

RUSTY LUCAS
P.O. Box 422
SANDUSKY, OHIO 44871-0422

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The Honorable John E. Potter
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20260-1000

Dear General Potter:

I have a few questions about the post office and the postage stamps you issue. These burning questions have been eating away at me for quite some time. But first I must tell you that as a young boy I was quite interested in philatelics. In the second grade, Mr. Drazich, Stark Elementary School principal, sat me down in his office and gave me a philatelic lesson. He even gave me a few stamps from someplace in Africa. I lost my stamp collector book years ago after the dog peed on it in the basement.

Can you tell me approximately how many philatelists we have in the country today? Do you have those statistics? Is that a hobby on the rise or on the decline? With the advent of electronic mail and the Internet, I would assume that less people are interested in, or even exposed to, stamp collecting. Just between you and me, I think the art of true letter writing is being phased out of our society by technology and it makes me quite sad.

Now for my questions that I hope will not be taken the wrong way. I know that every few years the price of postage stamps goes up, but I've noticed a disturbing pattern over the past few rate increases. You do not issue stamps with the new denomination printed on the stamp itself for a number of months just after the postal rate increase. Instead you provide a U.S. flag stamp that says "first class" on it. Ever since we moved from 37¢ stamps to 39¢ stamps in January, we've had to use these non-denominational stamps.

My first question is: why aren't the 39¢ stamps printed in advance so that you can transition right into using them? It's not like it was a surprise to anyone in the post office that new rates would take effect on a given date. I have to assume that there is some other reason for the lengthy delay in issuing the 39¢ denomination, but I cannot come up with a reasonable reason myself. Can you enlighten me?

My next question is along similar lines: What is to keep me or anyone else from buying a few hundred dollars worth of 39¢ "first class" stamps in 2006 and putting those, unused, into a

drawer for however long it takes until postage goes up again? A person could then simply use these non-denominational 39¢ stamps instead of shelling out the few extra pennies that first class stamps cost at that future date. A person would stand to save a lot of money by doing that.

Please do not worry! I paid a full 39 cents for the stamp on the front of the envelope in which this letter is being mailed. I bought it just last week and not in 2002 when the price went up from 34 to 37 cents.

I guess in the end, you would probably still make out because anyone who buys a few hundred dollars worth of non-denominational 39¢ stamps today, only to sit on all that postage for a few years until the next increase, will still have to buy 39¢ stamps to use in the meanwhile. In the interim, you have his money years in advance before he ever uses the stamps at a discount. You have his money working for you right now!

I also have a few ideas for commemorative postage stamps that I wanted to share with you:

- The 2000 Presidential Election in which Florida played a key role.
- The recent scientific rediscovery of the rat-squirrel species thought to be long extinct.
- The recent 100th anniversary of the San Francisco fire.
- The FEMA rescue effort in Louisiana (you could donate some proceeds to the cause).
- Celebration of the advances and variations in paper clip technology through the years.

I think that these would be excellent events to portray American and World history and interest in postage stamps. Politics, nature, science, and industry are all included in the above ideas.

If one or more of my ideas were selected for a future stamp series, I think it just might be the catalyst to get me back into phlebotomy full time. I might even have to quit my job to free up enough time to get 50 canceled stamps of each of these depictions -- one in each state. Forget about the state quarters craze that the U.S. mint manufactured. I can never get my quarters to stay in those stupid little display holes anyway. A U.S. map of state canceled stamps is better. I think a paper clip stamp canceled in Duluth, MN would be the phlebotomic prize of a lifetime.

Sincerely,



Rusty Lucas

p.s. Does the US Postal Service have any free mailman baseball caps available that you could send to me for free? Or is that something that is only issued to licensed mail carriers? I would like to have a free authentic mailman baseball cap. Please send me one. If necessary, you can include an application for the civil service exam and I promise to fill it out and take the test.