

# 'Occupant' Delivered Steady Stream of 'Junk' Mail

Editor's note: This is the fourth of a five part series discussing the function and operation of the U.S. post office.

By HARRY FERGUSON  
United Press International  
Washington—The most popular fellow in the whole United States is named "occupant." He gets a steady stream of mail, most of which he quickly conveys without opening to the waste basket. This is what many embittered persons call "junk mail."

The U.S. Post Office Department prefers to call it "bulk mail" and can advance several valid reasons why it is a good thing for the country.

Eighteen billion pieces of this third class mail flow into the mail boxes of Americans each year and a good bit of it does not even have their name in the address. It simply is addressed to "occupant."

Most Americans are resigned to their fate and do nothing about the things stuffed into their mail boxes, but occasionally a bold spirit

revolts and takes up arms against the government. Such a one is Mrs. Robert L. Richard of Ualo Alto, Calif., a sort of Joan of Arc who organized a crusade against "junk mail" by collecting 100 pounds of it and shipping it to the Post Office Department here in Washington.

Starts With Letter  
"It all started with a begging letter I received," she said. "It came all the way from Alabama to Palo Alto. It contained a letter, a return envelope and two pieces of

literature. It was from an organization I'd never heard of and I would never dream of contributing to it."

Mrs. Richard invited her neighbors to help and they responded by filling up her clothes basket, her garbage can, several cardboard cartons and a large box. Off went the "junk mail" to Washington where it landed with a dull thud. Nothing happened. Mrs. Richard is still getting "junk mail" and will continue to do so. Like death and taxes, it is inevitable.

The Post Office Department takes in \$94 million a year in third class mail revenue. It charges 2 1/2 cents a piece and next year the cost will go up to 2 3/4 cents. It probably could go much higher without discouraging the people who send out bulk mail. The whole thing has become firmly built into the structure of the American economy and its removal would result in chaos and probably a sizeable number of bankruptcies.

It works this way: There

are firms such as R. L. Polk & Co., which keeps lists of persons by classification—automobile owners, pet lovers, fishermen, golfers, chefs, do-it-yourself carpenters, motorcycle riders and anything else you care to name. Say a manufacturer of fishing rods comes up with a new product. He goes to R. L. Polk and Co., and rents their fisherman list and subsequently the advertising matter goes forward. In this case the third class mail is addressed to persons by name. But a soap company, for

instance, may blanket the country with third-class mail addressed only to "occupant."

The size of a mailing by a business concern can vary widely. A firm selling bulldozers may send out only 5,000 letters. A candy manufacturer may send out 80 million. And what about the response? Many charitable and non-profit organizations use third-class mail and they get the highest ratio of responses, sometimes as much as 75 per cent. Business firms which enclose coupons to be returned

have achieved results as high as 20 per cent. But almost every user of third class mail considers it a waste of time and money. It is a waste of time and money because the people respond in some fashion.

The Post Office Department, of course, is strictly under the control of Congress which decides how much money shall be appropriated each year. And Congress itself is a great lover of bulk mail because its members can flood constituents with letters at no personal cost.

Gets Lump Sum  
This is known as "franking" and it is unnecessary to describe the contents of mail from congressmen because everybody has had experience with it, especially in the weeks leading up to an election. In return for the privilege of franking mail, Congress votes a lump sum each year to the Post Office. That makes it unnecessary for the individual congressman to stand up and be counted as to how many pieces of mail he is dumping on the voters.

Is there any way to get your name off mailing lists? Apparently not without considerable inconvenience to yourself. Maxwell Sackheim of Clearwater, Fla., was advised by the St. Petersburg, Fla., Post Office to write to the mailers and ask them to eliminate his name.

In his reply, Sackheim gave the Post Office Department both barrels:

"You reveal a shocking ignorance of modern business sales methods. To remove my name from mailing lists I would have to:

"Cancel my subscription to Time Magazine, Fortune, Forbes, Reader's Digest, Saturday Evening Post, Advertising Age, American Home, Better Homes & Gardens, the Flower Grower and a dozen other publications.

"Order my name removed from Who's Who in America, Commerce & Industry, Rotary Club of Clearwater, the

Chamber of Commerce, Poor's Directory of Directors, Free and Accepted Masons, Mecca Temple, East Bay Country Club, YMCA, The Red Cross, The Cancer Fund, the Clearwater City Directory and the telephone directory, American Express credit card, Standard Oil credit card, several financial institutions and banks, the Book of the Month Club, the Literary Guild and the Columbia Record Club."

In case you are wondering how your name gets on mailing lists, Sackheim has provided the answer.

