OLD BUS REVIEW

January/February 2008, #105 "Old Bus Fever–Until There's a Cure, There's NEATO"



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Old Bus Review #105

This is issue #105 of *Old Bus Review*, published by NEATO (Northeast Association of Transporter Owners, Inc.) Publication dates are during the second weeks of January, March, May, July, September, and November or thereabouts . . . *Heck, we're doin' the best we can under the circumstances!*

Northeast Association of Transporter Owners, Inc. (NEATO) was established to help members maintain, restore, buy, or sell pre-1968 Volkswagen Transporters (Microbuses, Kombis, Campers, Single- and Double-Cab Pickups, etc.) Membership is open to all owners and admirers of these vehicles and ownership of a pre-1968 VW Transporter is **not** a prerequisite to join. Membership in NEATO (which includes a subscription for 6 issues of Old Bus Review and a copy of the Transporter Tourist and Traveler Directory) is \$28 per year. Overseas dues are \$38 per year. Please make checks payable to NEATO. Joining can also be done through our website via PayPal: www.neatoclub.org. Membership dues and changes of address should be sent to:

> NEATO/Membership Coordinator c/o George Bossarte 353 Broadway Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

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Observe proper safety precautions when working around a vehicle, especially an older vehicle. Pay strict attention to a manufacturer's directions, wear safety goggles, gloves, respirators and proper clothing. With proper care, the old car hobby can be accident-free *and* fun

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This Old Bus Review

Dear Members—

Some of you have been with NEATO for years (decades, even!) and some of you are new to the club. The club Council feels it is important to tell you what's been going on lately—in particular, why there hasn't been a newsletter for so long. Those of us who volunteer with the day-to-day running of the club have endured a perfect storm of demanding home and work obligations, crashing computers, even health issues, that have pulled us away from putting out this latest issue of *Old Bus Review*. To use a Bus metaphor, it was like having two flat tires and a blown—engine stuck in the middle of nowhere! We profoundly apologize.

All of us on the NEATO Council agree that there's a need for a club and a newsletter. NEATO provides a valuable function as publisher of good Bus stories and supplier of insurance to all the club chapters for events held throughout the US. However, the Council also recognizes that we need an infusion of new energy from members to keep things going. We need a new newsletter editor (or assistant/apprentice editor), new chapter coordinator, and new ideas from the membership-at-large to serve our Bus community.

To that end, we are having open nominations and an election (see page 3 for more details). NEATO invites anyone interested to nominate him or herself to the governing Council. You will get to work with a great group of fellow enthusiasts from all around the US and Canada—all interested and committed to keeping NEATO running smoothly. Please consider it—it's fun!

Thanks for your loyalty and participation, and for helping to keep this Bus Club on the road!

—The NEATO Council (Peter, George, Rob, Tom, J.P., Jim, and Stan)

P.S. Mailed along with this *OBR* you'll find a copy of the "2007 Old Bus Review Complimentary Issue." We produced this as a free sample newsletter to hand out to Bus Folks around the country. If you already have a copy of this, feel free to pass this one on to a prospective new member. If you'd like "colorized" versions of *OBR* #105, or the *Complimentary Issue*, send an email to: type2tom@earthlink.net. We'll send back a PDF file with all the pretty colors! *Thanks*!

I Drive A Splitty and I Vote!

NEAGO Council Elections

It's time for the election of NEATO Council members. If you're interested in serving on the governing Council of this fine bus club, please write a few sentences about yourself and why you'd like to serve. Your short bio will then be published with other nominations as a ballot that will be sent out to the entire membership. The nine people gathering the most votes will then become the new governing Council of the club (should only 9 or fewer members volunteer for the Council, an election will not be needed and all volunteers will automatically become Council members). The new Councilors will then choose among themselves who will be President, Vice-President, Treasurer. Chapter Coordinator, Secretary, Parliamentarian (responsible for decisions regarding interpretation of by-laws), Membership Coordinator/Data Base Keeper, and other positions to be determined. The Council also chooses the newsletter editor (who can be someone outside the circle of Councilors).

from many different corners of North America, we have two regular tools for communicating and decision-making: our email discussion list, and monthly or bimonthly telephone conference calls. We have found these two methods vitally helpful in conducting club business, and our next busload of Councilors will use these tools.

