

Your Postal Podcast 46th Edition Transcript – March 2012

Source: yourpostalpodcast.com

Richard Watkins: Welcome to *Your Postal Podcast*. This is Richard Watkins from United States Postal Service Corporate Communications. In this edition, we'll go behind the scenes to learn about the latest of a popular series of USPS commercials, directly from the actor who millions recognize as the face of the Postal Service. We'll also hear from a postal employee who recently marked over a half-a-century of helping process the mail.

We've likely all seen the commercials and ads featuring "Al" the letter carrier. You know - the "If it fits, it ships!" guy. In our first story, we get to know "Al" a little better. Meiko Patton is here with the exclusive interview.

"Al" The Carrier Segment

Meiko Patton: I recently had the opportunity to visit the Los Angeles set where the newest Postal Service commercials were being filmed and chatted with Mike Bradecich, the actor better known to television viewers as "Al the Letter Carrier." Mike shared his feelings about being the face of the Postal Service, but first, he offered a sneak peek into the newest ads.

Mike Bradecich: So, we shot three different commercials this week, and they were for Every Door Direct Mail, which was fun. It's exciting to be representing a new product. I enjoy -- you know -- always be more than happy to talk about regional rate boxes or about flat rate boxes and I hope that I get to continue to talk about those things. But it's exciting to sort of be branching out and doing something new. You just name the ZIP Codes where I want my message to be seen and voila! Every single door -- hence the name, "Every Door Direct Mail." So it's exciting and it's fun to see something new and they were fun spots. They're really funny spots. I think people are going to like them a lot. Sometimes when we're doing a series of commercials, I can sort of point to the one I think people are going to respond, and with these three I can't do that, because I like them all. The other actors in them are all hilarious. They got some really great talent to be in these commercials.

Patton: With the new TV commercials now completed, Mike has appeared in a total of 19 -- and he *does* have a favorite.

Bradecich: My personal favorite, just for the experience of it, might have been one of the first ones that we did, which is one called "Tools." And it's Al helping out a business owner in his warehouse sending out different tools. At the end of the commercial, the business owner is so appreciative that he grabs Al and sort of pulls him in for a hug, and Al reluctantly participates in that. The director and the actor playing the business owner kept going off behind like a shelf of all of the tools in this warehouse, and they would hide from me and plot out what they would do at the end -- because it was something different each time. He didn't always pull me in for a hug, sometimes he'd high-five me; I think he picked me up once or twice (laughs), which is no small feat. So that was just sort of the improvisational aspect of that and sort of constantly being surprised by what they had up their sleeve was a lot of fun for me.

Patton: With the commercials has come plenty of notoriety -- although his own letter carrier has yet to recognize him as "Al." Happily, that's not the case for the clerks at Bradecich's local Post Office -- or for his young daughter.

Bradecich: I have never officially met my letter carrier at my house here in California, although I have sort of casually introduced myself, he has never recognized me from the brief interactions that we've had, and I always feel that it would be awkward to sort of force recognition upon him and say, "Hey, by the way -- look at the face...uh, familiar? Yeah -- I'm that guy." That just never feels right, but I do have a good relationship with a few people over at my branch because of some other work that I do -- a movie that I worked on, I end up sending DVDs out to film festivals and all these different places. So, I was in my branch last year *very* regularly; probably at least once a week. And at one point after about a year of going in there, one of the desk clerks, Glen, recognized me and sort of looked at me and said, "Uh, wait a second...is that?" and he looked behind him and there was a picture of me directly behind him and I was standing directly in front of him. He kind of looked back and forth between the picture and me a few times and pieced it together.

One time in particular, I remember, and it was early on in the campaign and my daughter went to go see a movie at the theatre with a friend of hers, and one of the Post Office commercials came on, *on the big screen*, which was really ex- ...like seeing me next to one of her favorite princesses up on the big screen in the theatre while she's eating her popcorn? That earned me a lot of credibility around the house. I was about 5 percent cooler for a couple days after that.

Patton: While the commercials do help pay the bills, Bradecich also feels a responsibility to the Postal Service and its employees.

