

EAST VALLEY OPINIONS

Putting a modern stamp on holiday card

Last week, I tried to be a dutiful son.

Not that I don't call my mom on a regular basis — and hardly ever reverse the charges — but I do have a habit of taking care of most social and business correspondence responsibilities via e-mail.

I've been informed, however, that one must write using an actual pen and an actual card and an actual envelope when one's mom is involved. This involves a stamp.

Stamps used to be obtainable from the post office, entailing a mind-numbing visit to an actual post office where you stood in line like an Ellis Island immigrant for days on end. At least at Ellis Island you could get your name simplified. Consequently, I avoid post offices, banks and MVD offices, not to mention Harkins Camelview theater on Sunday afternoons.

Fortunately, nowadays one simply pops on over to the little strip shopping center "postal" store.

Normally, I like to wheel out my 12-speed and bike on over to the little postal facility/bug spray store on Base-



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line Road. (Part of the fun is using my cellphone and headphones to call my mom back in Pennsylvania and sound like a big shot because she thinks it's so extravagant to be tooling around on a bike making a long-distance call.) That day, though, my bike was in the shop. With Thanksgiving nigh upon me and a clever holiday card burning a hole in my pocket, I discovered I was out of stamps and thus would need to drive my car over to the store if I was to get there before the 1:15 p.m. postal pickup.

I arrived at 12:51 p.m., only to find the two proprietors, whom I'll call Jasper and Jethro, sunning themselves out front, their chairs literally propped against the postal/bug spray store, apparently posing for an *American Gothic* tableau. I mentioned my need for stamps but they

just grinned slyly to each other and noted their sign that clearly states — in 10-point type — that they're off-duty until 1 p.m.

Somewhat annoyed, I gritted my teeth and drove down to Guadalupe Road, where there's a postal store/T-shirt emporium. Aha ... open! I marched in and the dialogue went like this:

Me (cheerfully): I'd like some stamps.

Owner: We're out of stamps till tomorrow.

Me (deadpanning): You're out of stamps.

Owner: Yes, we're out of stamps till tomorrow.

Me (deadpanning like mad): Out of stamps.

Owner: Yes, till tomorrow.

Me: But this is a post office, right?

Owner: Yes, and we're out of stamps until tomorrow.

Me: Hmm.

Of course, at this point I could have simply driven back to the postal/bug spray store, but I just couldn't see rewarding Jasper and Jethro for taking lunch simultaneously.

So I just asked the postal/T-shirt store owner where she thought I might be able to get

an actual stamp. I was thinking she might break down and admit that she had a couple of spare 37-centers in the back room.

Owner (deadpanning): "You might try the post office up on Southern."

I was about to explain to her that the whole point of *having* these little postal/bug spray/T-shirt/woodwork stores was to *avoid* the bejabbering post office, but she was already on the phone ... presumably to Jasper and Jethro, to tell 'em she had a live one.

So naturally, I did the next best thing.

I came home, scanned the card electronically, Photo-Shopped in some heartwarming text and e-mailed it off to mom.

Moral of the story: There's a better chance of the Cardinals having a winning season in Tempe than finding a stamp here at noon.

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