

POPULAR SCIENCE



Your Back-Yard Resort

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Rockets Carry The Mail

WATER barriers and impassable terrain may be no more able to halt the mails than the traditional snow, rain, heat, or gloom of night, if these experiments work out. Rocket postmen can hurdle obstacles in a few seconds, as shown in these pictures. Here the fiery missiles are carrying letters a mile and a half across Searles Dry Lake in southern California.

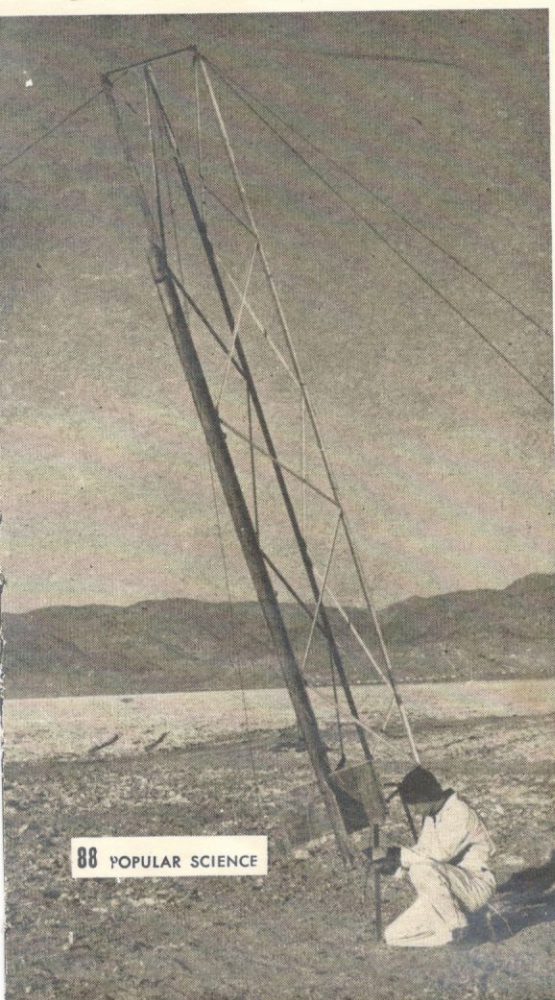
Mail-toting rocket is a stainless-steel tube 11 feet 3 inches long. Unloaded, it weighs only 60 pounds. Cost: \$50. Letters are carried inside four tail fins that stabilize it in flight.

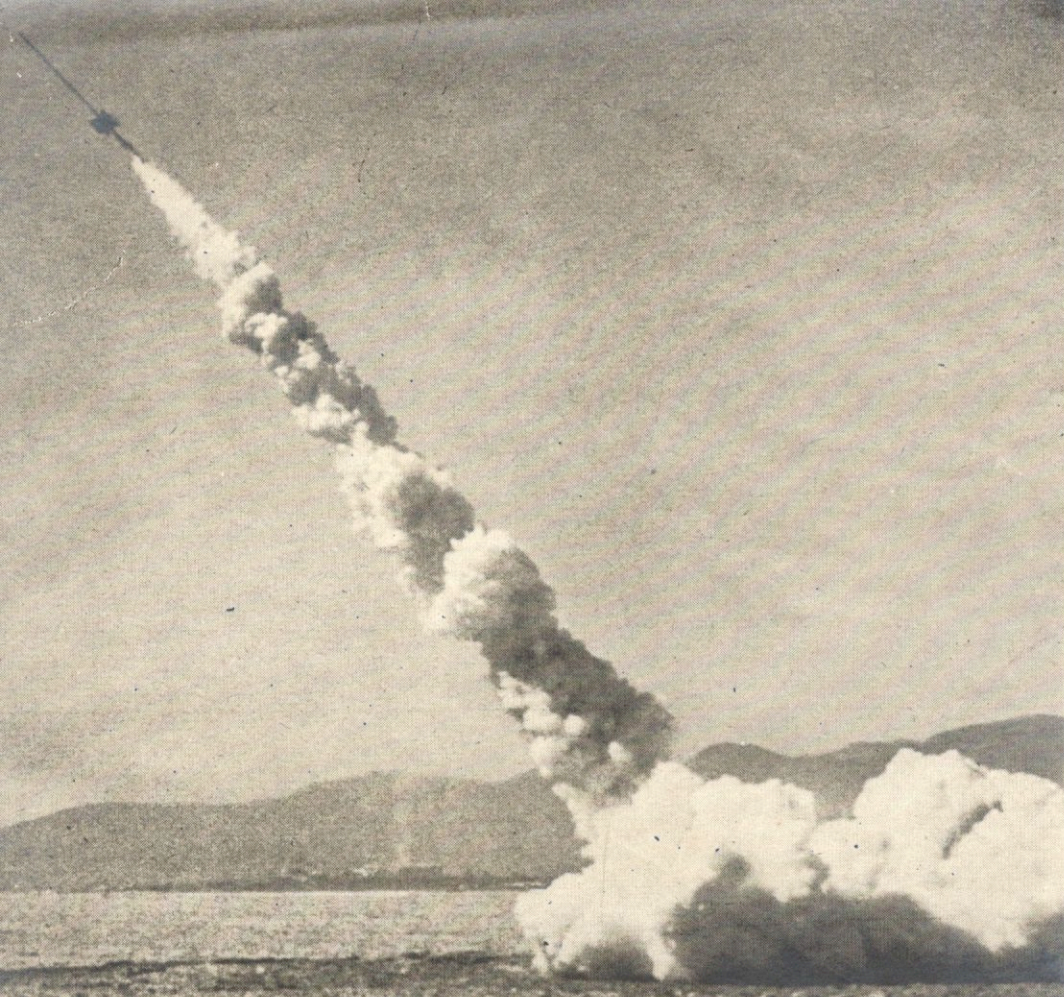
Launching tower, below, is 14 feet tall. The rocket slides along an aluminum T-stock on three ball-bearing clips. Operator in foreground is connecting ignition wires to fuse.

The demonstrators are amateur rocketeers of the Glendale, Calif., Reaction Research Society, whose 90 members are mostly high-school and college students. Their work carries forward experiments broken off in Austria, Germany, and England when rocketeers were drafted for war.

The equipment seen in action here could speed the delivery of letters to off-shore islands surrounded by heavy surf or to villages in mountainous territory where a mile or two might be a day's walk. It could also be adapted for use on mail steamers that must travel for hours along a coast before making port.

In foxhole a safe 250 feet from the launcher, rocketeer below closes contact to fuse squid, now packed in rocket's tail behind propelling fuel. Car battery supplies the firing charge.





Rocket is driven by 35 pounds of micrograin powder, mostly zinc dust and sulphur, which

burns out in four seconds. It climbs to 4,000 feet and reaches speed of more than 400 m.p.h.

At its destination spent rocket is dug from salty earth in which it buried itself on landing. Tail is then removed for easier handling, and a brace is used to take covers off fins.

Opened fin shows compartments where letters are carried. Each of the four sections of the rocket's tail has room for 300. Fins are made of aluminum sheets on frame of ½-inch plwcod.



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