

JAN 17 1984

If It's Too Good to Be True It Likely Is

NEARLY every week I throw potential awards amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars in free money into my wastebasket.

These fantastic gifts come from business firms which have something to sell that they consider essential to my life. The U.S. Postal Service refers to these letters as "bulk business mail," recipients frequently refer to them as "junk mail."

Whichever it may be the gimmick is much the same. By sending my order before a certain date I could become eligible to be entered in the final drawing and become a "potential winner."

A few weeks ago I started collecting samples of the promises of what I might have won. Here are a few:

A voucher for three days and two nights of free vacation, plus bonus prizes, was received from an Arkansas resort sales promoter.

A Birmingham publisher sent separate but almost identical offers for two magazines, each listing 1,104 similar prizes that I might win by subscribing. My luck would be to

subscribe to one and a subscriber for the other magazine would win the jackpot.

A different publishing firm offered \$25,000 in cash or a yacht cruise for my subscription order. Another promised \$25,000 or \$100 a month for life if I ordered a certain book and if I won.

A science magazine that offered only a free calculator/watch for a subscription couldn't compete with the subscription house that offered \$40,000 a year for 25 years — one million dollars!

The reason I pass up these glorious opportunities to become instantly wealthy is that they sound too good to be true. Somebody said "what sounds too good to be true probably is."

The mailing materials are impressive, often displaying what appears to be a check through the window envelope or fancy brochures that resemble stock certificates. Glamorous pictures of houses, cars and appliances are designed to arouse avarice. Many have my name impressively inserted by word

processing machines.

Letters sometimes proclaim "All prizes are guaranteed to be given away." They rarely say when but it probably will not be until they bring in enough cash to cover costs. Careful consideration of the matter tends to generate skepticism.

A few acquaintances have won minor prizes in giveaways but the big winners always seem to live in distant states.

Last week the mail brought a catalog offering 32 pages of merchandise and nearly a dozen leaflets offering numerous prizes, some of which I could win just by rubbing ink off the black spots.

One said in big clear print "You may be our next big winner" and warned that this is my last chance to win the \$250,000 super jackpot. All I need to do is send in an order for \$15 or \$20 worth of merchandise I don't need.

That sounds too good to be true, but you never can tell. I might be the big winner this time. I'd better get my order in the mail before the cost of stamps goes up again!