

Guest Commentary from TC Computers

(Editor’s Note: The following was submitted by Monique Allen, of TC Computers, who disputes parts of stories that have appeared in “Illinois Valley News.” We are printing her comments in the interests of fairness, clarification and giving her the opportunity to present her side of the issue. Parenthetical phrases *in italics* were added by the editor.)

I am writing to ask that some of the issues regarding TC Computers and Illinois Valley Fire District be clarified. I think that the articles in “Illinois Valley News” were one-sided and unfair to my business. We were never contacted by either the “News” or the district about the complaints made publicly against our services.

I will begin with some background of the issue:

The three-year service contract between TC Computers and the district expired Jan. 31, 2004. At that time the contract reverted to a monthly agreement until such time as the agreement was either renegotiated or canceled by either party with 30 days written notice.

During this time the district evidently was going through some issues of its own, as the new chief had not yet taken office. As a courtesy, in the middle of January, I contacted the district secretary and reminded her that the contract was going to expire and revert to a monthly agreement. Knowing that the new chief was not yet in office, I suggested that the secretary contact the board members and make them aware of this so that they could decide whether to plan renegotiations or cancel the agreement.

I personally contacted the district several times during January, February and March to inquire as to its decision and let them know that they were still obligated under the agreement. We also attempted to schedule appointments to perform services covered under the contract, but were given no response from the secretary or board.

When Chief Harry Rich took office, I again attempted to contact him to welcome him to the area and discuss the service that we provide to the district and see if anything needed to be checked or serviced. Each time I phoned I was told that the new chief was either in a meeting, talking with someone else or just unavailable and that he would be asked to return my call. I received no return calls from Rich, the secretary or the board. We not only received no response to our calls; we also received no complaints about services, hardware malfunctions, virus problems or lack of service issues.

After three months of unreturned phone calls and visits we did finally receive a letter from the new chief. The letter, dated March 25, advised us that they wished to cancel or not renew the contract effective April 1, 2004. I closed out the contract, generated invoices for February, March and April (which I prorated) and sent them a reply letter with the invoices enclosed, stating that the effective date would be April 24, which is 30 days from the date of written notice as per the contract. The letter was hand-delivered to the district secretary by myself on April 7.

Again I phoned the district to offer a complete close-out inspection of the systems to ensure that we were closing the agreement with the machines in good running order. This call again was not responded to. We heard nothing further from the district throughout April and May. The issues they seem to have had with the bills were not brought up until I placed several phone calls requesting an estimated payment date so that I would be able to close out my files.

The only phone call we have received from the district or any of its representatives came on a Monday (when we are closed) by Rich wishing to discuss the bills. I personally showed up at Station 1 the following day to meet with the chief and address his questions and issues. I was informed once again that the chief was unavailable, but would be in his office the following day.

I returned the next morning and again was informed that the chief was unavailable and that I would be called when he returned. By about 2 that afternoon, not having received a call, I called the station from my office and the call was answered by an answering machine. I walked to the business next door, a stroll which took about one minute, and called the station again from their phone. The call was answered by the secretary on the second ring. She sounded surprised to hear my voice, and informed me that the chief had just returned, and that she just had not had a chance to call me yet. I immediately went to Station 1 to meet with Rich.

As we sat in his office, he brought to my attention that he felt the billing for February, March and April was unfair, and in an effort to save the district money, he would be performing all its future maintenance and service himself. He also informed me that when he took his position, each of the machines was dusty, and that he was forced to replace some of the fans in them.

Rich also stated to me that the machines were good computers and he felt that the repairs he made were minor, but we should have been there to blow that dust out of the machines and replace the fans. My response was that we would have been happy to perform the cleaning and fan replacement had we only been called, or had any of our calls to schedule service been returned.

When it is our job to “perform biweekly system checks and maintenance on hardware and software as needed,” we can only perform that service if we are able to schedule an appointment when someone will be in the office to allow us access to the computer systems.

It has been the policy of TC Computers for the past two years of the three-year contract not to appear to perform maintenance without prescheduling an appointment, or a member of the district calling to request an unscheduled service call. Too many times in the past we had shown up for maintenance and found the station closed early or locked. We do not have enough spare

time to make wasted trips.

