

Transportation & Communication

By Marilyn Reeves

For the past few months I've been experiencing inexplicable delays in my Comcast e-mail service. The other day my sister sent me a message that was time stamped at 8:45 a.m. It didn't come up in my In Box until after 2:00 p.m., despite my having clicked on the Send/Receive button several times previously that day. So what's up with that? I was a little P.O.'d until it occurred to me how spoiled I am! Like everyone else in modern day America, I have come to expect instant gratification in virtually every aspect of life.

It's only been the last 15 years or so that I've even had access to personal e-mail. Prior to that, my communication with friends and family was done by telephone. And most of those years were prior to the little luxuries of Caller I.D. and Voice Mail. If I was expecting a call, I had to wait by the phone until it came through or I simply missed it. Nevertheless, it has been a privilege to live in an era that utilizes the telephone as a means of communication.

What did people do before Bell's historic invention? Well, you got out the old horse and buggy and drove over to visit with your neighbors in person. Long distance communication must have been tricky at best. Letters would have been sent by ship and then transported by train, stage coach, or random rider.

One of the cleverest systems was the instigation of the Pony Express back in April of 1860. Horsemen would gallop with their mailbags to and from St. Louis and San Diego, watching out for thieves and marauding Indian parties along the way. With fresh horses and riders replacing the preceding team every few miles, a typical run took from 9 to 11 days. The Pony Express, despite its legendary romanticism, only actually lasted for a period of 19 months, before being replaced by a brand new invention called the telegraph.

But what about the days before man discovered that horses could be used as a mode of transportation? Way, way back in history, before the invention of the wheel, or ships and canoes? Well, I guess they "hoofed it" under their own man power if they wanted to go visit a long-lost daughter who had been dragged off by the hair to another neighboring village. And the journey must have been dangerous and arduous, traveling by foot, watching out for bears and saber-toothed tigers ... not to mention fellow humans.

Whether on foot, or by horse-drawn carriage, or by the fast and luxurious modes of travel in today's world, throughout history, communication and transportation have often be closely linked.

Did you know that the word "travel" comes from the same root word as "travail"? Just get stuck at an airport for a few days and nights during a blizzard and you'll understand why.