



AS IT IS

Letter Delivered 51 Years After Being Sent

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A letter written to a 12-year old girl in Lithuania was delivered in December, almost 51 years after it was sent.

Now in her 60s, Genovefa Klonovska said after being handed the letter, "I thought that someone was pranking me."

A prank is a trick that is done as part of a joke.

The letter included a handmade, colored rose and two paper dolls. It was sent to Klonovska by a young girl in Poland. They exchanged letters in what is known as a pen pal program – when people write letters to each other without actually meeting.

The letter, together with 17 others, was discovered this past summer when a wall was taken down in a former post office in Vilnius.

Jurgis Vilutis is the owner of the building.

"The workers suggested we throw the old letters away, but I called the post office instead," Vilutis explained. "I'm so happy they got interested."

The letters, from the late 1960s and early 1970s, were likely hidden by a postal worker after he searched them for money or valuables, Vilutis said.

Lithuania was part of the Soviet Union then. The senders were family members or pen pals from places such as Australia, Poland, or Russia.

Street names and their numbering have changed in Vilnius.

Post office workers spent months looking for the people who were supposed to receive the letters – the recipients.

Only five recipients were found. In several cases, children of dead recipients were handed a lost letter.

Deimante Zebrauskaite, head of the customer experience department at Lithuania Post, said "We felt a moral duty to do this."

Zebrauskaite added, "One lady compared the experience to receiving a message from a bottle thrown into sea. People were emotional. Some people felt they saw a part of daily life of their **deceased** parents."

In the letter to Klonovska, sent from Koczary in Poland and stamped in 1970, a girl named Ewa complains buses no longer reach her village, forcing her to walk in -23 Degree Celsius cold. She also asks for pictures of actors.

Now in her 60s, Klonovska has no memory of Ewa. She probably wrote Ewa after finding her address in an advertisement for pen-pals in a newspaper. Their relationship stopped after the letter was not delivered.

"The loss was not life-changing," said Klonovska. She then asked, "What if they delivered a lost letter from a **suitor** to his love, and their wedding never happened?"

I'm John Russell.

Andrius Sytas reported on this story for Reuters. John Russell adapted it for Learning English.

Words in This Story

deceased – *adj.* no longer living

suitor – *n.* a man who wants to marry a particular woman

