

By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

In talking with about 25 people in Imperial this past week, one thing was very clear. The decision by the Omaha World-Herald to discontinue home-delivery, convenience store and rack sales in the area is not popular.

Subscribers in Southwest Nebraska first learned that they would be without newspaper delivery of the Midlands Edition in an article in the World-Herald Dec. 30.

The Midlands Edition was distributed across much of the western half of the state.

The decision was made “due to rising paper and distribution costs,” “driven by current economic conditions.”

Sunday, Feb. 1 will be the final day for delivery of the World-Herald in this area.

On Dec. 29, a letter was written to subscribers offering them two alternate ways to continue receiving the paper.

The first was to subscribe on-line for \$5 per month. The second was to obtain a mail subscription for 13 weeks at a rate of \$62.14 for seven-day mail delivery, and less for Monday-Saturday or Sunday only subscription.

Every one of the people interviewed for this story, or those others contacted, expressed disappointment with the World-Herald’s decision.

Publisher Emeritus of Johnson Publications Elna Johnson said she’s been a subscriber for probably 54 years. “I can’t remember when I didn’t receive it,” she said.

Johnson subscribed seven days a week. She definitely won’t go on-line to receive the paper, but may try the mailed version for awhile.

“I have concerns about the mail but can’t quite fathom not having it,” Johnson said, although she’s concerned her news will be old by the time it arrives.

She’s also concerned about the size of the paper being pushed into her post office box. Most Imperial residents receive their mail via post office box.

Johnson recognized that the World-Herald’s decision was an “economic thing.” “Frankly, we’ve probably been fortunate to have it this many years. I don’t like it, but I see the financial problems.”

Don Newman, an employee at Adams Drug, said he’s been a seven-day-a-week subscriber since 1981. He called the World-Herald’s customer service and complained when he learned of the change.

“They’re cutting off areas of news. That’s pretty short-sighted,” he commented.

Newman questioned whether cutting off 12,000 loyal (Midlands) customers was going to “equal out what they’re going to save” by cutting printing and distribution costs.

He said he’s going to try to obtain the Sunday edition of the Denver Post, but isn’t sure how to get his daily news.

Newman said he’s not “computer oriented,” and can’t carry the on-line edition of the World-Herald to the coffee shop under his arm.

Becky Carman, owner of Carman’s Appliance, said she and husband Doug have enjoyed reading the Sunday World-Herald together for 30 years.

They don’t plan to go on-line for the paper, but may consider having the Sunday edition mailed, and then save it for the following Sunday so they can read it while they eat breakfast.

“Doug and I aren’t going to sit in front of a computer and eat French toast,” she joked.

“I think it’s really sad. If they said it would cost \$1 more per week, I’d pay it for the weekly service. It’s part of our world, something we look forward to.”

Contractor Kent Pribbeno has received the seven-day-a-week subscription for 40 years. "I don't know what I'll do now. I wonder every time I get the paper."

Pribbeno said he doesn't want the mailed edition, because he doesn't want his news a day late, and if sports stories are a day late, "they're no good at all."

Saying he's heard nothing positive about the change, Pribbeno said he'll probably take the Denver Post on Sundays, but that too, may come late.

Community volunteer Nancy Terryberry always reads the World-Herald after walking in the morning. Having read it for seven days a week for over 20 years, "I feel bad because they're cutting us off again."

Terryberry has no plans to go on-line for her news, or getting it through the mail. "I would never read it on-line, and I read in the morning or not at all," she said, adding that getting the paper on-line would make it difficult for husband Tom to "tuck it under his arm" as he left the house.

Adams Bank & Trust of Imperial receives several newspapers, one of which is the World-Herald. Banker Miles Colson has been reading it for 15 years. He said he's trying to wean himself from the paper by not reading it in the coffee room every morning.

Colson said the bank hasn't decided if it will continue to receive the World-Herald in another form.

"They're forcing us to get our mail elsewhere," he noted. "If you're used to getting your newspaper every morning, the choices are limited out here."

Colson said it's "disappointing not to get same day delivery. The Midland section was a good way to get news about out west."

The banker was one of a number who noted that "on-line isn't as mobile as putting it under your arm."

Those persons who are used to visiting Lied Imperial Public Library to peruse the World-Herald are also due for a change.

The library will initially contract for the on-line edition, Director Beth Falla said. She added that subscribing to other newspapers will also be addressed by the board.

In the World-Herald article of Dec. 30, Publisher and President Terry Kroeger said, "The World-Herald also will rely on the strong local papers within our newspaper family as we serve communities across the state. The World-Herald has invested in daily and weekly Nebraska newspapers over the past 20 years, and the recent development of the World-Herald News Service has enhanced our statewide coverage."

Dailies in the newspaper family include the Scottsbluff Star-Herald, the North Platte Telegraph, the Kearney Hub, the Grand Island Independent and the York News-Times.