Bradecich: Every single time I put on a postal uniform I think about the fact that, you know, I'm going to go in front of this camera, whether it's for TV or for a magazine or for a print that's going to appear in one of the branches or somewhere else, I think about the fact that I am representing the entirety of the Postal Service, in particular the letter carriers because I'm supposed to be a letter carrier myself. And I take it as a huge responsibility. I've been in several commercials before I ever did a Post Office ad and some of them I was a big fan of and they were things I actually used myself, and some of them, not so much! Some of them you do because it's a job and it's a chance to pay the bills, but with the Postal Service it's definitely one of those where, even in my off hours I'm happy to talk about the products -- talk about not only the flat-rate boxes, or the Every Door Direct Mail or the APCs (Automated Postal Centers) that I'm a huge fan of myself. There's a lot going on with that organization.

Watkins: The new commercials featuring "Al" and Every Door Direct Mail began airing in early March. The ads will appear during several national broadcasts, including news programs and sports events. If you'd like to hear more of our talk with Mike Bradecich, please click the "Comments" link on the Your Postal Podcast webpage, or email us and let us know. If enough listeners respond, we'll include more from the interview on our next podcast.

Veteran Mailhandler Segment

Watkins: Our next story takes us to New Hampshire where Brian Sperry introduces us to a veteran mailhandler whose postal career predates the ZIP Code.

Brian Sperry: Dwight D. Eisenhower was President when Ray Lamy walked into the Manchester, New Hampshire, Post Office looking for a job. He passed the civil service exam and was hired as an indefinite or non-career employee. Early in his career, Lamy did it all for the Post Office Department.

Ray Lamy: At that point in time, you could do anything. You could carry a route, you could throw mail. They were just switching over to trucks from the railway system. I started loading trucks at the old Post Office. It was a four-hour job. They said "Are you interested?" Sure, why not? (Laughs.)

Sperry: As a non-career employee, Lamy had to retake the civil service exam every few years.

Lamy: Every time they had the test you had to retake the test over again in order to remain on the roster. But that wasn't a bad thing at all.

Sperry: Fifty-two years later he still works for the Postal Service as a mail handler at the Manchester Processing and Distribution Center. He's seen the organization change a lot through the years.

Lamy: Well, I would say it's a little more efficient, a little more machinery. Everything was done by hand in the old days. So it has gone by leaps and bounds I would say.

Sperry: There are several key attributes found in a good mail handler, says Lamy.

Lamy: It sounds very trite, but keep your nose to the grindstone and try to do the best you can.

Sperry: By the time 10:30 rolls around each night, you'll find Lamy feeding flats into flat sorters. He credits those who came before him for the way he approaches his job each day.

Lamy: I was well trained by some of the older mail handlers, who were quite dedicated. One guy in particular, his name was Leo, he was very conscientious and very hard working. So I think I kind of modeled myself after him.

Sperry: So is retirement in his future?

Lamy: Everybody tells me, "You're working for four bucks an hour." I say, yeah I know. I'll be ready to retire shortly. Fifty-four years, that's what the record is. So a year or two and I would equal it. I probably would never beat it. It's been a fun career; it really has, very enjoyable.

News Roundup

Watkins: And now, here's a roundup of recent Postal Service news: In February, the Postal Service announced major changes to its network of mail processing facilities. Subject to adoption of a final rule changing its delivery service standards, USPS is

pursuing a significant consolidation of its national network of mail processing facilities that will reduce the number of facilities from 461 by approximately one half by the end of 2013. The consolidations will not occur before May 15, 2012, and the Postal Service will suspend most of its mail processing consolidation efforts during the fall election season in anticipation of heavy mail volume during that period. Consolidating operations is necessary if the Postal Service is to remain viable to provide mail service to the nation.

For more information, go to usps-dot-com-slash-Our-Future-Network.

Thanks for listening to Your Postal Podcast. Now, we'd like to hear from you. Please click the "Comments" link on the YourPostalPodcast-dot-com webpage, or email us at YourPostalPodcast at usps-dot-com with feedback or story ideas for future shows. Our special thanks to Meiko Patton for her contributions to this month's program. This has been a production of USPS Western Area Corporate Communications. Copyright 2012, All Rights Reserved.

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