



"send a postcard and receive a postcard back from a random person in the world!"

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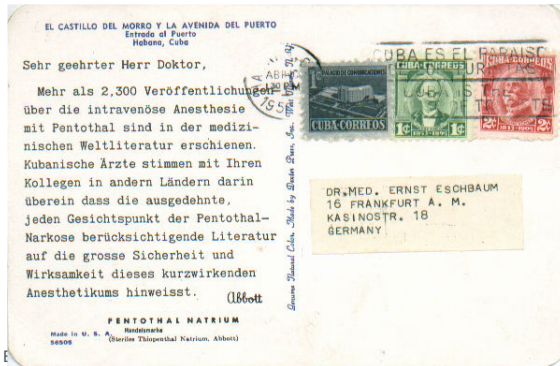
## Postcrossing blog

News, updates and all kind of goodies

### Dear Doctor...

We can probably all agree receiving a postcard in the mail from an exotic faraway place is one of the more exciting things that might happen in a day... but did you know that some decades ago, a pharmaceutical company used this precise notion to come up with one of the most unique marketing schemes of all time? Read on - it's a good story!

Between the years 1954 and 1968, [Abbott Laboratories of Illinois](#) sent out 240,000 postcards every couple of weeks to doctors, nurses, and health facilities all over the world. They manufactured, stamped, and postmarked over 170 unique postcards from 165 different towns in 85 countries. The postcards' authenticity of origin intrigued the recipients, increasing their overall effectiveness.



ent to non-doctors that omitted this greeting and just had the message. The pictures on the cards displayed local scenes portraying the place, culture, or people of the particular country it was mailed from. The entertaining message on the back was written in a friendly tone, and never forgot to plug their prized product—an intravenous anesthetic by the name of [Pentothal](#). This drug, by the way, is still used today not only for its anaesthetic effects, but also in some places for its [truth serum](#) properties!

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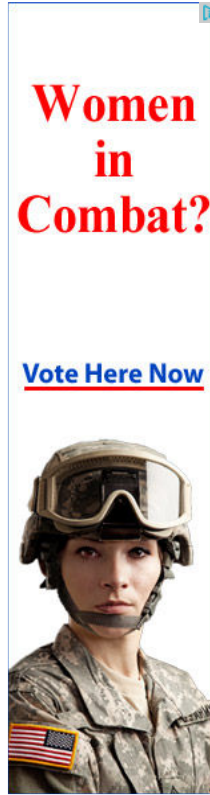
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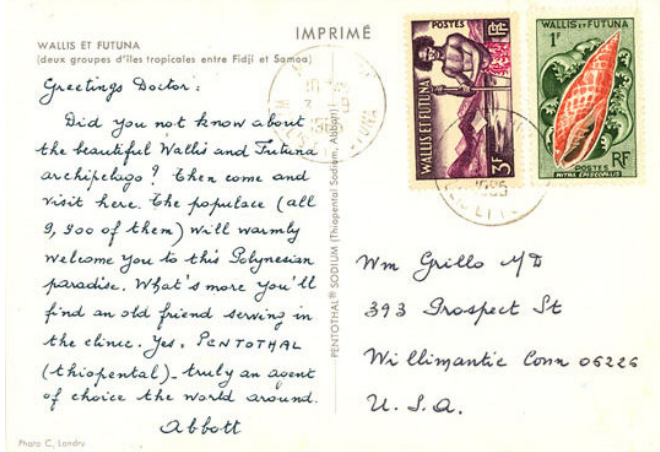
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It is a bit of a mystery how this novel idea originated. In an article by Daniel Friedman, one Abbott employee, Dean Carson, was quoted saying, "I just came up with this idea and they said it was fine." Others speculate it was either the Abbott advertising executive, Tom Bird or Charless Hahn, the Chicago Sun Times stamp editor, who had previously collaborated on a magazine together advertising Abbott products to doctors in Latin America.

Whoever actually invented this genius marketing method back then probably didn't fully realize the extent of popularity these postcards possess among present-day collectors. In September 2012, a bunch of Dear Doctor postcards were sold on eBay raking in hundreds of dollars for each card—the [record price was \\$298!](#)

Impressive, isn't it?

By the way, the photos that illustrate this post come from the collection of Tom Fortunato, who graciously allowed us to use them. Tom runs [deardoctortopostcards.com](#), a website for Dear Doctor postcard collectors - check it out!

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Posted by [meiadeleite](#) on 25 Jan, 2013  
Tags: [history](#), [postcard](#)

### 12 comments so far



an interesting story...  
Posted by [rosenbusch](#) on 25 Jan, 2013



It's interesting to read about the different purposes of postcards throughout history. Very inspiring. Thanks for this post!  
Posted by [Stasele](#) on 25 Jan, 2013



I have some of these ... my favorite one is from Ceylon of a snake charmer ...  
<http://9teen87spostcards.blogspot.com/2011/01/snake-charmer-in-ceylon-sri-lanka.html>  
Posted by [9teen87](#) on 25 Jan, 2013



here is another one of mine from Greenland ..

<http://9teen87postcards.blogspot.com/2012/03/qivitoq-movie-from-greenland.html>

Posted by [9teen87](#) on 25 Jan, 2013



Thank you for an amazing story. I am a professor of pharmacology and I will put this nice story to my lecture. I hope that the students will learn quickly all material connected with interesting things

Posted by [ingali](#) on 25 Jan, 2013



This is such a wonderful bit of postcard history. Thank you!

Posted by [PostMuse](#) on 25 Jan, 2013



WOW!

Posted by [linku](#) on 25 Jan, 2013



the power of a postcard... very interesting story indeed!

Posted by [Luziaceleste](#) on 26 Jan, 2013



Fascinating and an original form of Ad cards

Posted by [Mundos](#) on 26 Jan, 2013



thank you for this interesting article :)

Posted by [nediam\\_nori](#) on 26 Jan, 2013



What a wonderful story and a clever marketing campaign, and I hope I can run across one of these some day. It would be wonderful!

Posted by [MsCookie](#) on 26 Jan, 2013



So interesting! Thanks!

Posted by [Mama-Bear](#) on 27 Jan, 2013

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