

The Potter and the Postmaster



Norman S. Halliday

How would you like to be faced with the problem of needing 45 million gallons of gasoline this month? That, unfortunately, is the headache of Norman S. Halliday, AB 50, who as Assistant Postmaster General of the United States, is extensively involved in the energy crisis and its impact on the delivery of Christmas mail.

Halliday traded a law practice in Washington, D.C., for his new job last April 7, and has been working a 16-hour day ever since.

"In December, the U.S. Postal Service uses one-and-a-half times its average monthly consumption of fuel," said Halliday. He continued, "The situation is critical; especially since airlines have knocked out many late evening flights that carry much of the mail. We are asking people to send their cards and packages at least a week earlier than they normally would. To insure that mail is delivered before the 25th, first class mail should be sent by Dec. 8, and air-mail by Dec. 15."

When he isn't worrying about fuel shortages, Halliday acts as the Postmaster General's representative in Congress and other governmental agencies. The bulk of his work is legislative, and he spends many hours a day answering legislative and governmental complaints. "Every year we move through my office about 36,000 letters, most of which are from congressmen."

Halliday is not an unfamiliar face to Washington U. alumni. Many remember him as a lineman and

captain of the WU football team in 1949. In 1971 and 1972 he was chairman of the Washington University Alumni Council of Washington, D.C.; and at one time he was a member of the University's Alumni Board of governors. His former wife and four children live in St. Louis.

The U.S. Postal Service delivers over 90 billion pieces of mail each year. Some 85 per cent of its budget involves salaries (700,000 persons receiving \$1.2 billion over the next two years). Because salaries are constantly increased, Halliday confirmed that stamps are going up in price.

"We have recommended to the Postal Rate Commission that the 8 cent stamp go to 10 cents. Under the law, we can put this rate into temporary effect on Jan. 5. However, the Cost of Living Council held a hearing in November, and we don't know what they are going to do. If they say we can't make the rate hike, we will have to go to Congress and ask for money, or decrease service. For every penny increase, we raise \$600 million in revenue.

"When the U.S. Postal Service changed to a semi-independent operation, we inherited a 198-year old dinosaur. It will take us several years before we have a completely efficient organization. But we are working as hard and as fast as we can to constantly improve."