Our club may be unique among VW clubs in our use of mail-in ballots. Since our membership is so geographically spread, this is the only way we know to give every member a voice and a vote in the affairs of the club. These ballots will be mailed with the next issue of *Old Bus Review*. The current Council invites you, dear member, to consider listing yourself on this ballot.

Involve yourself! NEATO needs you!

2008 marks 22 years since NEATO's founding, and we want to involve new people in charting the

course for the club. We need help from members willing to take time not only for specific duties, but also to generate and contribute ideas!

Since our governing Council has been and will be of folks



Please send your nominations to:

George Bossarte 353 Broadway Cambridge, MA 02139

or email:

gbeng@world.std.com



Gettin' to Know: Mark Pribanic

1) Age? 34.

2) **Married, single? Any kids, pets?** Wife: McCall. We have a black lab (Bonnie Blue), and a cat (Wink).

3) Joined NEATO? September 1993

4) Where are you from? I currently live in Neptune Beach, Florida. It's located in NE Florida not far from Georgia. Born in Savannah, Ga.; lived in West Virginia; The Hague, Netherlands; Ithaca, NY; DeLand, Florida; Canton Ohio; Des Moines, Iowa; Lake Worth, Florida and Atlantic Beach, Florida.

5) **Tell us about your first Bus?** Bought my first Bus in 1993 as a Junior at Stetson University. Paid \$800, was a '65 Sundial type conversion kit, L87. Owned it for 4 years, sold

it to get my '58 single cab.

6) What motivated you to buy your first Bus? Classic looks and styling. To go surfing in New Smyrna Beach and camping in between classes and on the weekends.

7) **How many Buses have you owned?** 7 Total: 1956 SC, 1958 SC, 1964 SC, 1965 13W Deluxe, 1965 Westy, 1966 Deluxe, 1967 Westy. Currently have the '58 SC, '65 13W & '66 13W.

8) **Do you wrench on your own Buses or farm out?** Farmed out the first 4 years of owning a bus. I had no mechanical aptitude or space to work on it. In '97-'98 had the space, friends and will power to learn. Now, I do all of my own work. Occasionally, asking friends for guidance.



9) **Stock or Slammed**? Prefer stock but can appreciate a well done lowered Bus.

10) Best road trip done in your Bus?

Would have to be the Appalachian mountains or any day at the beach.

11) Favorite Color Combo of a Bus?

Anything stock and uncommon: Velvet green; Palm Green/Sand Green; Turkis/ Postal Yellow.

12) **Best breakdown story:** Bought a Westy and was towing it home. Three miles from previous owner's house the front wheel passes me going down a rural highway. Right into a briar patch. I never checked to see if the spindle nuts were there. Of course, driver's side was not. Didn't know at the time it was reverse thread. Took me over a week to figure that one out. Some of my bus friends call me lefty due to this incident.

13) Dream Bus? Early Barndoor 1950-1953.Preferably a barndoor single cab or barndoor15W deluxe (if there ever really was one).

14) **Custom paint or OG color?** Prefer an original paint Bus. If resprayed, would choose OG color.

15) **Favorite bus accessory or add on**? I'm a sucker for dealer license plate frames and "year of" tag. All of my buses wear vintage "year of" tags.

16) Any other vintage vehicles? 1958Porsche 356 Coupe & a bunch of old bicycles (11)

17) **Tell us something you're proud of, nonbus related?** Won two state golf titles in high school.

18) **Any advice to new Bus owners?** Get to know your local bus crowd, join NEATO, surf the web for research and resources (thesamba.com). Buy a Bentley's and John Muir's idiots guide.

19) **Tunes?** Classic Rock, Trance, Alternative, Punk and Reggae. Most anything that's catchy.

> 20) What do you due to support your Bus habit? Senior Account Manager in Sales.

21) Worst/funniest trend with Buses? 1980's/1990' s day-glow paint jobs (bright neon pinks, yellows and greens)

22) Samba Id name: mpribanic.

Mark Pribanic is the organizer of Bulli Brigade #14, the Bus event held on November 10, 2007 in St. Petersburg, Florida.



Tired of Life?

