

Your Postal Podcast 44th Edition Transcript – January 2012

Source: yourpostalpodcast.com

Richard Watkins: Welcome to Your Postal Podcast. This is Richard Watkins of the Postal Service's Corporate Communications Office. In this month's edition, we'll take you to western Kansas where seven-foot-high snowdrifts proved no match for one dedicated postmaster, and you'll learn more about the Postal Service's 2012 Commemorative Stamp program.

Dedicated Postmaster Segment

Watkins: In our first story, we learn that it's not only letter carriers who push through the snow and ice to deliver for their customers -- postmasters do too. Brian Sperry reports on a Kansas postmaster whose dedication to her job may only be surpassed by that of her horse.

Brian Sperry: Becky Grusing and her husband live on a ranch in southwestern Kansas where they own a herd of cattle and about 40 horses. Becky is the Postmaster of nearby Kendall where the animals outnumber the town's population of 60.

The evening of Dec. 19, 2011, a major winter storm came through western Kansas, dropping nearly two feet of snow on the Kendall area with snowdrifts 6 to 7 feet high in places. The next morning Grusing took a look out the window and thought the prospects for getting to work were bleak at best. Most people would have grabbed a blanket, a book and cozied up next to the fire, but not Becky.

Grusing: Well, I thought about that the first hour or so and then pretty soon I was walking the floor looking out the window thinking of all the things I needed to do and wondering how the people in Kendall were managing you know, because a lot of the people in Kendall are older people and they have no way of clearing the way out if they needed to get out.

Sperry: So Becky's husband decided to test whether or not they could get out in the truck.

Grusing: My husband went to see how far he could drive and went about a third of a mile before he couldn't go no further. He said, 'I guess we're going to have to ride.'

Sperry: So Becky and her husband saddled up their horses, and headed for work.

Grusing: It's two miles down this country road and most all of the road was covered with at least two feet of snow. And then you'd come to places where there was a wind break and it would be really deep snow then. Then when we got into Kendall where there are trees and everything, well the drifts were really deep. So even if we made it to Kendall with our vehicle we couldn't have made it to the Post Office.

Sperry: Even Becky's horse, Macho, hesitated at getting out in the deep snow.

Grusing: Yes, he did. He just kept looking back towards the house like 'Why are we going out here?' (laughs) My horse, they seem to have a sense for how deep those drifts

are going to be, and they won't go into them unless you make them go into them if they're very deep. Some of the places where it was deeper than his knees they kind of get to lunging a little bit, so you try to avoid those spots. Because it is kind of hard to ride them when they get to lunging through the snow.

Sperry: Becky and her husband hitched their horses outside the Post Office. Her husband began clearing the snow while Becky went inside and opened for business.

Grusing: Yep, the phone started ringing not too long after I got here. 'Are you open today? Is there going to be mail?' I had probably seven or eight people came in just walking from their house over here just more curious than anything. But the mail didn't get here until probably about 30 minutes before time to close; so I did get it put up. But the Highway 50 up here was closed.

Sperry: One customer was so impressed that Becky rode her horse to work she posted it on Facebook. The media soon found out about it and before long the entire state and region knew of Becky's dedication to her job and conjuring up images of the Pony Express.

Grusing: Once it got out on the news, well I've had phone calls and comments from probably 10 different states (laughs).

Sperry: To this day Becky doesn't understand all the fuss.

Grusing: A little bit exciting and a little bit embarrassing, because it just didn't seem like that big a deal to me, but everyone else thought it was wonderful.

2012 Stamp Program Segment

Watkins: 2012 promises to be another stellar year for the Postal Service's Commemorative Stamp program, which features everything from Aloha Shirts to Wedding Cakes. Here with a preview is David Rupert.

David Rupert: The United States Postal Service's 2012 stamp program is as diverse and varied as the United States itself.

Although much of our country is socked in with snow and cold, a pane of the just released Aloha shirts stamps is sure to take the chill off.

