

Your Postal Podcast 38th Edition Transcript

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Watkins: Welcome to *Your Postal Podcast*. This is Richard Watkins of the Postal Service's Corporate Communications Office. In this month's edition you'll hear about one of history's most famous dogs who gets his very own stamp later this month. Stay tuned and you'll hear details on how to win a book about the prized pooch. You'll also hear about an adventurous 25-year-old who's traveling to six continents, personally delivering mail to virtual strangers, joined only by a mysterious mailbox in the South Atlantic Ocean.

If a wagging tail makes you smile, you're sure to love this story from David Rupert.

David Rupert: What's not to love about a scrappy little dog with untamed hair and a spirit of great adventure? That's the story behind Owney the Dog, who debuts with his very own stamp next month.

Owney served as a Postal Service mascot in the late 1800's. He literally rode the rails of the mail trains and was befriended by postal employees and embraced by the public across the country and eventually the world.

Dirk Wales is a storyteller and author of two children's books about the dog.

Dirk Wales: It's a real dog who lived a real life. And I've been living with this dog since 2002. There's two books. The first one sold 31,000 copies and the second is doing just fine. I've been invited to the Smithsonian to the event. And I've been all over the country talking and kids are amazed and full of wonder, because it's a real dog who lived a real life.

Rupert: Owney was highly protective of the mail.

Wales: One day he was on the wagon going between the Post Office and the rail head and a mail bag fell off and he jumped off and stayed with it until they came and found him and the mail bag. The dog didn't just bark or whine or anything. He got off with the mail bag and stayed there. Does he know that somebody will find him missing and come after him? I supposed so instinctively he knows that. But he is in fact in his own terms, protecting the mail.

Rupert: Why should this little tramp dog get a stamp? Well, according to Wales, he was an amazing marketing mascot that helped raise the visibility of the mail. And he believes the dog can still help us out.

Wales: In his time, he was an advertisement, a positive image for the United States Postal Service. If you had a dog or a cat or some kind of animal travelling around the country with this kind of persona, image, accomplishments behind him, my guess is that you could raise the image of the Post Office in the national mind without any trouble at all.

Rupert: The crowning achievement of the dog's life was a trip around the world which took Owney to nearly every continent over the course of 132 days. The dog traveled

more than 143,000 miles by steamship and train. The emperor of Japan even greeted him with open arms.

Upon his arrival home, he was greeted by more than 100,000 adoring fans at the New York harbor.

So, what can we learn from this little dog who lived more than a century ago?

Wales: I found myself wondering that if everybody who worked for the Post Office today knew about this dog and some of the incredible things that he did, how an incredible friend and advertisement for the Post Office he was, if that would inspire and motivate them?

Watkins: You can buy the book at www.dirkwales.com or through major retailers. Dirk Wales has made available to our listeners a copy of each of his books on Owney. If you want a chance to win them, just go to [Your Postal Podcast.com](http://YourPostalPodcast.com), leave a comment about this podcast and we'll enter you in the drawing for one of the books.

Watkins: The high seas. Travel. Adventure. Mystery. This next story has it all, as Lisa Nystuen talks to a young traveler who plans on circling the globe, delivering letters deposited by seafaring vessels.

Captain and Clark Segment

Lisa Nystuen: Have you ever gotten in the car and started driving with no destination in mind? You might just end up in a different town or even the next county. But two 25-year-olds are embarking on a round-the-world journey without really knowing the itinerary. Each of their stops will be determined by the outgoing mail that they'll collect from a Pacific Island. Chris Staudinger who is making the trip with his girlfriend Connie Clark, explains.

Chris Staudinger: 350 years ago, the whaling ships and the navy ships that were going down to the Galapagos realized they needed sort of an International port where they could start to place their mail – and what they settled on was this old whiskey barrel. So a ship would put in a batch of letters, and then another ship returning to that home port would take out the letters and then deliver them. Over time, this has changed from a necessity to a tradition where people will go down to the Galapagos, drop in a letter, somebody finds it addressed to where they are going home, and then take it and deliver it by hand.