During the remainder of the conversation I was asked to cut the bills for service in half. Rich stated he would sign the check and personally deliver it to my business the following day were I willing to accept that. If I failed to accept that condition, the matter would be handed over to the district board for discussion. I closed my conversation with Rich and informed him that I would get back to him with a decision.

Based on the lack of respect shown my company by failure to return phone calls, notify us that there was a problem or concern, I made the decision that the billing would stand, as we had done everything in our power to fulfill the contractual obligation and perform services. I called Rich a few days later and informed him of my decision; his response was, “I will take it to the board.”

I called the station and a member of the board to find out when the next meeting was to be held and was given the date and time. I was never given the location of the meeting or invited to attend or even asked if I planned to attend. Neither my husband nor I attended that meeting because with no notice or invitation we were not sure if our billing problem was even on the agenda.

This catches us up to the point of the articles in “Illinois Valley News.” The following describes the issues I have with each of those articles and the things that I ask be corrected.

The first article, on June 16, was the only indication we were given about the problems stated by Rich, with the exception of those I mentioned from my meeting with him. The headline read, “I.V. Fire District terminates its computer contract 5-0.” The contract had expired on Feb. 1. They chose to cancel the underlying monthly agreement and that had been dealt with, as I have stated above in this letter in March. The headline and first paragraph of this article is misleading to readers, having them believe a vote took place that night.

The article continues, “A TC representative wasn’t present at the Monday meeting, but will be asked again to attend the next regular board meeting in July.” This statement is incorrect, as we were not asked in the first place, and therefore could not be asked again. Also in that article, it states, “According to the contract, TC Computers was to perform biweekly system checks and routine maintenance on systems and software,” quoting Rich. The quote leaves out two important words: “as needed.”

I called “Illinois Valley News” and spoke with Shane Welsh about the article and told him of the things that I believed were discrepancies in it. I asked him to interview us and hear our side of the story, since the statements by Rich were (*in our opinion*) slanderous and could damage our business. Welsh informed me that my only option was to attend the next regular meeting of the district board and have a chance to make our rebuttal then. I asked him to print a copy of the contract so the public would have a chance to view that as well, and was told, “No.”

Dismayed by (*what I feel*) is unfair representation of our company in the newspaper, we waited for a letter, phone call or email requesting our presence at the next meeting. None came; again we have never been contacted by any member of the district or the board except for the single phone call by Rich prior to my meeting with him. We attended the meeting uninvited on July 15 in Cave Junction.

We answered every question presented us by members of the board, and were invited to a special session, which was to be held on July 21. The article in the “News” highlighted the meeting, and of course, as a journalist does on occasion highlighted the negative more than the positive, which is upsetting but cannot be helped.

The final two paragraphs of this article read: “The board decided to hold a special session at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, July 21 at the Holland Loop Fire Station. The meeting is planned to allow Rich and TC Computers to openly discuss the problems and invoices and consider whether or not to pay the bill.”

That special meeting was in fact an executive session, not a public meeting. It was a complete waste of our time to be asked to attend so that we could sit outside for 45 minutes to then be told, we would be notified by mail of their decision. My problem with the way it was stated in the newspaper is that the board stated that the “News” was informed that the meeting would be an executive session, so stating that we would be able to “openly discuss the problems and invoices” was (*in my view*) a complete fabrication.

I called the staff writer again on the day that the article came out and informed him that he had misspelled my husband’s name, and might want to get it correct for his next article. At that time, I said nothing else to him, nor did I bring up the subject again.

The evening of the meeting, after the close, I did approach Welsh and inform him, “You are now eligible to be sued for slander or libel because twice you have printed misinformation in the newspaper.” The article in the July 28 issue of the “News” quoted me as stating, “... and stated to an ‘Illinois Valley News’ reporter that he is liable for suit because he had misspelled her husband’s first name in an article in last week’s issue.”

Aug. 2 I again called the “News” and spoke to Welsh. I asked him to correct the false statement made in the previous article. He asked me what the misinformation was that I had referred to, I told him about our not being asked to attend the June meeting as printed in the first article and about the July 21 meeting being stated to “openly discuss.” I informed him that I did not have copies of the other discrepancies in front of me, as I was out of town, but would provide them upon my return.

