

Changes in mail times will affect business here

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 to move the processing of 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. That means — if the change is approved — any mail not at the Oberlin post office by 2:45 p.m. would not go out until the next day. Currently, the truck leaves here just after 5:05 p.m. with mail going to Colby. That's 2 hours, 20 minutes out of a business day.

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 north-west 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.

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 be "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

Blue-eyed blonde irresistible

She held her arms out to my husband and he took her in his with a loving smile.

Talk about love at first sight. He was enchanted by her beautiful blue eyes, framed in dark lashes, her smile and the way she laid her head on his shoulder.

Her mother smiled benignly at them saying, "Oh, she loves men."

And so she did. From Steve's arm, 15-month-old Eva went to Greg's arms, the Louie's turning her head into whichever chest she was clasped to when her mother tried to get her back.

Oh, and she had them all wrapped around her little finger.

It was a baby sort of week for us — first at the wedding we attended in Miami and then with our granddaughter in Augusta, Ga.

Besides Eva, there was Daniel, a 3-year-old whirlwind who ran his dads crazy. Louie and Jimmy came late to fatherhood when they adopted a mixed-race baby.

Jimmy told me that Daniel was a quiet, biddable child until he turned 3. Then he started running and exploring and being a normal 3-year-old boy. This is hard on this 50-something father, but they seem to be coping and Daniel is delightful.

The three sons of the groom were young men at 10, 13 and 15. Jack,



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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William and Henry are very British and tried their young best to act grown up and proper — with some success.

Back up in Augusta, our granddaughter took one look at us and, unlike Eva, turned her face to her mother and refused to acknowledge that she'd ever seen us before.

However, it only took about a day before we were her people and little arms were reaching up from the floor to be picked up.

Taylor is 14 months now, and a bundle of energy.

Since her mother and father both work all week, she spends most weekdays at a fancy day-care center. This week, however, she got to stay home with mom and the grandparents.

Instead of structured play, snack time and naps, she spent most of the day pushing a plastic mop bucket around the kitchen and pulling spices off "her" shelf.

We took her for walks. We walked

and she rode in her fancy stroller with a handful of Cheerios to eat and play with. Our daughter's miniature schnauzer trotted alongside the stroller, hoping for stray Cheerios. She got lots.

The walks weren't long, but they were enjoyable as we strolled around the neighborhood, enjoying the flowers and beautiful weather and greeting neighbors as we passed.

It was a peaceful respite from the normal round of baby stuff — feeding, cleaning, diapering, cleaning, wiping a snotty face, running to keep little hands out of or off of almost everything in sight.

But, all too soon, we had to head for home.

No babies here. But we do have our cats and dog and the weather's great, so we can just smile and plan our next visit the South and the world of babies.



The FUTURE

Fat-free diet a big challenge

Can you spell triglycerides, boys and girls?

I've not only learned how to spell it, I've taken a crash course in what they are. According to material I found on the Internet, triglycerides are, plain and simple, fat in the blood.

Throughout this whole ordeal with Jim's injury and recovery, another health issue has cropped up. Doctors recommended he have a heart catheterization to check his arteries, and during the testing, they discovered his blood-sugar levels were OK, he had no heart blockages and no cholesterol problems but, his triglycerides were almost "off the chart." A strict diet was prescribed, and in the blink of an eye, our routine was turned upside down.

I give my husband a lot of credit. Some men would say, "No! I'm not gonna do it." But from the very beginning, Jim said, "I will do whatever it takes to fix this." He has no idea how much easier that makes all of this.

Jim has always been one to eat what was set before him so, I'm the one who has to make the adjustments. Trying to come up with a palatable meal without using butter, salt, sugar or white flour is a challenge. I am keeping in mind the words of a woman I love like my mother.

"Aunt Toots" says, "Don't worry about the foods you can't eat. Just be thankful for the ones you can." So that's what we're doing. He



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts

loves all fruits, vegetables, fish and chicken, and who could complain about that?

Jim's hand is healing nicely, and we expect the pin to come out of his thumb this week. He never, really, stopped working. He just can't do the heavy work like he wants to or the fine, finishing work.

This weekend is Jim's 50th high school reunion, and we are scheduled to sing a song for his class program. He keeps testing his guitar-playing abilities, but at this point, we will be singing acappella.

-ob-

In the midst of all the hubbub of Jim's injury, doctor's visits and everyday life, we have added two new residents to the Plotts menagerie. They are "Billy" (the Kid) and "Nanny." Yes. We are in the goat business.

And if the man who sold us the goats is correct, we could be doubling our herd in a few days. Nanny is expecting, and goats often have twins.

They seem to be content with their new home, although, it was not so at first. The night we turned the goats

loose inside our fenced compound, and before the gate was closed, they climbed onto a stack of shingles, bounded over the fence and were headed home.

We let them stay a few days while we "goat proofed" the compound. Now, with no avenue of escape, they seem content to eat weeds and goat granules. Little Billy will come out of my hand, but Nanny is still standoffish. She stomps her foot and won't even come to the feed pan if I'm in the pen.

I hope to tame her baby(ies) when if (they) come. That is if she will let me get close.

-ob-

Memorial Day weekend is coming up, and I don't know if we're going to have any flowers to decorate graves with or not. Some of my irises are blooming, but not a single rosebud is visible and the peonies aren't blooming yet, either. I hate the thought of buying flowers, but it may come to that.

My mother always said, "The way we care for the dead is a sign of how we care for the living."

A lot of truth in that.

End Time schedule unclear

The world did not end.

Why anyone is surprised, I'm not sure. Jesus himself told us to be prepared for the End of the World, but he also said that we would not know when he would be coming.

Yet prophets have been predicting the Apocalypse since the first century. And there are always plenty of people ready to believe, as thousands did this year, that the end is at hand.

Could it be? Sure, but I wouldn't spend the savings account and mortgage the farm, as some apparently did, to take one last grand vacation with the kids. Or shell out \$140,000 on ads to tout the End of Time.

The odds are against it.

Jesus talked about the Judgment many times. One of the most memorable, in the Book of Matthew, seems pretty clear to me:

"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man..."

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." (Matthew 24:36-44)

There's always someone who claims to have "figured it out." The radio preacher Harold Camping is only the latest of dozens, maybe hundreds. Someone comes along once or twice a decade and declaims the Rapture.

Yet, the world never ends.

Will it happen?

I'm sure of it. Both the Bible and science teach that someday, what began with a bang or a flourish of God's hand will end. One of the problems, I suspect, is that we humans do not much understand God's timetable. His idea of a "day" or a "lifetime" may be somewhat longer than ours.

But we only have our own perspective. That takes us back to the Bible, where Jesus advises us to "be ready," to lead a life good enough that, whenever we're called — in this life, and on the final day, we'll be among those chosen for the "A" team, not among those left behind.

That makes sense, both because

we know our time on this Earth is limited, and because we know we cannot know the day or the hour, either of our own demise or of the Second Coming:

"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions." (Matthew 24:45-47)

It's human nature to want to know, but we don't need to have that knowledge to be good people or good Christians. We just need to live like the Judgment might indeed be tonight.

From the Bible

My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

Proverbs: 3, 1-2

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