

Your Postal Podcast 54th Edition Transcript – November 2012

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Richard Watkins: Welcome to *Your Postal Podcast*. This is Richard Watkins of U.S. Postal Service Corporate Communications. In this November twenty-twelve edition, we'll talk to one of the photographers behind the stunning Earthscapes stamps and you'll hear from an award-winning entrepreneur in Missouri whose quilt company relies on Priority Mail to cover his package shipments. Later, you'll hear the latest postal news.

But first, we'll talk first-hand with a man who has a portfolio of more than 200,000 aerial photographs – and last month, five of them landed on stamps. David Rupert has the details.

Earthscapes' Stamps Segment

(Ambient sound of an airplane engine starting and revving.)

David Rupert: This is the sound of Jim Wark's Husky airplane as it takes to the skies for a photo assignment. Wark is the photographer who has five of the Earthscapes stamp images released last month. The stunning stamps offer a bird's-eye view of some common images. You can see his photos in a variety of places.

Jim Wark: There's a big market in real estate, construction progress is probably the biggest assignment market. Aerial video is very popular now. Those are the things that I concentrate on. And that's definitely a niche. There's a big market there, mainly in textbooks, but also in some picture books and things like that.

Rupert: Wark is an aerial vagabond, wandering the skies looking for the unique.

Wark: When I'm going cross-country, I'm never going from A-to-B. Actually, I may know where I'm going to end up, but I don't know how I'm going to get there, because I go where the pictures and the weather take me.

Rupert: Once airborne, Wark levels off at a thousand feet, opens up the clamshell door, revealing a three-foot-by-four-foot window to the world below. And thanks to the airplane's aerodynamic design, there's little wind. So he lifts his camera from his neck to his eye, and shoots.

Wark: You're always looking at the ground. You're pretty low. Usually, if you're just going A-to-B, you don't see it. But if you're looking for it, you see all kinds of stuff. Anything that's environmental, you've gotta shoot it, because people are going to want it.

Rupert: He looks for the symmetry and patterns of mankind, like the railroad round house in one of the stamps and skyscrapers in another one of his images. But he also sees wonder in nature.

Wark: Well, you see the patterns of civilizations; you see the patterns of nature. Every once in a while you run across something like that, that you know is going to be a great picture.

Rupert: From the ground, the Yellowstone Grand Prismatic Spring is a bubbling cauldron of sulphuric gas and sand. But from Wark's perch, it's one of nature's most beautiful images, and that's why it ended up on a stamp.

Wark: That's kind of an iconic image that's been shot many times from the air. It always turns out great because it's just so colorful. So graphic. You can't go wrong shooting that.

Rupert: His favorite stamp is the one of the Utah Monument Valley, with the fog rolling in against the sunrise. It was also one of his very first aerial photographs.

Wark: I had no intention of making it a career or a profession at that time, but I was familiar with the Monument Valley area of Utah and I thought I wanted to get some pictures. It just exceeded my wildest expectations. Those are *still* the best pictures that I've taken in 22 years, from that one trip.

Rupert: Photography runs in the Wark family.

Wark: My great grandfather was a professional photographer in Ireland in 1850. And both of his sons came to this country in the late 1800s and they were both professional photographers. My dad was an amateur photographer. He liked photography. My son is and of course, I am.

Rupert: Jim Wark's son, John, is now taking over the stick for the family business.

John Wark: People are not used to seeing the world from a thousand feet. That's the niche. That's the opportunity we have as photographers to bring that perspective into a print.

Rupert: So what was it like for Jim Wark to see his lifetime work on a stamp?

Wark: The exciting thing was actually seeing one on a letter that was mailed to me. I consider it a great honor. I feel very privileged to have been selected.

(Ambient sound: Engine noise of a small airplane taxiing away.)

Missouri Star Quilt Segment

Watkins: After only four years in business, Missouri Star Quilt, based in Hamilton, Missouri, earned a prestigious Impact 100 Award, which recognized some of the top U.S. entrepreneurs under the age of 30, at a recent White House ceremony. Missouri Star Quilt now boasts an international customer base, who rely on company owner Alan Doan and his team for fabrics and quilting supplies, with an assist from the local Postmaster and Priority Mail.

After discussing his company's shipping needs with Postal Service competitors, Doan was impressed with the Postal Service's Priority Mail Flat Rate pricing and service options.

Alan Doan: The thing that I really appreciated about the Post Office is you guys have definable milestones that we could work towards, so (USPS Mid-America District

Business Solutions Specialist) Mark (Floresch) said, "When you hit 100 grand spent with us, let's talk again; and when you hit 350 grand spent with us, let's talk again and maybe we could do some other things. You know, now we're doing significantly more than that. I mean, each of those milestones were opportunities for us to revisit our contract and our situation with you guys and try some new ideas and different ways to work together.

Watkins: Doan says that Missouri Star Quilt considers Hamilton, Missouri, Postmaster Christie Biggerstaff an extension of his team. And he says another benefit of using Priority Mail Flat Rate is the visibility that comes from co-branding the Missouri Star Quilt logo with the USPS brand.

Doan: It really solidifies for me, the relationship that we have with the Post Office. Again, like a hundred thousand Flat Rate envelopes from you guys sitting in our storage facility right now that we're shipping off of and they've all got our logo on it, the Post Office logo. People get that. I mean, it really gives some credibility to the operation that we're running. It makes us look really official, which is something that we're trying to go for as a kind of a "mom and pop" shop. I mean it's hard to get that clout established in peoples' minds. But when they see that, it sells us a lot.

News Roundup Segment

Watkins: And now here's a look at recent postal headlines. Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe has thanked employees for their hard work and dedication during Hurricane Sandy.

The storm — one of the largest to strike the East Coast — disrupted millions of lives, including employees who live in the area. In a video released October 31st, the PMG urged affected employees to get help from the Employee Assistance Program or the Postal Employee Relief Fund.

Mr. Donahoe also discussed the important responsibilities employees have during the recovery period. Quoting the PMG, "Our customers are counting on us to help them resume their daily lives," adding that customers will need their prescriptions, Social Security checks and bill payments. The PMG said the work employees did during the storm didn't go unnoticed. "Times like this remind everyone why the Postal Service is essential," he said.

And the Postal Service is reminding customers who have evacuated or relocated due to Hurricane Sandy to submit a change of address, place mail on hold, or request that mail be temporarily forwarded to their new location. There are three services that will help customers maintain a continuous flow of mail: A Change of Address, General Delivery or Premium Forwarding Service.

To sign up for all of the available forwarding and Change of Address services, hurricane-affected customers can visit their nearest Post Office or go to usps.com and click on the "Manage Your Mail" tab.

Thanks for listening to *Your Postal Podcast*. Now, we'd like to hear from you. One lucky listener who posts a comment about this month's podcast on the *Your Postal Podcast* webpage will be picked at random to receive a free set of 10 Twentieth-Century Poets

Note Cards and Forever Stamps. The winner will be selected from all qualifying comments posted by November 30th, 2012.

Our congratulations go out to Colleen Felton from Mount Ayr, Indiana. Colleen posted a comment about October's podcast and has won a Latin Music Legends Digital Color Postmark Keepsake Set.

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