

The question of the day: "Did he see his shadow?"

Winter seems to have arrived in all its glory and hopefully will make a dramatic exit shortly. But at the moment, I am glad I'm not one of those people that has to deliver mail in this weather.

As many of you already know, the person attributed with the quotation "Neither snow nor rain, etc." was Herodotus, a historian who lived in the Fifth Century BC in Ancient Greece. The statement is certainly a far cry from today's modern postal service. But at the moment, I am thinking about the weather that a chosen few will enjoy in Alaska this summer. I am looking for 2-5 additional people who would like to join us for the trip of a lifetime. We do have a woman who will be traveling by herself but would welcome a roommate so if you or someone you know might be so inclined. We leave on July 27 and return on August 5. Our small caravan of travelers will be in Anchorage, Denali, Talkeetna, Seward, Kenai Fjords/Peninsula and on the glaciers using rafts, kayaks, dog sleds, planes, trains, ATVs, Jeeps, boats and riding in luxury conversion vehicles. Lodging will be at quaint inns and bed & breakfasts. We will have our final meeting at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the museum to work out the last few details and meet all those who have paid their deposit to go. Curious? Interested? Stop in. All of us are your friends and neighbors from the surrounding community.

I did hear a large groan Monday when the postage rates were elevated another \$.01 to \$.46 for a first class ounce letter. That equates to about a 2.5 percent increase in cost in comparison to the \$.62 cent increase over the last weeks in the cost of a gallon of gas. But I digress. Of the industrialized nations in the world the US still enjoys the least expensive mail service. In most categories, the rates only increased on the very first ounce additional ounces are still the same.

The year 2013 is a milestone in many categories. One such milestone will be the theme of this year's Gala Celebration on Feb. 17 in the upstairs gallery of the Museum of Postal History. It is the 100th Anniversary of the creation of parcel post. This service actually went into effect on Jan. 1 of that year and was the beginning of the US Post Office Department's surge as the forefront of a global economy. This enactment was the end of a very long and heated debate in Congress.

Businesses in rural communities relied on the local farmer for a major portion of their retail business. By allowing large urban stores such as Sears & Roebuck, Montgomery Wards and Wannamaker's to package their goods and deliver them inexpensively to the American farm, it was predicted that this alone would end the small town businesses. Ironically, the prediction did come true but only in small part to the beginning of parcel post.

It has been said that on the table in the American farmhouse you would find just two items – the family Bible and a Sears catalog. If you visit the Delphos Canal Commission Museum, you will find a Sears' car on display. Yes you could purchase a car, a weapon, a home and just about anything else you could possibly want and have it delivered to your door. Remember the reason I say to your door is because Rural Free Delivery (RFD) began in 1896 as an experiment in West Virginia.

Our Gala Celebration will include drinks, a buffet dinner, music by Bob Ulm, desserts by Ruth Ann and trivia contest which will require you to find the answers to questions by touring the museum, and the awarding of our grand door prize of a week's vacation in your choice of either Lake Tahoe or Palm Springs, California. Reservations will be accepted by sending your check for \$25 per person to: MPH, PO Box 174, Delphos OH 45833-0174.

It is ironic that we chose to celebrate this service just as the postal service has begun to change various characteristics of this type of mail. First, Parcel Post is being renamed Standard Post and will only be available for purchase at the post office. Second, Parcel Select is replacing Parcel Post for online postage vendors and will now include free delivery confirmation.

Other important events this year include the 100th anniversary of the Lincoln Highway (the first coast to coast paved highway), the 100th anniversary of the Delphos Flood and the 100th anniversary of the opening of New York's Grand Central Station. On March 1, 1913, the 16th Amendment to the US Constitution was ratified creating Income Tax and one week later, the Internal Revenue Service began collection of income taxes. The first minimum wage law was put into effect in Oregon and the first crossword puzzle was printed in one of New York's newspapers the NY World with just 32 clues. To commemorate this great publishing event, the US Postal Service issued a stamp to honor crossword puzzles in 1997.