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## U.S. Postal Service Gets My Stamp of Approval

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## U.S. Postal Service Gets My Stamp of Approval

**By Rich Sloane**  
UCF Forum columnist  
Wednesday, April 30, 2014

I'm saddened by the fact that electronic communication has seemingly replaced the letter. I consider the work of the U.S. Postal Service one of the greatest values around today. To have a letter go 3,000 or more miles in a couple of days at a piddling cost amazes me. It costs me as much in gas to drive three miles to work as it does to send a letter 3,000 miles. And some days the letter gets there before I do!

In my formative years, at college away from home, lost in a sea of indecision and apprehension about my future, once in a great while I'd get a letter from my father. He wasn't one to write, so it was always a welcome intervention in my psyche to receive his correspondence. The message was always the same. It always ended with: "Hitch your wagon to a star." I treasured getting those letters.

The thing back then was "the letter." A letter was always received with excitement. You never knew what it would hold. In your hand the prospect of what was inside a letter fell just short of Christmas morning. It seemed to say: "Open me for a surprise." Unless, of course, you could tell it was a bill.

I admit that having to walk 60 feet to retrieve the daily mail from a freestanding community mailbox in my neighborhood is not what it used to be when each house had a mail slot in the front door. There was no need to keep watch on the street to see if the mail truck had arrived. When you heard the clank of the metal flap at the home's entranceway, you knew the mystery of the mail was about to unfold.

Recent public debate over whether school children should be taught cursive writing leads me to believe that letter writing is even further doomed, despite the fact that Florida's Legislature is making it a requirement. My handwriting, cursive or otherwise, is somewhat atrocious and I've always envied those whose penmanship flows like liquid art onto the page. But I still enjoy sitting down to write a letter now and then.

As a member of the Armed Forces serving in Vietnam in the '60s I could send a letter postage-free from the war zone. I suspect that privilege still remains for those serving today in combat zones.

And correspondence today from my federal elected officials arrives franked, or free of postage. I suppose there's something incongruous there...or not.

Stamps are another reason I want the post office to thrive. I enjoy finding just the right stamp to match a particular correspondent or message. Sending a contribution to a veterans' organization? Flags always work, or perhaps a stamp commemorating a past military engagement. Birthday, anniversary, special holiday? There's a stamp out there to match the message inside the envelope. Favorite entertainer, athlete, humanitarian or cause célèbre? You're sure to find a stamp as inviting as flying your favorite college football team car-window flag.

And there's no comparing the value of "If it fits, it ships." I know there's competition out there, but the cost of shipping all you can fit into a box which they give you for free is incomparable. I've found the service to be reliable, courteous and timely. I save every trinket, every knickknack I pick up at trade shows, every free pencil, T-shirt, water bottle and an occasional children's book, and stuff it all into a Priority Mail box. Off it goes to three eager grandchildren in Indiana where it will arrive in two days at the cost of peanuts. It costs me about as much to buy a hamburger and fries, and I know there's more satisfaction in the goodies going to Indiana than in the calories going to my waist.

We need to maintain a vibrant postal service, whether run under the auspices of the federal government or private enterprise. I'm willing to put up with the junk mail. I'd

consider giving up Saturday delivery, but I know it would give me the DTs. Personally, I prefer the feds running the postal service; I love that eagle logo, and Mr. ZIP, too.

There are probably a hundred legal and legislative fixes that would place the postal service on a more fiscally sound footing. Let's put them in place.

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