Swingin’ Six ZIP Code Promotional Film

Transcript provided by Smithsonian National Postal Museum

[Music, clapping and finger snapping to the rhythm]
[Text]: ZIP Code
Swingin’ Six: ZIP!
[Music, clapping and finger snapping to the rhythm]
[Text]: With the Swingin’ 6
Swingin’ Six: ZIP!
[Music]
Swingin’ Six: Well hello my friend. How do you do? We hope you have a moment or two to listen to what we have to say to each and every one of you.

Swingin’ Six male: It concerns our postal system.

Swingin’ Six: Our lifetime friend, as all of you know. They’ve never failed us through the years, through driving rain, sleet or snow. But now they’ve got a problem, and what are they to do? The answer, my friend is very simple. It’s up to you to see them through. Doo do do do do do.

[Music]

Swingin’ Six: Well, back in the days of the thirteen colonies the cry was freedom and how to defend it. Mailing a letter wasn’t much trouble; there weren’t too many places to send it.

Swingin’ Six male: But now it’s a different story.

Swingin’ Six: They’ve got more mail than ever before. It’s stuffed in bags, stacked on shelves. There’s hardly room for anything more. There’s been a mail explosion! They’ve got a terrible load! You’ve got to help them right away, before the U.S. Post Office explodes! [Clapping to the rhythm]

[Animal noises]

Caveman: Whooooah

[Clunk as caveman hits other caveman with stick]

Narrator: It wasn’t so long ago that communication was a simple act. But the range of the human voice is limited. So, man’s ingenuity found ways to bridge distance. He invented writing, and typographical errors.

[Sounds of traffic and honking horns]
Narrator: To carry messages across vast distances, man developed roads, highways, turnpikes, bunions, [water splashing as feet plunge into tub] calluses, and a rare assortment of aching limbs. [Sound of steam]

[Music]

Narrator: Yes, up until recently, communication remained a simple act. What matter if it took two weeks to go from New York to Atlanta, a month to St. Louis. If the letter from Uncle Ben arrived a day or so later, nobody fussed. The times were tuned to wagon wheels, footpaths, and the puff of wind against sails. Distance was measured by weeks and months. Everything was a far time off. Then, slowly, the country got up steam. Commerce shook off its sea anchor and headed westward, all the width of the continent. There was a new idea: speed.

[Marching band music]

Narrator: Everything was coming up to date in the Kansas Cities and the Portlands. Communications became the most vital aspect of our economy. The post office became the prime artery of commerce. For a time, the Department was perfectly able to keep up. If the mail piled high, put on another piece of equipment. And if that didn’t do the trick, add a few more clerks, or a flock of carriers.

But by World War One, the post office carried more advertising in a week then all the newspapers and magazines could carry in a year. It was the country’s bill collector, check deliverer, errand runner. The volume of mail delivered leaped to twenty billion. By 1948, it had doubled – forty billion. This year, doubled again – nearly eighty billion pieces of mail. Literally, the post office stands to be swamped, overwhelmed, drowned, in a sea of mail. Where do we go from here? Patchwork, piecemeal solutions based upon obsolete transportation routes will not work. The answer has to be as new as the challenge is new. And the post office has the only logical answer.

[Text]: ZIP Code

Narrator: ZIP Code. Mail distribution via the straight line. Always the shortest distance between two distant points. ZIP Code.

[Text]: 94100

Narrator: Five trailblazing numbers like this one, launch every piece of mail with space age speed and precision.

[Music begins]

Swingin’ Six male: Now that’s easy to say, and it sounds just fine, but let’s put this question right on the line. What is the ZIP Code – a postal quirk? What does it do? How does it work? If you’ll lend an ear we’ll be glad to explain how the ZIP code eases your postal pain.

Swingin’ Six female: The first digit tells me what part of the nation your letter will find its destination. Since the country’s divided into ten big sections, each with a number to establish direction, before your letter has even departed, we’ve already got it started.
Swingin’ Six male: The next two digits go hand in hand, to a major post office over land. Since each big section has town after town...

Swingin’ Six female: we need these numbers to really narrow things down. We’ve got the section, we’ve got the city, just two more numbers and we’re sitting pretty.

Swingin’ Six males: These last two digits are really specific. They’re your local post office number. Terrific!

Swingin’ Six male: What a system; as you can plainly see, just five little numbers, quick as can be. But if you have a question or if you have a doubt, if you’re still not sure what the whole thing’s about, just always remember ZIP Code defined means city to city in one straight line. But don’t take it from us.

Swingin’ Six female: Don’t take it from me.

Swingin’ Six male: Try it yourself.

Swingin’ Six female: You’ll see.

Swingin’ Six: It’s a better deal than you’ll get from any other post office department.

[Text]: ZIP Code

Narrator: Yes, ZIP Code is a better deal. Moving the mail in one straight line; straight as an arrow. And on Valentine’s Day, it could be Cupid’s arrow. The time: before ZIP Code. A boy, a girl, a valentine.

