

Post Office Department Floods Market With Printing Error

By DAVID D. LEWIS
Washington — (UPI) — A West German reporter glanced at a U. S. newspaper, shook his head and said: "Only in America could it happen. With Cuba, Berlin and India to worry about what upsets you people is a silly little upside down stamp."

Sent to the United States to cover the Cuban crisis and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's Berlin talks with President Kennedy, he found himself absorbed in reading about the uproar over the Dag Hammarskjöld stamp misprints.

both accidental and intentional. Perhaps the visitor was right; perhaps not. But one thing is certain: there was more at stake in Postmaster General J. Edward Day's decision to flood the market with unlimited, deliberate misprints than a few thousand dollars profit for fortunate finders of the original errors.

Public Service

When Day decided to wipe out a couple of budding small fortunes, he was not being vengeful or trying to cover up an error. He was not try-

ing to cash in on it by selling more stamps. The postmaster general said he was "looking out for the little guy, the amateur and the kids who collect stamps. We print stamps as a public service—not to create or deflate fortunes."

"Now, let's get something straight," he said. "The stamp business is one thing, and sometimes it isn't connected with collecting. The business is for dealers and wealthy collectors for the most part. Most stamp collectors never see a dealer."

Not Lottery

"We're not in the stamp lottery business. We certainly sympathize with the few luc-

ky finders of the original misprints. But we are more sympathetic to the wishes of the millions of other collectors whose ambition it is to have one of every stamp we issue, especially the commemorative issues—our real work."

Dealers, editorial writers and the general public split on whether Day chose the right course, but he won his point where it counted—with the collectors.

In the three hours and 45 minutes the deliberately misprinted stamps were on sale

Nov. 16, more than 375,000 were snapped up—mostly by collectors who stood in line for hours to buy them. The rest of the first order for one million extra misprints was spoken for in telephone, telegram and letter orders.

Few Benefited

Jacques Minkus, head of stamp sales for 39 department stores—including Gimbels of New York City—said "It is wrong. Finding something dif-

ferent is part of the joy of collecting. Why destroy it?" Peter G. Keller, executive officer for the American Stamp Dealers Association, said "I understand the post office department's point of view. One, two or three people have benefited fabulously by the mistake and other people are not able to get copies of the stamp." But he said "the controversy will add value to the original misprints."

James F. Kelleher, special assistant to the postmaster general for information and philatelic (stamp) matters,

said "With all due respect and consideration for our critics, we have to judge success or failure on the response of the general public."

Will the reprinting of the Hammarskjöld inversions end the chance of rare U. S. stamps ever getting into public sale or being permitted to stay rare? Kelleher says no.

Many Variations
"We're not trying to take the kick out of a chance discovery," he maintained. "Lots of little variations occur and will occur, plenty to satisfy most collectors' curiosity."

Although neither Day nor Kelleher would say so, it was known they also were trying to forestall the slim possibility that someone connected with the printing and distribution of U. S. postage might try to deliberately create a rarity.

Kelleher added, however, "There definitely is no suspicion that this occurred in the Hammarskjöld misprints. It was just a matter of a couple of sheets of paper being slipped backwards into the press for the yellow overlay impression."

The multi-color Giori press is used for the commemorative issues. More than one billion stamps have been printed on it in the last five years.

And more than one trillion (one thousand billion) U. S. stamps had been printed in the 44 years since the last inverted issue—the 1918 air mail stamp with an airplane flying upside down—slipped through inspection and onto the market. This one, by the way, is now worth about \$10,000.

New Process
"It's quite possible that we'll never have another inversion on the Giori press," Kelleher said. "A new process has been worked out that will permit multiple color printing in most instances, without the necessity of two press runs."

"And the Bureau of Engraving and Printing has tightened its examination procedures drastically."

The multiple color ability of the Giori press has both advantages and disadvantages.

Causing trouble on the Hammarskjöld issue was the need for two turns through the press to keep the black outer band from running into the yellow highlights where the portrait touched the top edge. But the color-mixing feature will be employed on the next commemorative issue to produce a remarkable variety of tones and shades for the sunset background in the reproduction of Winslow Homer's painting, "Breezing Up."

The Homer stamp, to be dedicated Dec. 15 at Gloucester, Mass., will be the second in a series of commemoratives on American art designed to put such a work in the hands of every American who has four cents (or a nickel after Jan. 7). First in the series was the Frederic Remington painting, "Smoke Signal," issued 13 months ago.

Series of Dots
Lost in the confusion was the fact that the Hammarskjöld stamp was printed in a revolutionary technique. The portrait was engraved with a series of tiny dots, rather than the broken lines formerly used for steel stamp engraving.

The result was hailed by stamp experts as a dramatic success, creating a more softly human picture and paving the way for elimination of the so-called "halo effect" previously used to keep multiple colors from running into each other by separating them with a thin, white space.

Stamp fans will be glad to know that the confusion caused by the Hammarskjöld misprints has not dampened the postmaster general's enthusiasm for dramatic results.

"We're not going to back off on our efforts to push the horizons of American stamp art because of this fluke," Day said. "The Homer stamp will be out soon and we have more surprises in the works."

Day has been full of pleasant surprises for the stamp buying public. Two examples were the project Mercury stamp commemorating Col. John H. Glenn Jr.'s earth orbit—on sale minutes after he safely landed; and the first Christmas stamp that came out earlier this month already is bidding for sales record.

As one long-time postal official put it: "The stamp business used to be nice and neat and quiet before Ed Day came to town. But these last two years have been exciting and fun."

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REDUCE VALUE — Leonard Sherman of Irvington, N. J., who purchased sheet of irregular four-cent Dag Hammarskjöld commemorative stamps, didn't wind up with a windfall after all. Post office flooded the market with printing error to drastically reduce value of original mistake. (UPI photo)

Christmas Tree Custom Revived With New Twist

If you've a yen to make this a really "old-fashioned" Christmas, the best way to begin is to go out and get your tree the way our forefathers did! Go into the "forest," cut it down, and then haul it home.

Yes, today there are hundreds of American free farms and nurseries, where this old family custom is being revived with a new twist.

Carefully Cultivated
The difference is that these modern Christmas trees, instead of growing wild, are carefully cultivated by professional growers. Farmers and nurserymen find that they can lower their costs — and build customer interest — by allowing a family to choose a Christmas tree while it is still growing.

Customers usually come out to select their tree in November or early December, have it tagged, then pick it up a week or so before Christmas. Stay Fresh Longer
There are some places where you can have the fun of cutting down your own tree with a saw or ax provided by the grower. In others, the tree is dug up for you and then

put in a bucket or wrapped in burlap.

Trees selected in this way stay fresh and green longer than those that are cut down far in advance of their sale. Too, prices are usually a little lower than they would be at the usual street corner sales lot. Costs, however, vary widely, depending largely on locale but also on the tree's size, shape, thickness, etc.

Trees that are balled and burlapped (dug out with their roots intact, suitable for transplanting) are more expensive. To find farms and nurseries that offer this choose your own service, contact your county agricultural agent. Or just drive along a country road outside your town and look for the signs.

NAME'S THE SAME
Charlotte, N.C. — (UPI) — The names of about 25 streets here are being changed in the interest of public safety. Fire trucks were recently sent to McArthur Avenue when a house on McArthur street caught fire.