By Rainer Mueller

Recently when I wanted to transport some kids in my '57 Kombi, one couple said that their kids could not come along. The bus was not safe because it had no seatbelts.

A short time later a gas station attendant was telling me of his past experiences as a VW mechanic. After the joy of seeing a reminder of his youth had passed, he became thoughtful. Among the many stories of happy customers were also horrible memories of crushed legs, shattered heads and other injuries resulting from the early buses complete lack of safety equipment.

With an insecure feeling I drove my bus home and parked it in the garage. The following day I paused, after climbing into my new Passat, and studied the interior equipment: automatically adjusting seatbelts, headrests both front and rear, two airbags, ABS, collapsible steering column, a large "crush zone" in front, a dash made of skull-friendly plastic, safety glass, and enormously safe handling characteristics.

And then there was my bus: no belts, zero crush zone, the original 6.40 x 15 bias ply tires, the pendulum rear axle with handling reminiscent of the pitching of a boat, the ever-present steering wheel slop, single-circuit drum brakes, and lots of nice hard steel to knock ones head against. On top of all this, a bus with a 36 HP engine is a continual traffic hindrance which drives drivers of modern vehicles to often dangerous passing maneuvers.

I sat petrified in my Passat as these thoughts whizzed through my head: "You're responsible to three kids and a wife. You insist that they travel in the bus. How can you justify the danger presented to your family by your old car craziness?"

The following days were no better. My fascination for old buses and the accompanying dreams of road trips were constantly attacked by concerns of safety. A veritable quandary! Since then I have given the problem considerable thought from a variety of viewpoints.

Our modern oh-so-secure times have some intrinsic disadvantages; we find ourselves surrounded

by a buffer of assurances, safety precautions and certain foreseeable paths our lives can follow, so that danger as such is suppressed and sealed out of our lives. Everything is under control.

I suddenly realized that I don't want this secure mindset, that parts of it were even repulsive. Today we find ourselves somehow in a giant airbag! So much is so soft and so safe that no matter how a person falls or how stupid he acts he isn't hurt. The fact still remains, though, that life is life-threatening, and can end in a moment. The more one realizes this, the freer and less encumbered his life will be.

I believe many modern safety measures are an attempt to digitize, and thus allay our fear of the unforeseeable. An adventure has an element of danger. If there is no danger, there is no adventure!

Advertisers' prattle touting amusement park adventures and experiences is stupid. Children garner false experiences, over-organized, commercialized events whose results are totally predictable. The most wonderful experiences I have ever had (and continue to have) are those that were dangerous, where something unpredictable could have happened. My story of my reluctant trip down a mountain road on a folding bike with no brakes continues to make a good tale. But no one cares in the least about my account of an amusement park ride.

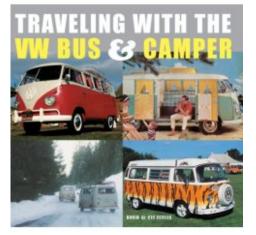
Everyone needs a true dash of danger. Otherwise one bounces around in this modern, flabby, padded world so long that he has to get his kicks bungee jumping or vicariously through sporting events.

After these strong arguments with myself, I can now gladly climb into my bus just as it is, without seatbelts.

And I again look forward without reservation to our long planned trip to Greece next year: the whole family, large roof rack, tent and lots of camping gear; with 36 HP over steep mountain passes, hairpin curves and thousands of kilometers. Yes, I even think my kids will have an adventure to talk about for a long time to come . . . that is, if they survive!

Translated by Burt Reif

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Welcome New NEATO Members!

