

Dogs, Lonely Women Often Delay Uncle Sam's Mail Couriers

By HARRY FERGUSON

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The U.S. Post Office Department has a sort of combined motto and pep talk which it lifted from the Greek historian, Herodotus, and put on the front of the New York post office: "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

What frequently does stay these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds is a dog. Also a woman. The department talks freely about the dog problem, and the supervisor's safety handbook for postmen says under section 188 that "carriers should neither antagonize nor attempt to pet dogs."

Gets No Counsel
Nowhere is there advice and counsel on what the postman should do when a woman invites him to put down his mail sack and come in for a cup of coffee. But it is a real problem and a postman of about 10 years experience told about it after exacting a strict pledge that he would remain anonymous:

"A lot of these women are just the motherly type. You know, it's raining and they feel sorry for you and they want to give you some hot coffee and maybe toast. They don't cause much trouble because you can always tell them you're late and have to keep going to get your whole pouch of mail delivered."

"Then there's the other kind. You could call them lonesome. They're waiting at the door every time you deliver the mail. If you turn them down on a cup of coffee, then they tell you to come inside because one of their letters has been lost and they want to talk about it. I always tell them to give me a written memorandum, but most of the time they don't buy that. Sometimes they get real tough and say they're going to report me to the department if I don't come inside. Nobody has reported me so far, but you never can tell."

Spots Dangerous Ones
"It's easy to spot the dangerous ones. Usually they're wearing a kimono or something like that and have their faces made up as if they were going to a Saturday night dance. When you see one like that, brother, you better run."

"I'm not saying there are lots of them on my route, but there are enough to cause trouble. But I hear things are even worse for people like television repair men, telephone company workers and fellows who sell things door to door. Those guys got to go inside the house to do their job. Me, I can always stand at the door and say no."

Unfortunately, there is no way a postman can say no to a dog which is rushing at him with every intention of biting. About 7,000 postmen were bitten by dogs last year, and the worst offenders were Dobermans, cockers, Pekingeses and terriers.

The Post Office Department knows it's walking a tight rope. It wants to protect the postmen, but it faces the wrath of millions of American dog lovers. The first attempted solution was to advise the owner of any dog that bit a postman that hereafter he would have to pick his mail up at the post office. That didn't work because it developed that many postmen were being bitten by stray dogs.

Armed With Capsule
Now an experiment is in progress in Detroit, Miami, Baltimore and San Francisco where the postmen have been armed with an aerosol capsule called Halt. It is loaded with mineral oil and an extract of cayenne pepper and was developed at the University of Georgia. When a postman is about to be attacked, he squirts Halt at the dog.

The department says the preliminary results are encouraging: "The sprayed dog does not cry out. He merely puts his tail between his legs and beats a hasty retreat. In most cases, after one or two experiences with Halt, the dog never again attacks the user." While an animal obviously has been made uncomfortable for a short period of time, there are no lasting effects to the eyes or any other portion of the face. Within 10 to 15 minutes the ef-

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fect of Halt has worn off and the dog returns to normal. Halt leaves a yellowish coloration on the dog's hair which is removable by washing."

Dog Bites Costly
Ten per cent of all dog bites cause injuries which force postmen to lose work time, and last

year the department says the total cost was \$800,000. Even so, the department did not plunge into the Halt experiment rashly. It informed the American Kennel Club, the American Humane Association, the Popular Dogs Publishing Co., and the Humane Society of the United States, and in-

cluded suggestions and co-operation. The trial period for Halt is about over and by Labor Day there may be a decision as to whether it will become a permanent weapon in the postal arsenal.

Any time the Post Office Department is accused of being an-

ti-dog, it tells the story of Oweiny, the Post office dog, who was mounted and is now on display in the Smithsonian Institution. Oweiny showed up at the Albany, N.Y., post office in 1888 and began taking out of town trips with the mail sacks. The clerks put an identification tag around Owe-

iny's neck and he began traveling all over the country.

One day he got aboard a mail steamer in Tacoma, Wash., and went around the world in 132 days. In Japan, the Mikado gave Oweiny a canine passport and he collected what the department calls "200 medals and certifi-

cates." He was considered lucky because no train nor ship on which Oweiny was riding ever had an accident.

If this doesn't convince critics of the Post Office Department's dog policy, the story then is told of

how Oweiny died on the streets of Toledo, Ohio, in 1897. Another dog attacked and Oweiny—not being equipped with Halt—fought back unto death.

(Tomorrow: Junk mail: who sends it and why).

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