

ENTERTAINMENT

Deep Thoughts

May Your Tribe Increase Bob!

By Vengrai Parthsarthy

Bob Cook is not a nameless, faceless postman as in India. He is the mail carrier on a vital route. He does not hoist his postal articles on his shoulders weighed down by the sheer weight of it all. He drives his own car as he goes round delivering the post for the day. He parks his car at a vantage, central point and shoves the letters and the junk mail (which in America is inescapable) in the mail box. Each owner or tenant has a mail box outside his home. Where people live in apartments in a township they have individual boxes in one central location with locking arrangements.

One great advantage that Bob Cook has over his Indian counterpart is that he is authorized to sell postal stationery, something unheard of in India perhaps because the carrier has to handle quite a bit of cash. And, in America, all transactions are based on trust which is not exactly the case in India.

Around Christmas time, Bob leaves a message for you offering to supply your requirements of stamps "something I'm glad to do not only at X-mas but throughout

the year." If you have Christmas packages to mail, Bob offers the suggestion that you may send it by "Priority Mail" which will get the packets to their destination in two days. Bob Cook is a knowledgeable man; he will explain the advantages of his service over UPS or Federal Express.

If you dread standing in long lines, Bob says he will mail them for you - if you would leave a check to the postmaster for what you think it might cost. He will settle accounts with you for any shortage or overpayment. For overnight delivery Bob offers Express Mail and "it is very reliable," assures Bob. Of course, not all mail carriers are Bob.

"If you have any postal needs, maybe I can save you some valuable time" underlines or epitomizes Bob's philosophy of work. It is his *raison d'être*. He says waiting in the line in the post office can be "maddening." He is also at your service if you wish to avail yourselves of stamps by mail. It usually takes about 4 days before the stamps arrive by mail. If you want the stamps earlier all you have to do is to keep your written request clearly visible in the mail box along with the cash and the next day the twenty 32 cent stamps (\$6.40) or whatever you want will be in your mail box. You don't have the problem of someone filching the money in the mail box - a situation for which there is no guarantee in India.

If you are going out of station, Bob will hold the mail for you if you let him know the dates you will be leaving and returning. Each mail box has a red flag which you should put up if you want Bob to pick up the mail or want his attention.

"On December 26th I'll be going for knee surgery and I'll be away for a couple of weeks" says Bob, and wants the public to put up with slight delays by the relief workers. How gracious!

The postal service was trying something new during the holiday period - a food collection drive for the needy. "If you have an extra can or two of food you are welcome to leave it in your box tomorrow and I'll pick it up" says Bob voluntarily taking on an extra load of responsibility. And, when Bob concludes his message by wishing everyone a "Merry Christmas" and the best in the coming "New Year" there cannot but be a chorus of "Wish You the Same".

We salute you Bob. May your tribe increase!