Burke Caley, Renton, Washington ('58 23, '60 SO23 Westfalia) Joanne & Arthur MacDonald, Naples, Florida Ray Hair, Denton, Texas ('64 Std, '64 Samba, '65 & 2 '67s 13 Window, '67 Panel, '67, '69, & '78 Deluxes, '67 Custom, '70, '71, & '72 Westys) *Clay & Mary Smith, North Franklin, Connecticut (several buses owned!) *Cris Torlasco, Albany, New York ('58 Single Cab, '60 & '66 & '91 Westfalias) *Kevin Thornton, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada ('56 Single Cab, '60 Panel, '65 21-Window, '86 Syncro, '91 Vanagon) Christian Cardona, Denver, Colorado Mark A. Boshko, Ellsworth, Maine ('67, '76, '72, '67 (in order)) Jeffrey Hicken, Flagtown, New Jersey ('65 Kombi) *Mark Callahan, Athens, Georgia ('65 Sunroof Standard) Jim Gylfe, Sun Valley, California *Rich McKay, Gaithersburg, Maryland ('66 Bus) Thomas D. Pieszchala, Laporte, Indiana ('66 Transporter) Terry L. Richburg, Crowley, Texas ('56 Panel, '61 DC, '61 SO-23, '65, '65, '67) Sammie L. Smith, Nacogdoches, Tex. ('60 DC, '60 Panel, '65 SC, '65 SO-42, '65 SO-42)

* = Old Members, renewing after an absence

Mid-Life Crisis Bus Story

By Michael Kluckner

Part I

ne day in the waning months of the 20th century, a man drove his Honda Accord to a warehouse in an industrial part of the city to get his cappuccino machine serviced. To his surprise, across the street was a storefront outfit called Bow Wow auto parts, a venerable dealer of all things Volkswagen, especially the "after-market" parts, manufactured in places like Brazil and Mexico, that were considerably cheaper than the factory-made ones from Germany. In his youth a quarter-century earlier, he had spent more money at Bow Wow than at any place other than the beer store.

Lost in a reverie of long hair, greasy skinned knuckles and buses up on blocks on the front lawn of his old rooming house, he started to climb out of the Accord when a vintage canary-yellow split-window bus pulled up at the Bow Wow store, the noise of its exhaust vibrating the vintage fillings in his teeth. The driver's door opened and a young guy with short hair, a T-shirt and shorts jumped out and walked swiftly inside.

Seized by curiosity, he walked across the street, sizing up the bus. Its yellow paint job met a line of body filler just above the rocker panels – the place where they all get cancer first. There was also some rust, obvious from the bubbled paint, at the base of its prow, right where the passenger's feet rested. That had been the undoing of his last bus, the '65 with the home-made pop-top: the front of it was a million flakes of rust flying in formation. No stomping the feet in time to the music in that car, he thought, or you'd end up like Fred Flintstone in his stone-age runabout.

It was almost 20 years since he sold it and went sensible with small Japanese sedans, but he had once been a proud member of the Order of the Volkswagen Bus, taking the vows of poverty (by only owning stuff that would fit in the bus) and utility (by knowing how to keep it running himself). Now he was dragged down by a complicated, busy life, and laden with unnecessary responsibilities and useless possessions, like a cappuccino machine. Could he recapture even a whiff of the unfettered joys of youth with its boundless future?

The bus was a Kombi model, with three windows on each side. He peered in through them in the gaps between the ex-Afghani, bought-at-a-garagesale-and-handstitched-by-somebody-wearingbaseball-mitts curtains. A large white dog slept on the floor, its body fitted amongst a scattering of tools and parts. The interior was paneled in cheap brown veneer, with a few stowage drawers and cupboards like a really tacky houseboat. A small fire extinguisher was bolted to the wall. The rear "bed" was a hinged seat set upright and ready for passengers, covered in thick foam with a stained cotton Indian print, matted with white dog hair, over it. Perhaps the grandparents were driven to church in it on Sundays, he thought cynically. This was no camper, no Westphalia wonderbus for those happy family outings in the Tyrol, the Sound of Music playing on the eighttrack. It was a hippie-mover that had somehow survived the catharsis of the last quarter-century – junk-bond dealers, Bill Gates, Sport Utility Vehicles with heated leather seats and drivers with low sperm counts.

Part of him recoiled from its primitive, grubby tackiness. The rest said, "this was once me." He had just walked around to the back of the bus, noting approvingly the bumper sticker that said: "You'd Drive Better If That Phone Was Stuck Up Your Ass," when the owner emerged from the store, carrying a new muffler in one hand and a bag containing seals and bolts in the other. He was about 25, single silver earring each side, fairly clean-shaven, hair only a little spiky, striking blue eyes sort of like Paul Newman – a handsome young guy. Whip out the earrings and put a suit on him and he could be selling mutual funds to pensioners. He appeared mildly bemused by the older man. "Poor old fart," he was probably thinking, "nothing to do but relive his youth."