Swingin’ Six: There was a boy in New York City who loved a girl by Frisco Bay. He sent a card to say he loved her, to say he cared that special way. His letter zigged and zagged along the way. His lonely letter lagged day after day. She waited more and lonely hours just to hear what he would say, but when his words were finally spoken, all her love had gone astray on a sad, sad Valentine’s Day.

Narrator: And now, another valentine, carefully ZIP coded, here and here. A different girl, still far away by Frisco Bay, but the same boy, a little older and a little wiser.

Swingin’ Six: His letter flew across the country in just one day it reached her hand. In just one day, she knew the answer, the happiest girl in all the land.

[Text]: ZIP Code

Narrator: And those ZIP Code numbers will help clear up two of the major problems that give the Post Office Department fits. See the dead letter office.

[Music begins]

Swingin’ Six male: Have you ever asked yourself this question? Why do postal clerks get indigestion? There are many reasons. I won’t bother to list them. It’s all the stamp glue we take into our system.
Swingin’ Six female: I guess that’s as logical as a man can get, but that’s not the reason for their stomach upset.

Swingin’ Six male: It’s from trying to read the American hand, illegibly written throughout the land.

Swingin’ Six female: This letter will prove exactly what we said. The name of the city simply can’t be read. Oakdale.

Swingin’ Six male: Oakfield.

Swingin’s Six male: Oakhurst.

Swingin’ Six female: Oakpark?

Swingin’ Six male: Oakwood.

Swingin’ Six male: Tuscaloosa.

Swingin’ Six female: Oakpark?

Swingin’ Six male: Tuscaloosa?

Swingin’ Six male: Tuscaloosa?

Swingin’ Six male: Tuscaloosa?

Swingin’ Six male: Now you see what we mean? If the writing’s no good, this letter might as well be carved out of wood.

Swingin’ Six: If you think bad handwriting is only hard on your eyes, just try this problem on for size.

Swingin’ Six male: I’ve got a letter here for someone from Springfield.

Swingin’ Six male: Springfield?

[Music]

Swingin’ Six male: I’m from Springfield, Massachusetts and I’m telling you, pal there’s no place I’d rather be.

Swingin’ Six male: I’m from Springfield, Pennsylvania and there’s been a mistake. This letter is apparently for me.

Swingin’ Six male: I’m from Springfield, Arizona and I want you to know I’ve been waiting for this letter since a weekend ago.

Swingin’ Six: Oh what good does it do to send a letter my way when I’m in Springfield, USA.

Swingin’ Six female: I have looked into this problem, and I’m telling you boys, you’re angry and you have a right to be. There are very many cities with identical names, and Springfield is not the least of these.

Swingin’ Six male: There are twenty four Springfields causing postal delays, and they’re all abbreviated with a two letter phrase.
Swingin’ Six: Oh what good does it do to send a letter my way, when I’m from Springfield, USA.

Swingin’ Six male: There’s a Springfield, AR and a Springfield OH, a Springfield, FLA, and a Springfield, MO.

Swingin’ Six female: A Springfield, IL and a Springfield, ID.

Swingin’ Six male: A Springfield, KY, and a Springfield, SD.

Swingin’ Six female: There’s a Springfield, ND and a Springfield, GA.

Swingin’ Six male: There’s a Springfield, NJ and a Springfield, PA.

Swingin’ Six: There’s a Springfield, OR, and eleven more if you really feel like keeping score. Oh! Oh! Oh! What good does it do to send a letter my way when I’m from Springfield, USA.

Narrator: ZIP Code is bringing the mail explosion under control. It is as up to date as the computer, as timely as the fantastic ZIP Code scanner, electronically reading ZIP Codes and sorting the mail. It is a success, but to make ZIP Code work, you must use it. Remember, only you can put ZIP in your postal system.

[Text]: ZIP Code belongs in every address.

Narrator: To get any ZIP Code numbers you may need, including your own, just call your local post office.

[Music begins]

Swingin’ Six: Keep it all in your head, there’s no better way. Use ZIP Code every day. You know you’ve gotta have a ZIP Code on the envelope, a ZIP Code so you won’t just have to hope. A ZIP Code morning, noon and night, and everything will be alright.

Swingin’ Six male: Well, you get faster service and a lower cost. Fewer mistakes, no time ever lost. A lot less handling along the way.

Swingin’ Six female: No damage for you to pay.

Swingin’ Six: You know you’ve gotta have a ZIP Code on the envelope, a ZIP Code so you won’t just have to hope. A ZIP Code morning, noon and night, and everything will be alright. Well, meet a fellow called Mr. ZIP. What he can do for you will really make you flip. So if you have any further postal demands, we’re gonna leave you in his hands. You know you’ve gotta have a ZIP Code on the envelope, a ZIP Code so you won’t just have to hope. A ZIP Code morning, noon and night, and everything will be alright. And now, my friend, we’ll say so long. We hope you’re singing our ZIP Code song. We’ve told you everything we know. It’s up to you to make ZIP Code go. You know you’ve gotta have a ZIP Code on the envelope, a ZIP Code so you won’t just have to hope. A ZIP Code morning, noon and night, and everything will be alright.

Annimation Coastal Film Service. Executive Producer Ben Gradus. Produced by Lee Rothberg Productions, INC. for the U.S. Post Office Department.

[End]