Nystuen: It's an adventure that will capture anyone's sense of wonder and amazement, as they plan on traveling to wherever the address takes them.

Staudinger: Part of the romance behind the whole thing is that we're completely at the whim of what we encounter in the barrel. Ideally, we'd like to completely circumnavigate the globe. I don't know that we'll find any letters addressed to Antarctica, but if we could hit at least six of the seven continents

Nystuen: In the age of Facebook, Twitter, and e-mail, why letters?

Staudinger: What I'd like to draw attention to is the fact that communication has become such a casual thing now. As it becomes easier to communicate, the weight behind the words matters less and less. But to actually write a letter or to take the time to communicate to someone can be arduous at times. You have to really have to sit down and consider the weight of your words and what you want to say to somebody. And I think that's an important thing that people should keep considering

Nystuen: The two are all about helping people create long-term legacies through their written words.

Staudinger: You create your own immortality in a way by putting your words and thoughts down on paper. I think that's incredibly vital to humanity. It is a whisper of hope, that if we communicate we can become better.

Nystuen: What will it be like, trekking to some distant land and trying to hand-deliver a letter to a complete stranger?

Staudinger: For right now, door knocking and abundant charm is our best plan of attack. It hasn't failed us yet. So we're going to keep going on that road.

Nystuen: You can follow their journey through CaptainandClark.com.

News Roundup Segment

Watkins: And now, here's our monthly roundup of recent news about the U.S. Postal Service.

In addition to closing Post Offices and consolidating mail facilities around the country as part of cost-cutting measures, in a June 27 letter to select Members of Congress, the Postal Service asked for relief from the congressionally-mandated 5.5 billion dollars in annual health-care payments and for more flexibility in how the organization runs its operations.

Saying that the USPS is in "a dire financial predicament," Board of Governors Chairman Louis Giuliano and Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe asked Congress to support three key measures:

- Eliminate current mandates requiring the 5.5 billion dollar annual retiree health benefit pre-payments;
- Allow the Postal Service to access Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and Federal Employee Retiree System (FERS) surpluses; and,
- Give the Postal Service the authority to determine the frequency of mail delivery in order to transition from six- to five-day delivery.

The USPS, which has seen a decline in mail volume of more than 20 percent since 2007, posted a net loss of 2.5 billion dollars for the first half of fiscal 2011, up from the 1.8 billion dollar loss in the same period in 2010.

The BOG Chairman and the PMG said making the mandated 5.5 billion dollar pre-payment due Sept. 30 will not be possible.

"This pre-payment for future retiree health benefits is no longer tenable given present-day financial challenges," they said in the June 27 letter.

Federal retirement law has resulted in a 6.9 billion dollar surplus for Postal Service contributions into the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). The letter calls for the money to be transferred to the USPS to “help avoid insolvency.”

And in other news, with nearly 100,000 places to buy stamps, ship a package or renew a passport, the U.S. Postal Service is expanding customer access to its products and services.

It's not about brick-and-mortar Post Offices anymore, as Postal Service products move online and into retail outlets, grocery stores, office supply chains and pharmacies. Responding to changing customer needs and a business plan that calls for expanding access to Postal Service products, stores including Costco and Office Depot are offering shipping and mailing services.

Customers can find many locations nearby to purchase postal services by visiting an interactive map at www.uspseverywhere.com and simply typing in a ZIP Code. Using the simple icon guide designating stamps, shipping and packaging, P.O. Boxes and other services, customers can easily navigate to retail outlets, grocery stores, Automated Postal Center kiosks and Post Offices, among other options.

Thanks for listening to *Your Postal Podcast*. Don't forget to log your comment at YourPostalPodcast.com for your chance to win one of the two books about Owney the dog.

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