inside business

Jim Ashley can walk through airport baggage checks quicker with his readily identifiable baggage, thanks to his own invention Bag Tags.

Tags aid in luggage trace

One too many lost suitcases drove Jim Ashley into a new career.

"I had this idea seven years ago when I was going to Hawaii with my wife," he explained."I made a tag to put on my luggage and the suitcase was lost. But because of that sticker, it was found in another town only minutes later. I knew right there I had a good idea."

Today the Gresham resident is marketing what he bills as an airport-proof luggage retrieval system. Known as Bag-Tag, it combines a sticker bearing one of six colors, 10 geometric shapes and 18 letters of the alphabet.

The result is "more than 1,000 possible combinations and, given the bag's color and your flight time, the odds are a million to one" that another bag similarly marked would appear on an airline's luggage retrieval rack at the same time.

The identification system cards are available for $6.95 and for two more dollars the customer's name is entered on Ashley's company computer — another help in tracing lost bags.

It isn't a replacement for individual airlines' baggage check systems, Ashley said, only an additional means of protection for travelers. Airlines can trace the Bag-Tag owner's luggage by calling the toll-free number on the tag and reading the serial number to the operator.

Besides the computer-recorded serial numbers on the tag for tracing purposes, there's another benefit, Ashley said. "It's the psychological deterrent. This makes it easy to spot someone taking your bag from the carousel, hence a thief would take an unmarked bag."

Wallet cards the traveler carries to match the tag on suitcases explain in six languages how the system works so porters will have no trouble understanding Bag-Tag, Ashley said.

The identification system has been on the market for two weeks.

"Two years ago I formed a corporation," Ashley said. "I have one stockholder — Robert Gillette of Sandy. We're working out of Gresham but have a Portland mailing address for public relations purposes."

Marketing of the system was delayed while Ashley studied airline statistics on lost luggage. Between 1.8 million and 2.88 million items were mishandled during 1977, according to the Civil Aeronautics Board.

Interviews by a Portland advertising firm in the Seattle and Atlanta airports showed about half of all air travelers have at one time lost or had delays receiving their luggage, and 34 percent have had such problems during the past year.

"I lost enough baggage and I just went to work on the problem," Ashley said.

Bag-Tag is available at travel agencies, airport and hotel gift shops or through the company at P.O. Box 16777, Portland, Ore. 97216. Ashley can be reached at 667-7058.

Realtors fault feds in housing drop

Government policy is taking away the opportunity for Americans to own their own homes, according to the president of the 704,000-member National Association of Realtors.

"Government is both driving up interest rates and making it increasingly difficult to provide housing," said Donald Hovde.

Bureau of Labor Statistics releases on consumer prices and real earnings show the average production worker "experienced a 7.7 percent increase in his weekly income and 9 percent increase in consumer prices during the last 12 months," added Jack Carlson, newly-appointed executive vice president and chief economist of the association. "However, the average home purchaser experienced larger increases in mortgage interest rates, the purchase price of his home, and consequently his monthly payments of principal and interest.

"A major cause of the inflation of mortgage interest rates was action by the Federal Reserve to increase interest rates because the federal government would not slow the growth in federal government spending, causing an inflationary level of federal deficits," Carlson said.

"From March 1978 through March 1979, the median sales price of new homes jumped from $53,200 to $60,400 or by 13.5 percent. The median sales price of existing homes jumped from $46,500 to $53,800 or by 15.7 percent.

"Because of government-caused higher mortgage interest rates, a typical monthly payment for principal and interest on an existing home increased from $345 in April 1978 to $443 in April 1979. This is an increase of $98 each month or 28 percent (based on a 90 percent mortgage)."

Hovde said, "As if government-caused inflation of mortgage costs were not enough, the administration now proposes to increase interest costs for homebuyers by raising interest rate ceilings on deposit accounts and phasing out the dominant role that savings and loan associations and mutual savings banks play in ensuring an ample flow of home mortgage money to prospective homeowners.

"If the government phases out interest ceilings on passbook accounts, this could cause 1 percent higher interest rates for the homeowner who buys a new or existing home in the future. This could cause monthly principal and interest payments on a median-priced home to increase by another $39 a month or more than 8 percent more. More importantly, the administration's proposal could siphon funds away from housing and thus reduce the availability of homes at reasonable interest rates.

"Not only is the federal government thwarting the dreams of Americans to own a home to fit their needs, but state and local governments are ganging up to limit the availability of homes for Americans," Hovde said. "A representative sample survey of those that sell homes indicate that local government's no-growth and slow-growth policies, growth management ordinances, sewer moratoria, exclusionary zoning, down zoning, badly designed environmental regulations and excessive time delays in issuing building permits are causing both higher costs of housing and fewer homes.

Fuel chief knocks gas rules

"I can't think of anything left,except for them to tell us how to clean the restrooms."

That's what Wayne Bowlby, executive director of the Oregon Gasoline Dealers Association, said of new federal Energy Department regulations concerning service stations.

The new regulations impose a nationwide uniform profit margin of 15.4 cents per gallon for dealers.

Add to that previously-initiated rules governing allocation allowance and priority customers, and there isn't much more than that left, Bowlby said.

"At this point, the government is telling the dealer how many gallons he can buy, what to sell it at, when he can sell it, and who to sell it to," he noted.

"When it first came out I was going to tell the dealers to absolutely rebel. Now I'm not quite sure.

"I've fought closures. I didn't want to do it.

"This time, I find myself wondering if we are doing the right thing.

"Every time we do something, we move back another two feet."

Not only do the profit margins have to be uniform, but the law requires the maximum margin be posted in the station.

"This is a case of constitutional rights," Bowlby explained. "Even if we have the same profit level, even if we're only making 10 cents, it's the principle of it.

"And if a federal auditor comes in and the station doesn't have it posted, they'll be penalized 5 cents per gallon profit for 30 days.

"It seems a pure and deliberate attempt to divert attention of the public away from them."

Bowlby noted sessions with dealer representatives in San Francisco and Washington, D.C., both of which he attended, in which newspapers in those cities printed reports of hearing findings soon after or during the hearings.

New chamber directories to be out soon

Sandy Area Chamber of Commerce reports that new chamber directories will be available for distribution by early September.

The directories will include new businesses as an update to the chamber's previous booklet. The chamber also plans to include a new city map of the downtown sector.

Copies will be distributed free of charge in some downtown stores and at the chamber office at Pioneer Boulevard and Meinig Avenue.

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