

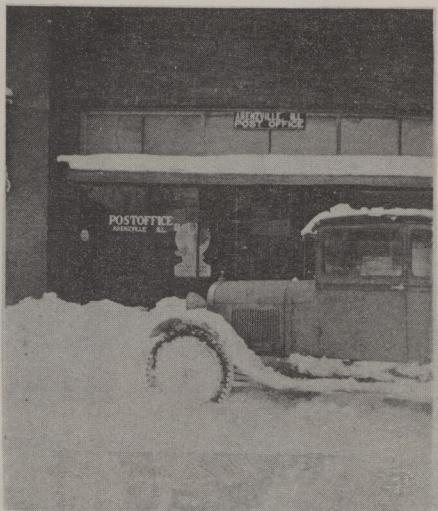
THANKS
FOR
THE
MEMORIES

Greetings:

Flag Day is not a major holiday in America but it has much meaning to me. It was on June 14, 1937, Flag Day, that I made my first trip as the carrier on Route One. As I traversed that first 33.175 miles, there was never a thought of the many happy experiences or lasting friendships that the years would bring. Progressing from \$600 a year teaching school to \$1860 as rural carrier seemed to be the big thing at the time. As I prepare for my last trip of 96.85 miles on June 30, 1978, it seemed appropriate that I say "thanks for the memories" which our forty-one year association has produced.

By 1937, the Model A Ford was the accepted mode of transportation on route roads. They were light, had good clearance, and could take a lot of punishment. This 1929

Coupe, once owned by H. C. Niestradt was nine years old when I bought it for \$200. Five gallons of gas cost ninety-three cents and a year's insurance came to forty six dollars. There was a little catch, my daily car



allowance was \$1.65. Even then, there was too much month left at the end of the money. This car was my second Model A, having bought a roadster with side curtains and a heater that wouldn't work. It was not that I hadn't been warned, I bought it anyhow. Had it not been for the ever-present bonfire at each WPA worksite along the way, I believe I would have frozen. I bought a new Ford V-8 in 1941 for \$832 with a heater and seat covers as the only luxuries added. Four more V-8's and then thirteen Chevy's did their bit in making up the 640,000 miles which I would guess that I have driven on the route.

Somehow, I just couldn't get very excited about the snow and mud of the past spring. There are many who recall the roads being planked in every direction out of Arenzville. The great boon of the carrier in the thirties was the WPA bank gravel which sort of moved us out of the mud era. It was a far cry from the crushed rock we see today and no one would have dared think that the time would come when both the muddy bottoms, the clay hills, and those kinky sand roads would in our lifetime become smooth two-lane strips of blacktop.

If there is one group of men to whom we carriers are deeply indebted, it is the road commissioners. The warm months see ditches cleaned, sewers installed, and roads re-surfaced but when snow is swirling

in the air, it is the commissioner and his men who run all night so we can go the next morning. It used to be a beautiful sight to get out on the route at eight in the morning when there wasn't even a rabbit track in the new fallen snow. Yes, such snow scenes are great for painting but not for delivering mail. I am reminded of the farmer some years back who remarked that his neighbor's pasture was so poor that his cows had to live on hedge balls and scenery

Perhaps, high water, such as this which inundated the road just west of the Arenzville elevator on May 25, 1943, stands out in our memories. The Illinois River was at that time near the thirty foot level and Prairie Creek covered the Beardstown Road. During those first years, Indian Creek had been



CONSOLIDATION

dredged only as far as Waggoner Bridge so flooding was an ever present possibility. I was taught early in the game to take off the fan belt, put a tarp over the radiator, drive slowly, and, for heaven's sake, fix my eyes on some distant goal, never on the water. I have driven half a mile with water ranging up to nearly two feet deep. Only once, I looked to the side to see how I was doing, the waves seemed to be floating me to the left so I swerved to the right. My headlights were out of sight and there was water on the floorboards when Steve Paul, using a team and a hay rope, pulled me out.

