WHAT OUR READERS SAY
Best local paper ever. I have loved the Sunday edition for years and never read the local newspaper till now. Love this paper and have helped us make a transition to our new home in Arizona. Thanks and keep up the good work. – Robert F

Thanks to this wonderful newspaper, we will be visiting your bakery [The Bakery PHX] during the summer. We moved to Carefree a year and a half ago and use the paper to find new and interesting things to see, do and eat. Also, thanks for the recipe. – Loretta F

WHAT OUR ADVERTISERS SAY
I wanted to be sure to drop you all a note to share the incredible success that we have experienced as a direct result of advertising in your newspaper. We have seen a significant increase in calls, visits to our rock yard, a huge spike in people visiting our website, and sales and referrals from homeowners and contractors, with these folks each telling us they saw our ad in your paper.

So, first, advertising with you works! Second, it’s very reasonable priced. Third, it clearly gets read. And, finally, every contact working with the paper, from the professional, talented creative designer to the advertising reps to the publisher has been a pleasure to work with. And, I even now enjoy reading each issue to read the articles and read the ads.

Keep up the great work! – Mark H., We Rock AZ!, Inc

THE LATEST TV COMMERCIAL FOR THE USPS: WATCH US DELIVER

The latest TV commercial for the USPS is entitled “Watch Us Deliver.” The voice over begins, “What do you think of when you think of the U.S. Postal Service?”

Do they really want to know?

Incompetence?

Beginning from the beginning. Stay with me.

Part of me is Thoroughly Modern Millie. The other part is as traditional as they come.

One part emails, texts and Facebooks. The other likes receiving household bills via U.S. Mail (not email), handwritten thank you notes, formal table settings and gentlemen holding doors open. Multiple personality disorder? Perhaps. If that’s the case, my traditional side is iber protective of my modern side.

I am also a control freak. (Heaven!) Another disorder.) Just ask those who know and love me. Included in my control freakiness is that I pay my bills on time. Myself. I could authorize automatic withdrawal (shudder). Leave my credit card on file (is this really secure?). Schedule payments through online banking and forget about it (not a chance). I do it the old-fashioned way: (1) receive bills via U.S. Mail; (2) pay by check, credit card, online banking; (3) keep a receipt. My choice. My control. My disorder.

I have paid all of our bills for 45 years of marriage. On or ahead of time. Always. Imagine my chagrin when LH goes online in “research” mode to evaluate our cable services to find that our account is “Past Due,” there is a late fee assessed and if we don’t pay up in less than a week our service will be interrupted. WHAT? He sends me an email with a snarky, yet affectionate note with something about it being “...lost in one of your piles?” I guess it is possible (not probable, but possible) that the bill was misplaced. Doubtful. I turn my office upside down. No bill. Phone the cable provider. Advise I had never received the bill. Based on our history of decades of never having been late, they deduct the late charge.

Figured it was an oddity. Stuff happens. Until...

Two days later I receive two current months’ bills from yet other utilities. One states in bold letters at the very top: “DELINQUENT ACCOUNT.” Plus, a late fee. The other more gently states, “Just a reminder, your usual timely payment has not been received.” Yikes! I am mortified.

I can feel my blood pressure going up again as I recount this saga. Here goes:

Friday 6/5. Afternoon: I call the USPS, Hopi Station which services (lose use of term) our area. “The line is busy. For only seventy-five cents, CenturyLink will keep trying and immediately call you back when the line is no longer busy.” (Guess we didn’t owe them money.) I call repeatedly. Same message. I call the 800 number listed on the USPS website. A lovely lady listens to my story. She’ll advise Hopi.

Saturday 6/6. Evening: Receive voicemail from Jane (name changed to protect the guilty) at Hopi Station at 2:40pm. On a Saturday. I’m impressed. Briefly.


Recording: “Thank you for calling. Please be assured that your call will be answered as quickly as possible. Please continue to hold for just a moment longer. We will be on the line shortly to answer your call.” I was able to write that down verbatim as I was on “hold” with this loop for fifty-five minutes and counting.

11:18am: While continuing on hold, I call on my cell. Same person answers. At least that’s consistent. I ask for Jane. Person will get her. I’m on “hold” now on this phone, too. Same recording. Stere. I’ve now invested 59 minutes—not including the number of times I could not get through at all. Person says, “She’s in a meeting. Can I have your number and she’ll call you back?”

You have got to be kidding. I was on so long I got lots done. Like paying the bills I did receive.

Tuesday 6/9. All day: Call on and off. Same busy message.

Wednesday 6/10. All day: Rings repeatedly. Perhaps they hadn’t paid their phone bill?

This is getting old. I take a longnnnnnn break.

Wednesday 6/17. Morning: 10:45am: Busy. 10:46am: Rings. Forever. 10:49am: Person answers. I ask for the supervisor. On hold for only 17 minutes when Jane appears. I tell her my story. She’ll have the supervisor for our address talk with the carrier. “I thought you were the supervisor.” It just keeps getting better.

Lest you think it’s just me: A friend “serviced” by the same station is in postal hell. (1) Mail was supposed to be held while on extended vacation. Wasn’t. (2) Days after return received all of someone else’s mail, neatly held by a rubber band plus three pieces of other misdelivered mail. (3) Getting lots of mail for other addresses. Her question: “If we’re getting someone else’s, who is getting ours?”

Making a yet longer (can you believe it?) story shorter: Nothing has yet been resolved.

Snail mail? How about no mail?

Does identity theft concern you? What about credit scores when bills are not received? Will the USPS bear that burden?

So much for tradition. Perhaps it’s time for me to bite the bullet and opt in for receiving bills via email. Then they can be lost in cyberspace instead of at the USPS!

Hope H. Ozer, founder and Publisher Emeritus of CITYSunTimes, is president of Phoenix Manhattan Group, LLC. Her columns range from personal – some humorous, some poignant – to observations on life.