

Efforts made to make tax-paying more fun

□ **Dunking booths, pies-in-the-face, free postage and blood pressure tests are all being offered by the U.S. Postal Service to make tax day seem almost enjoyable.**

For \$1, taxpayers in Santa Rosa, Calif., will have the pleasure of throwing a pie in the face of an IRS agent.

In Harrisburg, Pa., filers can — and no doubt, will — pay to dunk tax collectors in a tank.

And in Manhattan's main post office, tax day will be a circus — literally.

It's all part of a trend by the U.S. Postal Service to arrange music, food and fun for folks making the trek to local post offices to beat or meet the tax filing deadline.

Monday is the big day for most of the nation, delayed from the

normal April 15 because that fell on the weekend. Taxpayers in New England and upstate New York, who send their returns to Andover, Mass., have until midnight Tuesday because Monday is a state holiday in Massachusetts.

Dunking booths are popular this year, with people dressed as Uncle Sam or tax collectors taking the plunge.

In Annapolis, Md., fees paid to dunk Uncle Sam will benefit the Leukemia Society while the local AIDS-assistance network will receive the money raised in Harrisburg, Pa. Taxpayers who successfully dunk a "tax man" in Concord, Calif., will win free postage for their tax form.

In Santa Rosa, the pie-throwing fees will go to the family of a local deputy sheriff killed recently. Several tax agents have volunteered to take turns in the event, say local postal officials.

Ringling Brothers Circus is providing elephants and clowns

to encourage New Yorkers to mail early in the day, and there will be giveaways of headache remedies, antacids and food for the 50,000 people expected.

The Springfield, Mass., post office is renowned for such a good party that some residents save their taxes until the last day. This year's program features quartets of postmasters singing "Mailhouse Rock," a concert by the University of Massachusetts jazz band and samples of spaghetti and meatballs donated by local merchants.

Ice cream is on the menu at post offices in San Francisco, Lubbock, Texas and Charlotte, N.C.

Pizza, free stamps or T-shirts will be given out by local radio personalities at post offices in Richmond and Roanoke, Va., New Orleans, Philadelphia and Fayetteville, N.C.

Abilene, Texas, has scheduled a street party outside the main post office. There will be coffee and doughnuts at the Daytona Beach, Fla., post office and coffee and cookies in Olympia, Wash.

In Oakland, Calif., taxpayers

don't even have to go to the post office — returns will be collected by postal workers at 10 East Bay BART subway stations.

West Sacramento taxpayers will be offered samples of the "Presidential Chili" enjoyed by President Clinton on his recent visit to California.

T-shirts reading "IRS Took the Shirt off My Back" will be handed out by a radio station at the Charleston, W. Va., post office.

Pittsburgh postal workers will hand out pencils with the Postal Service symbol and the boast: "No Tax Dollars Used Since 1982."

On a more sober note, nurses will be on hand at the Staten Island, N.Y. post office to provide blood-pressure screening to taxpayers.

Tax agents, volunteer accountants and others will offer assistance to last-minute taxpayers at hundreds of post offices.

And various headache and stomach medicines will be offered in Atlanta, San Francisco and Philadelphia, New York and other metropolitan areas.

IRA, British show signs of continuing battle

□ **Seven month cease-fire may end because neither country will give up its weapons.**

CROSSMAGLEN, Northern Ireland (AP) — Last year, when IRA sharpshooters were picking off soldiers and police, mock warning signs boasting "Sniper at work" appeared along the twisting roads of this bitterly disputed borderland.

Now the signs say "Sniper on hold," a token of a cease-fire that has held seven months, but also a warning that the Irish Republican Army still has its guns and explosives.

Cutting through the complex rhetoric of a slow-blooming peace process, the signs suggest how fragile the truce could prove if Britain sticks by its demand that the IRA disarm first.

On Sunday, Irish police found a trove of IRA weapons near Ballyjamesduff, about 85 miles northwest of Dublin. The cache included three home-made mortar tubes, nine detonators and more than 1,000 rounds of ammunition.

Britain's negotiators insist pro-British "unionists" from the province's Protestant majority simply will not talk to the IRA-allied Sinn Fein party while facing the threat

of resumed IRA violence.

IRA tactics have shifted but the goal remains "Brits out" of Northern Ireland so the province can unite with the Irish Republic. IRA supporters say it will not give up its arsenal in advance because talks might not produce an acceptable deal.

"People here are impatient for talks to start, and they can't understand why they haven't started," said Jim McAllister, 50,

"Give up our guns? Why's nobody asking the Brits to give up theirs?"

— unidentified observer

Sinn Fein's most prominent and popular figure in South Armagh, a region of rolling farmland with few pro-British Protestants.

Before the cease-fire in September, the IRA's South Armagh units were recognized as the outlawed group's most technically competent and determined. The British army surrendered the roadways to the IRA after curbside bombs claimed too many soldiers' lives.

Instead the army operates from hilltop surveillance and listening posts, moving sup-

plies and troops by helicopter.

In other parts of Northern Ireland the army has been withdrawn to barracks and two battalions have been ordered home. In South Armagh, soldiers continue to patrol fields and buzz about by helicopter.

Crossmaglen is a few miles from the border with the Irish Republic. Some locals fear that negotiations will not eliminate the border.

"We have peace. Ordinary people do feel sort of disappointed all the same. You can't help wondering what it all's been for," said Paddy Short, who runs a pub.

Last month, Short recalled, he talked with Sinn Fein chairman Mitchel McLaughlin during a protest in the town square calling for the release of IRA prisoners.

"I asked him, honestly, how the whole process was going," Short said. "He sounded optimistic, but then he would, wouldn't he? He's part of the crowd that wants into the political game. From where I'm standing, the Brits don't seem to be budging."

"Give up our guns? Why's nobody asking the Brits to give up theirs?" said one of the men, who would not give his name.

Plagued by damaging splits in the past, the IRA seems determined to stay united. Any hint of disposing of weapons would be divisive, and there is evidence hard-liners are waiting for their chance.

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