The correction printed on Aug. 4 does not correct that I never made the statement printed in the article on July 28. It states only that I am “aware there could be no suit for spelling her husband’s name incorrectly.” This leads readers to think that after making that statement to the reporter, I then thought about it and realized that I could not do that.

There is a big discrepancy between never saying something that a reporter fabricated and just trying to take it back. The correction also states that I was unable to readily identify the “misinformation,” when in fact I had readily identified two instances during the telephone conversation and informed him I could identify the rest later.

I am extremely upset with (*what I consider*) one-sided journalism and a lack of respect for the truth or fair play. I do not have a problem with the truth being printed, but it is always misleading to the public when only half the truth gets printed. I would like the truth to be heard from both sides of the argument. I would also like printed clarification of the items I have pointed out to be incorrect.

Campus Achiever

Former Selma resident, Chelsea Calhoun attained the Dean’s List at Idaho University of Findlay. Calhoun, an equestrian studies major, was selected for maintaining a minimum grade-point average of 3.5.

A candle loses nothing of its light by lighting another candle.
- James Keller -

Lovejoy Hospice ...

(Continued from page 9)

in the patient’s care, their experience and loss.

*Lending Library: there are a variety of books and pamphlets available to help families before and after the death of a loved one.

“We don’t provide services here except bereavement counseling,” said Allister. “A person needing aid can call us and we would send a volunteer directly to their home,” added Allister.

The average length a patient uses hospice services is 24 days. They can receive hospice care up to six months before being required to renew services.

To qualify for hospice, patients must be certified by their doctor and the hospice medical director that they are terminally ill and have less than six months to live.

Lovejoy Hospice is not-for-profit, funded by Medicare, insurance payments, grants and community donation.

Patients who don’t have insurance, or make too much money to qualify for medical insurance, can still receive hospice care because pf community donation and hospice fund-raisers.

A Lovejoy Hospice “Heartbeat Tour” is held on second Thursdays to help communities get to know services better.

Lovejoy volunteers are also available at Immanuel United Methodist Church in Cave Junction on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Phone toll free (888) HOSPICE, (758-8569) for more information about hospice services or to schedule a ride to tour the Grants Pass facility.

Golf News

On Tuesday, Aug. 3, the Illinois Valley Women’s Golf Club held a low-net tournament.

Tournament winners at I.V. Golf Course: 1st, Marjorie Culbertson. 2nd, Beth Morreale.

The Strip

At the I.V. Airport - 592-4488
(6 miles south on Hwy.199)



'Bringing back TACO NIGHT!'

Mondays - 5 to 8 p.m.

\$1.50 per taco

Engels Woodworking ate 30 tacos (among 3 people)! Can you beat that record?

**Hours: Monday & Wednesday through Saturday
10:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.(closed Tuesdays)
Sunday: Noon to 6 p.m.**

The Tea Cozy

Teas From Around The World
Gourmet Teas & Accessories
Over 60 Bulk Teas - Gourmet & Organic

*Let Your Senses Inhale the Delightful
Fragrance from our Testers of Quality Teas.
Tea Tasting By Appointment*

**LOCATED INSIDE BOOK EXCHANGE
228 N. Redwood Hwy. - Cave Junction
592-3689**

SAVE UP TO 50% ON USED BOOKS
Over 35,000 Books
Wide Selection of Subjects
New Book Ordering

**Monday Thru Friday 9:30 - 5:30
Saturday 9:30 - 4:00**

MANSFIELD R. CLEARY



Attorney at Law

General Practice in

Illinois Valley

since 1980

Practice includes but not limited to:

**Bankruptcy - Eliminate
financial problems**

Living trusts - Avoid probate

Estate planning - Wills,

power of attorney

Domestic relations

Auto accident - Personal Injury

Criminal - DUII

Real Estate contracts - Foreclosure

592-2195

200 W. Lister

TALENT SHOW

at the Illinois Valley Lions

Labor Day Festival

Sunday, Sept. 5

Juniors & Intermediates

Monday, Sept. 6

Adults

CASH AWARDS

For details and sign up phone Donna (541) 596-2719

***Last day to sign up is Wednesday, Sept. 1**