

Thank you, Mr Postman

> The men who deliver our precious mail deserve a love letter for their many decades of faithful service

MANY of us who grew up during the country's founding years will remember the Postal Department.

Other than the radio and newspapers, they were the ones who kept us well informed about our friends and loved ones.

Who can forget the ring of the postman who brought us letters and postcards from near and far-flung places?

Before the internet, many of us would have applied for a job via a letter, carefully dropped into a letter box with a prayer or two, and would have received joyful or sad news of a successful or unsuccessful application days or weeks later, also through the post.

When running about barefooted with my childhood friends in Penang, I remember seeing an unusually fair-skinned, bespectacled postman with blonde hair delivering letters in my neighbourhood.

He went about his work quietly, usually with a smile on his face, riding his much-admired candy red bicycle with a large carrier in the front holding a large sack containing important letters and frivolous postcards.

Later, postmen upgraded to motorcycles and they, too, were in shades of red.

My admiration for the postal folk was also because they afforded me a fail-safe mechanism to date Amy, the girl of my teenage dreams.

Without any fixed line telephone in my house, where else could I turn, except the post? You'd be surprised that the turnaround time from sender to recipient in the same city took only two hours or so.

Here's how I did it then: I would cycle from one side of George Town to the General Post Office in Bangunan Tuanku Syed Putra, a stone's throw from Swettenham Pier or Weld Quay, and pop the letter into the letter box before noon.

That letter would reach Amy, who lived near **Penang Times Square**, by 2.30pm, and we would be sharing ais kacang at Kek Seng's along Penang Road by 3.30pm! It



postmen.

This must be due to their sharp sense of smell. The postman may be the same guy for years, but the smell from letters and cards may be too offensive for our canine friends, so he will be greeted with a growl every time.

Now, with the strong surge in e-commerce as more Malaysians get more confident with online purchases, I understand that about RM100 million is to be spent on a sorting hub for letters and parcels in Shah Alam to improve efficiency.

That's a lot of money. I just hope something more can be done for its employees.

It's not just expensive automated sorting equipment and other sophisticated machines that make the job special.

It's still Mr Postman and Mr Courier Man in the supply chain who help to bring about the good customer experience.

Do spare a thought for Mr Postman who have to read haphazardly scrawled "fowl scratches" or poorly-printed addresses on letters.

Although I still have letters addressed to strangers coming to my house ... they either got the house number or street number wrong.

Please, Mr Postman!

was that efficient.

You might ask: why go to such trouble? Why don't you go to Amy's house?

For me, a letter served my purpose better. I also didn't want to get clobbered if I wasn't welcomed!

And just imagine, the loss to music if Elvis Presley had not co-written and sung that song called *Return to Sender*, about the disappointment of his letters to a girl being returned unopened.

Neither would The Beatles or The Carpenters have belted out covers of *Please, Mr Postman*, a song asking a postman whether their beloved had sent them any mail.

But one thing that's still the same from the good old days till now: dogs still chase

Jeff Yong, after making his mark in the twisty maze of mainstream journalism, has finally decided to enjoy what he does best - observing the unusual and recounting the gleeful. He can be contacted at lifestyle.borak@gmail.com.