the car as well as large signs at each station — and get off when you get to the right one.

From Metro Center, we went out



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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to the Courthouse Station, which was back the other way in Virginia.

This time I was able to buy my own ticket and follow the little symbols to where we wanted to be, so I felt pretty confident.

The Metro system is sort of a subway for dummies, and that's just the sort I needed.

While Steve was in a meeting, I headed out on my own finding a little mall I had been told about, three stops down the line.

I didn't find the suitcase I was looking for, so I decided to go back to Metro Center, where I had seen one I liked.

Back to the ticket machine, down the escalators and to the sign for Metro Center. I got off at the right stop and bought the suitcase.

Now, I had a dilemma. Should I drag the suitcase back to where Steve was in a meeting and then on to dinner, or just take it back to the hotel.

I decided to take it to the hotel and headed back for the station at Rosslyn.

That's where I got lost. The station was only a block from the ho-

tel, but it wasn't an even block. It was more like two half blocks, with streets going everywhere.

I knew I wasn't far, but I didn't know whether to go right or left. Maybe the station had an opening on two streets and I got off on a different one?

Finally, I found someone to show me the way, and I made it back to the hotel and tucked the suitcase in our room.

Now I needed to get back to the Metro to rejoin Steve. Directions from the desk got me the one block back to the station, and I turned around as I was about to descend. There within sight was my hotel with the brave banner proclaiming "Holiday Inn" on top.

If only I had been looking up instead of down, trying to figure if there had been a McDonald's on that corner, or was it a Starbucks?

Even though I got lost once, it wasn't on the subway, so I'm still feeling good about my public transportation expertise.

Just don't ask me to catch a bus anywhere. I don't think I want to go there.

Speeding car frames a scene

It was a little like being in a movie. OK.

It was a lot like being in a movie, but shorter.

Tonda was driving us to the Washington National Airport after lunch and a business meeting downtown. Like the old Kansas City airport, National is just a short hop from downtown.

We'd wound up in Chinatown for lunch, and she offered us a ride to the airport.

We were headed east, through the Ninth Street Tunnel under the Mall, when the car came up fast from behind on the left.

There was no time to say, just to react.

Tonda, in her little four-wheel-drive, started edging to the right.

The car was going way too fast for the curving, three-lane tunnel. The driver was trying to weave through the traffic, but he had too much speed.

You could just see the car, an older silver gray El Dorado, going out of control.

And WHAM, it hit the wall. WHAM again, and it spun around.

A wheel — the left one, I think — went rolling down the tunnel.

The car spun to a stop.

By this time, everyone else was stopped, gawking, speechless.

No one in our car had said a word. By some miracle, this maniac had not hit anyone. Traffic was light, people reacted well.

And even more amazing, his car, spinning, careening off the wall, had come to rest without anyone hitting it.



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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Then the driver jumped out, looking wildly over his shoulder like a man with the devil on his tail, and started running down the tunnel, just like in a movie, his shirttail flying, long dreadlocks streaming and bouncing behind him.

Only no good guys came skidding up. No bad guys were shooting at him.

We sat there, jaws gaping.

"Stolen car?" Tonda asked.

I reached for my cell phone, dialed 9.

"911 Emergency, District of Columbia"

I reported, calmly, I think: "In the Ninth Street Tunnel under the Mall (I knew this because there was a big sign over the entrance), a guy just wrecked a car and left it in the middle of the tunnel. He's running away. He left the car."

"I need to send an officer to the Ninth Street Tunnel?"

"Yes. No one is hurt, but the driver is running away."

"Can you give me a description? Ethnic?"

"Can't tell. A black shirt, dark pants, long hair, going east."

By that time people had figured out one lane was open. They were honking at the front gawkers, and traffic started to move.

There the guy was, still running. "He's still in the tunnel, running east. He's at the mouth of the tunnel. He's turned south."

"To L'Enfant Plaza," Tonda said. And by the time we got there, he was gone.

I relayed the directions to the dispatcher and gave her my name.

"Well, that was exciting," Cynthia said, turning to Tonda. "Do you always entertain guests like this?"

Her mouth was still open.

"I'm just glad he wasn't trying to blow up the tunnel," she said. "That scares me."

"That guy," I said, "was running from somebody. He thought they were after him. He wasn't going to blow up anything."

But later, I thought it was a darned good thing for us he didn't try to carjack somebody.

From the Bible

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

I John 5: 3, 4



Man dislikes stoplight

To the Editor:

I have conducted my own study regarding Eco Carbon Monoxide, which involves the waste gases of gasoline-burning internal-combustion engines and the effect it has.

My studies show and indicate there is a 100 percent more chance of being introduced to these gases if you work, walk, ride or crawl in the

Letter to the Editor

vicinity of redundant stoplights.
Mike Ferguson
Oberlin

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