

Some days are worse than others

Wednesday, September 2, 2009. Buffalo, New York

local and long distance service

I received an email about a phone service that might save me money. Currently I have an AT&T calling card that costs me three cents a minute for a state-to-state call and nine cents a minute for instate calls. However, I figured that getting it set up may not be any better than what I have now, and it might take days to do. I may still look into it.

United States Government copyrights

Some of my books are copyrighted and I planned to have the remaining four done this week. When I went to the copyright web site, I found it wasn't very user-friendly. What a big surprise! The cost per book was \$45, but now it appeared that the price had jumped to \$65. Online registration was only \$35, so that seemed to be the way to do it. Unfortunately, I wasn't sure how to obtain the electronic form. Any effort on the home page there seemed to be giving me help screens and no matter where I went, it appeared as though I were in a loop. When I tried to check on the first two books I had published in 2008, they didn't come up. Entering my name gave the same result, so it seemed that the site needed remediation. I did obtain the phone number to call – which I will do soon – but that means being put on hold. I'll report more on this soon.

Pitney-Bowes

I talked to friend of mine about Pitney-Bowes and he wasn't impressed with those incompetent thieves either. I ordered an ink cartridge a few days ago for my mail station and it took eight days to get it and cost \$70 (\$50 for the cartridge and the rest for shipping and handling.) How bloody outrageous! The cartridge is about 4 cubic inches and the package it was sent in was about 273 cubic inches. They did send me a bag of air at no extra cost, but I haven't opened it yet. Before I ordered the cartridge, I went over to OfficeMax – a company I like – and asked if they carried the special ink gizmo. The clerk found one that was close and said I could try it and return it if it didn't fit, but I didn't feel like having to drive back there so I refused. While he was checking I mentioned that he was bleeding, but it turns out that the red stuff was ink. This cartridge was removed from my mail station a year ago, maybe longer, so then why was it on the clerk's fingers?

I've discussed my disgust with voice mail but it has only become more annoying with the automaton that tries to talk to you. When you hear the words, "I don't understand you," and your reply was "no," you know the system is messed up. Today, our phones are bombarded with automated calls that just tie up the lines. In the case of Pitney-Bowes when I called them, I was put on hold and when I finally talked to someone about my four questions, I was told that two could be answered by one department and the other two by another and I was given two phone numbers, but connected to one of them. Again I was on hold and then I was told that I would be connected to someone who could answer my questions. I said not to do that, but that did

no good. I was on hold again and finally asked about a small problem with the mail station. I set out to print \$.06 in postage but the machine printed \$.44. The other problem was that when trying to print out some postage, I was stuck in the menu and couldn't escape. I tried a restart, but that didn't help, but the person suggested I try it again by pulling the plug for thirty seconds and reconnecting. That didn't help but I was told that the station needed to reconnect to the phone line for updates. I have a single line in my house and couldn't do that and remain on the line with him. I figured once I hang up, I'll see if that works. Fortunately, it did.

My next question was about a credit since I was without the use of the machine for over a week. I pay almost \$9 a month to use the mail station. Not long ago, the rental was higher but I had that reduced when I threatened to send the machine back. When I mentioned that I might still do that, I was advised not to, but simply to call again. I was also give a credit for postage replenishment, since I was charged for adding postage to the meter via my credit card. In addition, I was told that I would have one or two more replenishments without being charged and that would go on for a few months. At this point, I wanted clarification about this number and time. I was told that my account showed that I wouldn't be charged for these money moves – contradicting what I heard a few months ago. Does the right hand there know what the left is doing at this corporation?

Summit Credit Union

I opened up an account with the Summit Credit Union a few months ago because I was sick of the regular banks. I needed to move some money from there to another checking account I have, so I called – again I was put on hold – to see if this was possible, without driving to the credit union. It was, but would cost me \$25, which means it wasn't possible for me. Since the place is about four miles away, I thought there was one closer where I could withdraw cash, without a charge. I found a bank two miles away and had an ATM card, but wasn't sure of the password, a. k. a. pin number. My documents showed two different pins, but the accompanying documentation seemed to imply that neither was for the ATM card, which I had yet to use. I thought that maybe I had picked a pin number out when I ordered the card, and I had an idea of what that was. Still, I didn't want to chance it, so I called the number on the ATM card. They couldn't tell me the pin number, but would send it to me and I would have it in three days. This wouldn't help me so I drove to the credit union and the clerk said I would have the pin in three days, but I did get the cash. My web site has an article I wrote on passwords, which you can find by clicking on “preview” on the page on this site for ***Press 1 For Pig Latin.***” If you have an account with Chase or Citibank, or any other bank, use up your checks and open up an account with a credit union. They gave you money from time to time for your efforts.

Honda

I conclude with what I hope is the end of what I will have to go through for a few days. While departing the credit union, I noticed a flying insect inside my car. I figured opening the window would release him outside, so I started the engine and lowered the

window. He flew out, but I noticed something unusual. The seat belt wasn't attached and no bells sounded. Granted it wasn't anywhere near Christmas, but something was off. I put on the seat belt and shoved the car into reverse. Backing up, I noticed I couldn't turn the wheel. In drive, the car didn't want to move. I could call Honda, but I have no cell phone. I could go inside the credit union and call from there. In the meantime, I had to do something else, so I did a restart – people with PCs know what I'm talking about here. I turned off the car and turned the key over again. The car was fine. I include a piece you may have seen on the internet, which I also placed in my 2007 book, ***This Page Intentionally Left Blank***.

At a recent computer expo, Bill Gates reportedly compared the computer industry with the auto industry and stated: "If GM had kept up with technology like the computer industry has, we would all be driving twenty-five dollar cars that got 1000 miles to the gallon."

In response to Bill's comments, General Motors issued a press release stating the following: "If GM had developed technology like Microsoft, we would be driving cars with the following characteristics:

- 1. For no reason whatsoever, your car would crash twice a day.*
- 2. Every time they repainted the lines on the road, you would have to buy a new car.*
- 3. Occasionally, your car would die on the freeway for no reason, and you would accept this, restart, and drive on.*
- 4. Occasionally, executing a maneuver such as a left turn would cause your car to shut down and refuse to restart; in which case you would have to reinstall the engine.*
- 5. Only one person at a time could use the car, unless you bought 'Car95' or 'CarNT.' Then you would have to buy more seats.*
- 6. Macintosh would make a car that was powered by the sun, was more reliable, five times as fast, and twice as easy to drive, but would only run on five percent of the roads.*
- 7. The oil, water, temperature, and alternator warning lights would be replaced by a single 'general car fault' warning light.*
- 8. New seats would force everyone to have the same butt size.*
- 9. The airbag system would say 'Are you sure?' before going off.*
- 10. Occasionally, for no reason whatsoever, your car would lock you out and refuse to let you in until you simultaneously lifted the door handle, turned the key and grabbed hold of the radio antenna.*
- 11. GM would require all car buyers to also purchase a deluxe set of Rand McNally road maps (now a GM subsidiary), even though they neither need them nor want them. Attempting to delete this option would immediately cause the car's performance to diminish by 50 per cent or more.*
- 12. Every time GM introduced a new model, car buyers would have to learn how to drive all over again because none of the controls would operate in the same manner as the old car.*