

US POST OFFICE BLUES

This month's column is going to be a slight departure from my normal Editorial. Of course, most of you know the word normal is not one that matches anything about me in the first place.

Seriously, instead of my usual editorial, I'm taking this opportunity to give you some information about the magazine circulation, specifically delivery.

In addition to my duties as Editor, I also handle the circulation responsibilities of the magazine. The printer that we are contracted with has a department whose job is to keep abreast with the continually changing Postal Regulations. That in itself is a full-time job, and one that they handle better than anyone I've ever met. We are in constant discussion on the best way to ship the magazine to reach your homes at the earliest day each month as possible. Realizing that we are a news magazine, our deadlines are not as far ahead as those magazines that are on the newsstand. I know most of you understand that because other Mustang magazine editors are working on their May issue while I work on March. They have newsstand deadlines to worry about. But the major difference is, we are your direct link between the latest news coming from the MCA and from the Mustang world. We strive to get the latest and most important information to the membership as quickly as possible. In order to do that, we ship the magazine to press around the middle of the month, it takes about a week to print it, bind it, and get it in the mail to you. We schedule the magazine to be mailed no later than the 25th of each month.

Some of you have experienced delays in receiving your *Mustang Times* each month. And, I'm sure most of you are getting it even later than usual. This has nothing to do with the production of the magazine here at Pate Marketing Group, or at our printing or mailing facility. This all has to do with the United States Post Office.

There are always Postal Regulation changes occurring, especially when it comes to mailing periodicals. In March, one huge change takes affect and the result is that we're now mailing *Mustang Times* wrapped in a poly bag. Many magazines will be addressing their magazines with the address upside down, with the address box parallel to the left binding, or even on the back cover. We researched all these possibilities, and didn't think any of them were desirable. The best result for all of us is to poly bag the magazine. This should eliminate any tears, destroyed covers, or coffee stains on the pages of your magazine before it reaches your mailbox.

Additionally, the Post Office is experiencing cutbacks as is most of the nation and actually most of the rest of the world. Those cutbacks have resulted in a reduction in delivery time. As much as a 75-percent reduction in delivery time, in fact.

So, what does this mean for the MCA and *Mustang Times*? It means slower than normal delivery of your magazine each month.

Basically, I'm asking for your patience and understanding. With the economy getting worse each and every day, with mail facilities cutting back and mail processing centers closing, mail delivery is going to get slower no matter if it's first class or media mail. There is actually not one thing we can do about it. As an example, the Post Office is trying to close two major processing centers in Florida, which will mean mail sent to the Tampa processing center, and then returned back to the originating post offices to be mailed out. That in itself will cause a two-day delay for all mail. Although we are located in Florida, the magazine is not mailed here. That information was just an example of what's happening within the Postal system all over the country. I wish I had an answer, but if I did I'd probably be working in Washington, DC, instead of Lakeland, Florida. NO THANKS!

Quickly changing hats, I hope all of you have plans to attend the 45th Anniversary in Birmingham in April. It's not too late to sign up to display your Mustang, or to just buy tickets to come and enjoy all the Mustangs and the people and vendors. If you've never been to one of these Mustang anniversary events, you just don't know what you're missing. It's an experience that you'll never forget. The registration form is on page 19 in this issue. I hope to meet many of you there!

Your slightly off center, eternally optimistic editor,

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