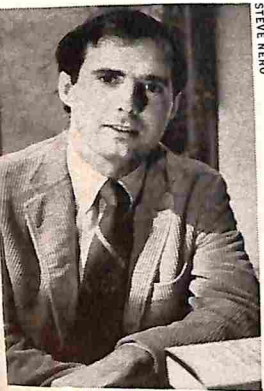


A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Cloaks, daggers, clandestine cash, and spooks were the agenda last week as the U.S. and the world asked new questions about CIA operations. The TIME correspondents dispatched to report on our cover story had an old acquaintance with the curious ways of intelligence operators, both foreign and domestic. "I've spent much of the last five years of my journalistic career worrying about spooks of one stripe or another," says Washington Correspondent Stanley Cloud, who in 1969-70 served in our Moscow bureau. "There the problem was the KGB," recalls Cloud. "We worried about phone taps, room bugs, whether we were being followed and just who among the Russians was and was not an agent."



TALBOTT



MERRICK

Cloud's next assignment helped give him background for this week's cover subject: "In Southeast Asia, it was not the KGB but the CIA that was a concern of most journalists. In Laos, where the CIA conducted a secret war, our every move was known and, we assumed, plotted on some map somewhere. The CIA was everywhere, but claimed to be nowhere."

For State Department Correspondent Strobe Talbott, who contributed the main part of the story, the CIA was suddenly right there last week when Director William Colby granted TIME a rare on-the-record interview. This was quite a departure for the former Eastern European correspondent, who spent several years steering clear of all contact with the CIA. He explains: "In the Communist countries, Western newsmen are widely regarded by local authorities as licensed spies. That made us all the more chary about getting near the agency and its outposts, even for the legitimate purpose of seeing what the CIA was up to."

Our account of CIA involvement in Chile was written by Associate Editor Edwin Warner and reported mainly by Washington's Latin American specialist Jerry Hannifin, with supplementary material from London Correspondent William McWhirter and Buenos Aires Bureau Chief Rudolph Rauch, who covered the overthrow of Allende. While reporting from Chile last year at the time of the truck drivers' strike before the coup, Rauch had asked a group of truckers who were enjoying a hearty barbecue on the tailgate of one of the vehicles blocking the road leading into Santiago just where they had got the money for such a feast. "From the CIA," was the laconic reply, and the incident was included in our Sept. 24, 1973 story. What seemed like a joke then has since turned out to be more than that. Some of the truck drivers may indeed have been getting money from the CIA.

In New York, Reporter-Researcher Sarah Bedell queried academics on the role of the CIA and checked the main story, which was written by Associate Editor Frank Merrick. Although a former correspondent, Merrick had never had an encounter with the CIA. "But then, being in the Boston and Chicago bureaus, I wouldn't have," says Merrick. "At least I don't think so."