THE ROUTE

Between 1937 and 1970, the length of the route gradually increased from 33.175 to roughly fifty one miles. There were 128 families when I began and only two were added in that time. Farms grew larger, old homesteads were torn down. In many cases, the tractor replaced the hired man so he went to the city in search of factory work. Only nine of the family heads whose box I served that first day remain as patrons. Hundreds, many of whose names I have forgotten, have come and gone. It is my hope that this message may convey my thanks for your part in my wonderful forty one years. You must realize that this is like a grown son trying to thank his mother for all that she's meant to him, all on one side of a Mother's Day card. But thanks for caring.

Road conditions improved year by year, so when Mr. Cooper retired in 1969, we were advised that eventually the two routes would be merged. For a year and a half, Dean Stock served Route Two, but on November 29, 1970, all of the rural service was provided by Route One. In these past eight years, I have come to know and appreciate Farrell's fine friends. The route now consists of three hundred families; there's less time to visit along the way; in fact, it is a full day's work. A couple of years ago, the Labor Department reduced the number of hours we are allowed to work per week. This explains the sub's carrying one day of each two weeks.

At one of the first carrier meetings I attended, our congressman reminded us that we should never lose sight of the fact that you, our patrons, are our employers, deserving the respect one reserves for his boss. He quoted the Scriptures, "If a man compel you to go with him one mile, go with him twain." He continued by telling us that we were paid well for going that first mile. The mark of a good public servant is the diligence and perseverance dedicated to that second mile. Your kindness and patience in my shortcomings have made each of these miles enjoyable. Your helpfulness and your concern for my health and safety have meant much. Thank you.

RURAL SERVICE AT ARENZVILLE

The rural delivery service was started as an experiment in West Virginia in 1896 and consisted of three short routes. According to my best information, Robert Willey was Arenzville's first carrier, starting on October 1, 1902. In 1906, F. A. Pfolsgrof and Chris Dahman took over the additional routes, Mr. Dahman resigning a few months later to be succeeded by Hugh W. Jones. Mr. Willey retired on Oct. 1, 1932 and the routes combined. Mr. Willey's 23.85 mile route became a part of Mr. Pfolsgrof's route. When these two men retired in 1936, Thomas Parlier and William Jones, the subs, filled the vacancies while civil service examinations were held.

Postmaster R. J. Ommen and Clerk Rena Beard (Mrs. Harold Kruse) were the office force who welcomed Farrell Cooper and Robert Brasell as the new carriers on June 14, 1937, with Robert L. Beard having accepted the position of substitute on Route One and John W. Herbert on Route Two. As his implement business grew, Bob Beard resigned as sub and his son Gerald, just home from the Army, stepped into his father's position on the route, serving until he, too, saw the need to devote more time to selling tractors. Daun Schone made a fine start and I thought the sub problem was solved but Uncle Sam had a position in the Army for him to fill.

Most every carrier, at some time or other, has said or thought, "I'd like to see that road commissioner try to deliver mail over these roads." Well, my next sub was Robert Stock, our road commissioner, and a very good sub he was. When next there was a need for a sub, the prospects were nil among the men because the very indefinite schedule of work didn't fit in with their regular work. Therefore, in November, 1969, Joanne Peck accepted the position which she has filled with expertise to this day. A change came about in the matter of appointments in the 1975 National Agreement between the Postal Service and the employees whereby the senior substitute in any office is eligible for regular appointment on the retirement of the regular carrier except for one or two instances. Her sub will then be chosen by civil service examination. I trust that you will be ever vigilant, as patrons, to see that the tradition of a "post office on wheels" at your front gate on a six day a week basis is continued and I'm sure my successor will maintain service with a smile as her trademark.

