

Hello Friends, Wade McSpade Here.

It was one of those rare, hot, muggy northern Michigan summer afternoons when I decided to cool off with a cold one at the 210 Tavern. There in his usual place at the end of the bar, sitting Cliff Claven like from Cheers, was our Goneaway Postmaster Pete. Now you're probably asking "If Pete is your Postmaster, doesn't that break the Code of the North? After all as a man and Postmaster that would certainly mean that Pete has a job. Well maybe technically, but Pete actually transferred up here from downstate, so we have to cut him some slack. Also, he does run his office from the 210 Tavern, so really he has a job, but he is almost never at his job.

Anyway, I sat down next to Pete and he immediately says to me "Wade, how come you have never written a story about me?"

"Pete", I said, "because you work for the Post Office and the Post Office is just the Post Office. Same in every city across America and I think Canada."

"Yeah but I am the Postmaster and I'm known all around town and I'm the only important person in town that you haven't written about. A lot of people have been asking why you haven't told my story."

"Pete", says I, "Your story just isn't that unique, but if you insist, I will write a story about you. BUT, don't blame me if people don't read it. Your Post Office isn't any different than any other that I know of, except maybe that your dog and cat sort the mail and I'm not too sure about that cuz I haven't been in all the Post Offices in America."

"Yeah, well maybe my dog and cat do work there, but I had to get around the Code of the North somehow, and we did get a 98% efficiency rating this year." Said Pete.

"Yeah, well statistics are boring", I said. "And nobody wants to hear about a dog that doesn't hunt and NOBODY wants to hear about a cat, no matter what its profession."

But alas, to keep peace in a small town, here is Pete's story:

Pete transferred from a Post Office down state. The city isn't important because after all, it is down state. He transferred up here because his wife was raised up here. She didn't want to come back to women's purgatory but Pete did. So much to his wife Picatello's chagrin, Pete moved north and like so many other women, poor Picatello was separated from her shopping & salons. Now after Pete settled into his new job, he realized that he would have to find his wife a job, and also find a way to keep his paycheck as Postmaster and yet not work. Sometimes it's a lot of work to fulfill the Code of the North.

I will say this for ol' Pete; he is one heck of an animal trainer. He immediately set about training his dog named Zippy and cat named Cody to sort the mail. Now at first they made a lot of mistakes, but after all it is the Post Office, so no one really noticed. However, Pete decided to cut down sorting errors, so instead of making each animal memorize

approximately 17,000 zip codes, it was much easier to have his cat Cody memorize Goneaway's one zip code, then place all other out-going letters in a box marked 'Out of Town'. (Please note, now all other Post Offices, I understand, have adopted this practice, but it happened here first.) This freed up Zippy the dog, who was taller, to work the counter. Now when he first set up shop, we all thought Pete was either regressing into infancy or had a speech impediment, because all we heard were shouts of "zippy cody no" or "good zippy cody" from inside the post office. When the towns folk found out what was going on, they were a little skeptical about this "new fangled government mail automation scheme" and at first were a little taken aback by being greeted by a Black Lab at the counter, but in time they really came around after they saw how well Zippy and Cody ran the Office. They particularly liked the fact that when they bought stamps from Zippy and took them from his mouth, the stamps were pre-licked and that with Cody, the Post Office mouse problem just kind of took care of itself.

Now Pete being the official Postmaster opens the post office at 8:30 sharp. When I asked Pete if Cody or Zippy could open up for him, his reply was, "Yeah I could train them to do it, but only the official Postmaster can have keys; don't want to break the rules and lose my retirement you know." After unlocking the post office, Pete waits for the incoming mail truck from Gaylord, opens the sack and dumps the mail on the floor, fills the water dishes and food bowls, then leaves and depending on the season, goes hunting or fishing or, like most of us, just sits in the 210 Tavern telling hunting and fishing stories. He returns to the Post Office at 5:30 p.m., locks the out of town mailbag and when the outbound mail truck from Gaylord arrives, throws the mail on board. Then he picks up Zippy and Cody, locks the doors and goes back to the 210 Tavern.

You readers are probably thinking, Wade, who puts the mail in the 'in' mailboxes? I just told you, it's Cody. We don't get much mail in Goneaway or at least we don't think we do, because after all it is still the post office, so we only have one mail box. Cody just puts the mail in the In Box and folks come in and go through the box and pick out their mail. Pretty efficient, really. (Author's note: this may be an opportunity for Pete to get an award for government cost cutting. Lets all write to the USPS in Washington and tell them to adopt Pete's idea in Post Offices throughout the nation!)

Now I told you that it wasn't a particularly unusual story, but I hope Pete is happy now that he is not only well known in Goneaway, but also on the www and will probably be a rich man or at least get promoted when Washington finds out about Pete's modernized, cost efficient post office.

Maybe you're wondering, did Pete ever find his wife a job? Well, my friends here is the real beauty of Pete's story, his wife is now one of the daytime bartenders at the 210 Tavern. Pete has it all: Free beer, hunting/fishing, good career, & family time without ever leaving the old 210 Tavern. We call that win-win-win-win in the north country.