The man introduced himself. confirmed the first impression by saying he had had a bus "just like this one" – he almost said "sonny" in a trembling Jimmy Stewart voice to the young man, whose name was Kevin – then suddenly heard himself asking if it was for sale. "Where did that question come from?" his inner voice asked.



Just another amusing interlude in the life of the middleaged, he thought as he drove home. Really, buying it was out of the question. The inside of the bus was appalling – doubtless the scene of all sorts of sordid vouthful rites involving people whose response to criticism or rules would be, "Hey, what's your problem, dude! People just wanna be free!"

Kevin's

aloof demeanour crumbled just a little and he stammered, "... well, uh, I guess I...," before going mute. Regaining his composure, he zipped around the back and opened the engine cover, stood back and pronounced proudly, "it's really clean!" And it was, given that he had no chance to run out and get it steam-cleaned. A new coil, still with its Bosch logo visible, was attached to the fan shroud. There were no hanks of hair or pieces of finger or other greasy bits lying around. He had had it for four years, he said, and had the engine professionally rebuilt at a time "when I had the coin, man." Actually, he didn't say "man," as he was from the wrong generation, but the word hung in the air like a distant echo.

There was a little play in the front end, he said, that he knew would have to get adjusted. Bet there's been a little play on that mattress, too, thought the older man. He asked Kevin how much.

"Uh, 4,000 - I couldn't let it go for anything less than that."

"I've got to think about it. I'll be in touch in a day or two," said the older man, adding an unspoken thought, "unless I have a sudden attack of common sense." ***

Nevertheless, he thought he ought to check it out. Epiphanies didn't come easily anymore, and he was concerned that he had become too settled to try anything new or, indeed, even to retry anything old. But, being a conservative, truly middle-aged sort of a person, he realized he could only proceed cautiously, like the guy at a high school reunion who dances hot and slow with an ancient girlfriend but has no real desire to spend the night with her. Maybe the purchase of an old bus would fit the bill?

* * *

He dialed Kevin's number. The phone rang a few times, then was picked up. A wall of guitar-rock sound, or cat-torturing, then a sleepy-sounding voice.

"Hullo?"

"Oh, Kevin, I met you outside Bow Wow yesterday, I'm interested in your bus."

"Yeah, yeah"

"Uh, could I come by tomorrow and look at it again, maybe drive it \ldots ?"

"Tomorrow, umm . . . no, I gotta work late."

He paused for a moment, as the ripping guitars in the background reached a frantic crescendo.

"What about Thursday?" he asked. "I'll be home about 5."

"Perfect." He gave the address, a street in a part of town that was "transitional," meaning it was hard to say whether it was going up or down.

In his Honda, he picked his way down a narrow street between two lines of parked cars, some of which had a complete set of inflated tires; it was a block with houses too scruffy to have attracted the yuppie restorers, so it sat awaiting an eventual apartment rezoning. Rents would be cheap. There, ahead on the left, was the bus.

He parked and went up to the door of a small stucco house; on the stoop of the place next door, a glassy-eyed, stringy-haired man nodded acknowledgement. Or maybe he just nodded. Kevin's door was open, revealing a small living room. A poster taped to the wall advertised a rock band with an aggressive name. A pile of stereo equipment occupied one corner. There was a chair with ripped arms, a barbell in the middle of the floor, and a toolbox and a telephone on a little wooden table. He tapped on the aluminum screen door and a minute or so later Kevin emerged.

As he had the first time, Kevin went directly to the engine compartment and opened the creaky little door. "See, I got that new muffler on," he said. The older man walked around to the front of the bus and lay down on the road where he could look up at the front suspension. Some new clips and clamps had been added to tie it together. Yes, there was some rust, but it didn't seem too bad.

He got the key from Kevin and climbed in over the wheel well and skidded his bum onto the driver's seat. He'd forgotten, it was like being in a cave. If he bent forward just a little he had a good view out the front and could see more or less okay out the sides, but the back window seemed to be in another county. The effect was heightened by the Afghani draperies, which permitted a few shafts of sunlight to penetrate into the dusty gloom. He was seized by the sensation that he was about to take a basement suite for a drive.