As Mrs. Kruse vacated her position as clerk to become postmaster, it has been our pleasure to work with succeeding clerks, Frances Hobrock, Elsie Kolberer, Irene Mincy Holt, Lucile Roegge Mason, Lucile Hansmeier Summers, Marie Paul, Doris Lovekamp, Lucile Schnitker and Inez Maschmeier. Each has done her bit to bring service and congeniality to our off-

ice, Mrs. Paul, after twenty years service as a clerk, received the recognition she had earned and was appointed postmaster in 1976. Like her predecessor, her work is exemplary and her office discipline commendable.

Other than the two subs on Route Two, mentioned earlier, Bernard Palmer and Roy Corcoran complete the list of Mr. Cooper's subs and of my office associates.. I think I can say without fear of contradiction that I never knew of an exchange of harsh or unkind words in all that group. Serving with such people has been a rare privilege.

POSTAL SERVICE - THEN AND NOW

Keeping the mail moving ever more rapidly is a goal which has prompted new inventions and innovations. Still, the complaints commonly heard are that as rates go up, service efficiency goes down. To the thousands of dedicated employees who have sought to improve the service, this is disheartening. One has but to watch a clerk and postmaster search for missing labels, patch up torn magazines, try to decipher illegible addresses, or seek to find the box from which items loose in the mailbag have come to realize that it will be a generation or two before the robots replace the two good eyes, the two good hands, and the one level head of the postal employee..

The Apostle Paul said, "Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do it heartily as unto the Lord." This has

been an inspiration to me to render the best service possible to every patron with favoritism toward none and love and concern for all. We hope that our motto of "Service with a Smile" has always shown through.

Several large bulk mailing centers have been built with miles of belts and conveyors to route parcels for distribution. In spite of the millions expended, parcels are still delayed at times and some get torn up in the machinery. In the early days of my service, we received a package of garden seeds in damaged condition one day. Corn, beans, and other seeds were loose in the mail bag. We got a good sack and poured the loose seed in it and I labelled it "succotash seed". On another occasion, a half-gallon of sorghum, which had been mailed in a Karo syrup can, lost its lid in transit. Thanks to the coldness of the weather and the thickness of the sorghum, a goodly share of it was delivered.

The people who serve you on the route and at the post office will continue to search for ways to improve the postal image. At times, they may be governed by regulations which they, too, think unworkable. As good citizens, let's seek to have some of the postal ills cured and use our influence to preserve six-day delivery; but beware of private concerns which would take over the post office. Ours is still the best postal service in the world.

WHAT'S NEXT?

You know, it is rather nice to look back over a long period of service which I thoroughly enjoyed one day at a time. Having shared the joys and sorrows of so many of you, I will always treasure the friendships that have been long in the growing. Likely, as I retell of the high water and deep snow that I encountered, it may become increasingly higher and deeper but the kindness of my patrons and my co-workers cannot be exaggerated.

What's next? Four daughters, who took their turns at bringing joy and blessing to our home, have provided us ten lovely grandchildren. My mother, a patron on my route all these years, may have a right to expect more frequent visits. My wife has waited patiently these many years for me to find time to do the odd jobs most men do on their day off. Of July first, the first day of the rest of my life, and all succeeding days, may I have the grace to say, "This is the day that the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it." I will enjoy being busy but not in a hurry.

To my God who has sustained me, to each of you, my friends, and to my family, I say, "Thanks for the memories. The best is yet to come."

Sincerely yours,

Robert R. Brasell
Robert R. Brasell

Carrier # 1

IN APPRECIATION
OF MY WIFE, MARY
FOR HER CONSTANT LOVE
AND SUPPORT

Words seem inadequate to express the meaning "love and support". The forty years of encouragement, faith in my abilities when I wasn't sure, help in time of need, care in time of illness or anxiety, and prayerful vigil in times of danger seem to say much.

Since she became my wife on Christmas Day, 1937, her expertise as cook, nursemaid, homemaker, mother, and grandmother leave me with gratitude, admiration, and a real understanding of "love and support".

Though listed on our tax return as only a "Housewife", she has given that vocation special dignity. To you, too, Mary, "Thanks for the memories".