Working dogs have been aiding humans for centuries, but it wasn't until this year that they have appeared on a stamp. Honoring dogs that help the blind and the disabled, those that provide therapy for the ill, and even canines that sniff out drugs, guns and explosives will be featured in the Dogs at Work stamps.

We recognize birds of prey as among America's most fascinating creatures, and the Postal Service will honor the Falcon, Golden Eagle, Osprey and the Northern Harrier with their own stamps.

The consummate humanitarian Danny Thomas will get his own stamp in February. Thomas was the star of the popular sitcom Make Room for Daddy. But behind all the anecdotes and jokes was a serious humanitarian, whose work lives to this day.

John Johnson, the trailblazing publisher of Ebony and Jet magazines gets a stamp later this month as part of the Black Heritage series.

Four great film directors -- Frank Capra, John Ford, John Huston, and Billy Wilder — are featured on stamps that come out in May.

And we could all use a good laugh about now, so why not use the mail to make it happen. Characters from five Disney•Pixar movies: A Bug's Life, Toy Story, Monsters, Inc., Finding Nemo, and The Incredibles will be on the Mail a Smile set of stamps that come out in June.

Other stamps include people like Tarzan author Edgar Rice Burroughs, artist William H. Johnson, Major League Baseball All-Stars, 20th Century Poets, Innovative choreographers, and author O. Henry.

And then there's places like Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and New Mexico, Arizona, and Louisiana all get their statehood stamps, and then there's the fascinating Earthscapes that take snapshots from the U.S. from far above.

And then there's the awareness stamps that celebrate cultural icons like Scouting, bicycling, heart health, and of course, Love, with the Feb. 14 issuance of the Heart Ribbons stamp.

News Roundup

Watkins: And now, here's a roundup of recent Postal Service news:

The USPS has launched a new iPhone app that uses the smartphone's camera to scan shipping label barcodes for quick, easy and convenient tracking of packages and other mail. The application stores the label numbers so customers can easily recheck the status of their shipments. The scanner function is available on iPhone 3GS, iPhone 4 and iPad 2.

Whenever and wherever they are, customers can check the delivery status of their shipments by simply scanning the barcodes on their shipping label receipts. Millions of Americans are making mobile devices a part of their daily lives, and the Postal Service is providing solutions that meet their needs.

Users also can use the new app to schedule a free next-day carrier pickup of their packages. After scheduling a next-day pickup, customers will get an email confirmation when the request is made, when the package is picked up, and when the pickup request is modified or canceled.

Since its launch in October 2009, the Postal Service's iPhone application has been repeatedly ranked as a top 10 free business application. The latest version has a new home screen with icons directing customers to available services. And for added convenience, the new mobile app allows customers access to their saved contact lists on their iPhone or iPad device.

A recent review of the performance of universal postal service providers by the Oxford Strategic Consulting (OSC) firm has named USPS the best postal service in the world for access to services, resource efficiency and performance and public trust.

The report found that USPS delivers nearly double the number of letters per employee as its closest competitor and more than five times more letters per employee than fifth-place Deutsche Post.

OSC conducts advanced research and helps private and government organizations achieve key strategic objectives. The review ranks USPS, Japan Post, Australia Post, Korea Post and Deutsche Post in its top five. USPS earned the premier ranking due to its high operating efficiency and public trust in its performance.

In other news, First-Class postage rates went up one penny on January 22nd, with the price of a First-Class letter moving to 45 cents. This was the first change to the First-Class postage stamp price in over two years. On the same date, a new Express Mail Flat Rate Box made its debut, offering Postal Service customers the opportunity to ship a box for overnight delivery anywhere in the country for one price, regardless of weight (up to 70 pounds).

For more information on new postage prices, visit USPS-dot.com.

Thanks for listening to Your Postal Podcast. Now we'd like to hear from you. Please send your feedback and story ideas to YourPostalPodcast@usps.com. A production of USPS Western Area Corporate Communications. Copyright 2012, All Rights Reserved.

#