He turned the key, the starter whirred and, somewhere back behind him both spatially and

chronologically, the engine burst into life. The VW air-cooled din – tin and fan noise and the drumming exhaust – was amplified in the coffin-like fuselage. And there was a smell. A muddle of confusing sensations swarmed up into his gut – it was the '70s again, he was in his 20s.

"Just wait a minute," Kevin said suddenly. "I've forgotten mah dog." They were back before he had done the whole H with the gearshift, remembering the long throws, the push down with the shoulder to get through the reverse-gear gate, and the peculiar clonking sound the gearshift made when it came out of reverse into neutral. The dog lay down amidst the tools and rubbish, happy to go for any ride at all.

He pulled forward, cranked the wheel to miss the parked car in front, and got it up to about 10 in first, the fan and engine roaring, then second, the road quite bumpy and poorly paved ahead. The bus began to porpoise a little. Another familiar sensation from long ago, all but forgotten like the waterbed what'sher-name had. Yet another sensation – he was sitting in front of the front wheels, like the weight on the end of a balance beam, moving up and down, up and down, being rocked.

The steering was truck-heavy, the steering wheel almost horizontal, and something clunked when he turned the wheel hard. King pins? As he drove along and got out onto a main street he became increasingly aware of yet another sound, like gravel being stirred around in a coffee can. It got louder the faster the bus went, so it had to be in the transaxle or the reduction gears. A problem.

A few more blocks and he had looped around and decided that the price would have to drop. Kevin agreed that it was something that would need fixing eventually, but said: "I'd just kick myself if I let it go any less." He had a girlfriend, see, and the two of them and Rover liked to go on camping trips, so ... the older man just walked away.

Michael Kluckner is a Canadian artist and writer living in Australia. Parts 2 & 3 of Mid-Life Crisis Bus Story will appear in the next issues of **Old Bus** *Review*.

Original art on page 9 by the author.

Letters from Members

Brekina Limited Edition (500) Rare 6-Door Deluxe Brazil Taxi Bus Model

From Peter Valentin, October 20, 2007

Hi, NEATO,

Many years ago, in former times, when Tom Brouillette was there, I was an 'exchange-member' of NEATO and (still am since 1988) of German bus club <u>www.BulliKartei.de</u>, started the Barndoor Registry (now in the hands of Tonny Larsen / Denmark -<u>www.barndoor.dk</u>) and even met Tom at the Lottermann-all-barndoor-over-40-years-anniversary-meet

at Bad Camberg in 1995.



Postage included (may be less, these are prices for shipping to Brazil) PayPal or credit-card:

1 model 20 Euros (approx. \$28 USD) 2 models 32 Euros (approx. \$45 USD)

Find other split bus T1 modelcars on the site: **www.mrs-modellautos.de**:

For questions please write an e-mail to **mrs-modellautos@t-online.de**

Atenciosamente, viele Grüße, best regards,

Peter Valentin Aschaffenburg, Germany peter@valentin-projects.de

Editor's reply: Thanks for the info, Peter! Looks like a neat-o Brekina model! Tom Brouillette is still around: I believe he's parked hisself in Philadelphia somewhere. Keep in touch!

After I had unfortunately sold 'AB 51', the original grey January 1951 bus, to the US in 2000, I found my latest old bus in Brazil, one of the legendary type 201 6-doors deluxe, 1975 (!) used as a TAXI from new until 2004.

Today I got the information—which you might spread, if interesting, that the new Brekina Limited Ed. (500) - 6 doors deluxe split bus Brazil Taxi - T1b 1975 (!) VW do Brasil type 201 models are for sale now.

This model made by German Split Bus Club Bulli Kartei is a unique special model 2007, made by Brekina / Germany, to commemorate 50 years production of VW busses in Brazil, each with a numbered certificate 001 – 500. This is probably the only model of the rare VW do Brasil type 201 6-doors deluxe split bus. Please see BulliKartei shop: <u>http://www.bullikartei.de/cms/modules/tiny</u> <u>content/index.php?id=18</u> or <u>www.mrs-</u> <u>modellautos.de</u> Got a letter to NEATO/Old Bus Review that you've been itching to write? Send it to:

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Or via regular old-fashioned stamped USPS to:

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