Tomorrow: Detectives of the U.S. Mails—The War Against Pornography.

## Escapee Held for Robbery of Bank

Salem—An escapee from the Ohio State prison was reported in custody in Los Angeles Wednesday on a charge of robbing the Gervais branch of the Bank of Oregon July 11, 1962.

The FBI identified him as Donald Jay Nichols, Downey, Calif., who escaped from the Ohio State prison in Columbus in 1959.

Nichols is the third man to be charged with the \$6,820 robbery. Clarence Emmett Young and Sidney Albert Thomas pleaded guilty in Los Angeles earlier this month and received seven-year prison sentences.

They were both serving terms of five years to life for armed robbery in California.

## BIG BALLOON BURSTS

Palestine, Tex.—Scientists of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology today determined what caused a huge balloon carrying instruments to study cosmic rays to burst at 107,000 feet. The balloon's 325-pound instrument payload was automatically parachuted to earth and recovered by scientists.

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AJAX LIQUID	28-oz. bottle	75¢
FLORIENT ROOM DEODORANT	Assortment	69¢
PRELL LIQUID SHAMPOO	Regular \$1.00—7-oz.	89¢
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## Your Money's Worth

By SYLVIA PORTER  
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WHAT IS DOLLAR DEVALUATION?—IV  
(4th in a Series of 5 Columns)

Although there is no possibility that the United States will devalue the dollar at this stage, talk about it will not be downed, and for the first time in my experience I'm receiving a steady trickle of letters asking, "What would devaluation mean to me?"

If we did raise the price at which the U.S. Government stands ready to sell gold on demand to any qualified foreign holder of dollars from, say, \$35 to \$70 an ounce, and thereby cut the gold value of the dollar from 1/35th of an ounce to 1/70th of an ounce, here is what this devaluation of our currency would mean to you:

**As a Consumer:**  
You would pay more for all imported goods and services, for the value of our dollar to a foreigner would have been cut in half, and theoretically this would mean the cost of goods that we import would double. There's no doubt that many commonplace imported foods would go up in price—coffee, tea, sugar, pepper, olive oil, to name a few. You'd have to pay more for clothes made of imported materials—imported silk, linen, wool, lace. Imported household furnishings (Persian rugs) would be more expensive. So would foreign cars or any foreign equipment.

You'd pay more for anything made of or including gold. You would not pay more, though, for goods and services produced and sold within our borders. The dollar would be devalued in terms of gold and other currencies and that's all. Over a period, the pull almost surely would be toward generally higher prices, but there would be no direct impact on the thousands of items Made-in-U.S.A.

**As an owner of cash, bank deposits, insurance, a house:**  
The dollar in your pocketbook or bank or invested in insurance or a house would be the same after devaluation as before devaluation—for I repeat, the key point is that its value would be diminished only in terms of gold and other currencies. Logically, there should be no immediate impact on the value of these assets.

**As a stockholder:**  
This is guesswork. It could be that the shock of a dollar devaluation—a final admission of weakness in the currency which is the pivot of the free world's economies—would send stock prices into a tailspin. It could be that the act would cause a trade breakdown of such enormity that all securities markets would be convulsed. It could be that foreigners would flee from our markets and add to the slump.

It also could be that any eventual inflation set off by devaluation would boost stock prices later.

This is so "illy" that the only sound advice is: Don't base any investment decision on anticipation of this catastrophe.

**As an exporter of goods:**  
Theoretically, a devaluation of the dollar in half would cut the cost of U.S. goods to foreigners in half, stimulate your export business.

**As an importer of goods:**  
Theoretically, this devaluation would double the price of goods we import, make many of these goods much less attractive to U.S. customers. There would be little competition left for American manufacturers of such products as cars, cameras, wines.

**As a foreign holder of dollars:**  
You'd be badly, perhaps critically, hurt. The \$1 you had the day before devaluation would be worth only 50 cents to you in the world markets the day after. The value of your dollar assets in your own currency would be slashed in half overnight and you might be forced into bankruptcy.

**As a tourist abroad when devaluation occurred:**  
You'd be hit hard too. Say you had arrived in Paris with \$1,000 the day it happened. Your \$1,000 suddenly is worth only \$500 in terms of francs. You're stuck.

It's all so academic. We could not devalue the dollar by ourselves. Other countries would take similar action at once. The gold-producing countries—South Africa, Canada, Russia—would then be the only primary gainers.

The free world has dismissed unilateral devaluation of the dollar as a practical move, instead is groping toward other ways to solve the problem of financing the prosperity of the West and safeguarding its gas-bus economy. A report on this tomorrow.

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