Ralph P. Davidson

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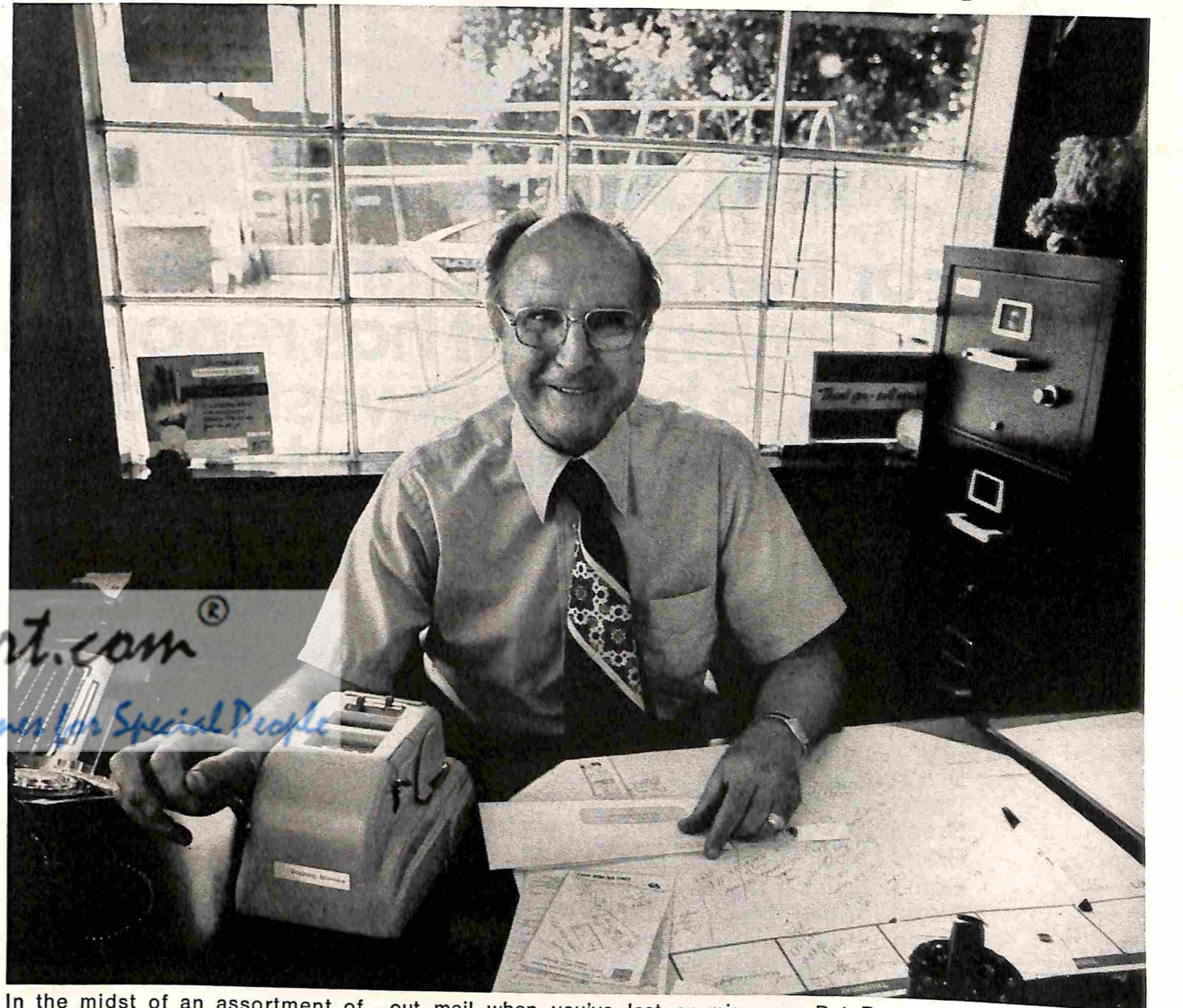
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Why Rex Walters uses a Pitney Bowes postage meter to mail a dozen letters a day.



In the midst of an assortment of swings, slides, jungle gyms and teeter-totters on N.W. Tenth in Oklahoma City is the cinder-block bungalow that houses the administrative office of the company that makes and distributes them. And that's the Rex Sales Company, Inc.

Just about all it takes to fill that bungalow are its two desks and the men behind them, Rex Walters and Joe Gillenwater.

The heavy-duty playground equipment and toys that the staff of 3 or 4 turns out in a nearby building go to elementary schools, nursery schools, parks, apartment houses, and of course, some private individuals.

Business correspondence with these customers was posing a problem for Rex since it's tough to send

out mail when you've lost or misplaced your stamps. Which Rex found he was constantly doing.

Worst of all, of course, were the times he had stamps, but in the wrong denominations. (Sort of like having two aspirins, but no water.)

So to stamp and seal all the company's statements, invoices, and general correspondence, Rex rented our little desk model postage meter.

The convenience he needed, he got. But he got some other benefits, too.

As Rex says, "Not only don't I have to worry about having the right amount of stamps any more, in the right denominations, but I don't have to worry about licking and applying them, either. And I make a lot fewer trips to the Post Office."

But Rex is particularly pleased that the meter imprint makes his mail "neater and more professional-looking."

And he hasn't changed his mind about it in six years.

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