



Bug Me



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By Patty Fels

The following is printed on the receipt I received from the Stanford Post Office when I rented my P.O. box last summer: "Received Box Rent From (Name of patron) with the understanding that his name, address, and telephone number will not be disclosed except for law enforcement purposes or in response to a subpoena or court order." In view of this, how did the University put together the computer printouts which included names, addresses, phone numbers, advisers, and P.O. box numbers and were posted on dorm bulletin boards? No one asked us freshmen for our P.O. boxes until we filled out the fall quarter PTR — and the print-out was dated Sept. 6. Did somebody break the law?—D.A.

Apparently so. The following law went into effect July 1, 1971: "Except as specifically provided by law, no officer or employee of the Postal Service shall make available to the public by any means or for any purpose any mailing or other list of names or addresses (past or present) or postal patrons or other persons."

Specifically, the Stanford Post Office tears off the right halves of the forms which all freshmen fill out to receive Post Office boxes, and sends them to the Academic

Information Center. The AIC then prints various lists, including the one that you mentioned, using this information from the Post Office.

Registrar Sally Mahoney agreed that the whole operation was probably technically in violation of the law, but said that the printout was not actually made available to the "public."

"The reports for the Academic Information Center shouldn't be construed as public information," Mahoney said. "They go to the student's adviser and to the staff in the residence system and they should really be regarded as useful in that context and not public." She admitted, however, that the printouts probably should not have been posted in the dorms.

University officials seemed rather unperturbed about the possible illegality of the issue; in fact, Law Professor John Kaplan labeled the whole question "a ridiculous waste of time." This attitude is most likely due to the absence of any practical legal recourse. About all a student can do is sue to enjoin the local postmaster from further violations of the law — if he has a few thousand spare dollars and a lot of free time.