

## Change Machine in Mail Center Feels Lonely, Neglected

By Ed Rockwell  
Field Reporter and Cat Herder

While North Central University students reveled in school administration's decision to mandate a "coin-free" laundry system across campus this school year, one small, seemingly insignificant soul embarked on the dark journey that is known as depression: the Mail Center Coin Machine.

"I saw it coming years ago when they invented the internet," the machine, affectionately known as "Rowe," said. "I was relatively new technology at the time – well, I was an updated version at least, not like my cousin Ray down at Chuck E. Cheese's."

Since the inception of the new card-reading system, "MAC-GRAY," complete with simulated credit cards "loaded" with specific dollar amounts, Rowe has been feeling pretty neglected. He said, "Almost no one visits anymore. It used to be I was the most popular machine on campus. Everyone had to come my way eventually to get change for their laundry...well, unless they lived in Carlson. Most of them never did their laundry."

"It's true," Jake Thomas, junior and three-year Carlson resident verified. "I haven't done my laundry since my freshman year when my roommate went to the Minneapolis Police and took out a restraining order against my dirty clothes."

"Now I've got basically no one. That MAC-GRAY did this to me, him and the school administration!" Rowe seethed. "I had my first visitor today in almost two weeks! It was some sick kid who needed change for his dollar so he could ride the bus to work. Normally, I'd have scoffed at his mere dollar; I mean, why take a one when you can take a five instead? But no, not this time. I spit out those quarters faster than Paris Hilton – well, you get the point."

Micah Schmitzberg, Official Chief Administrative Overseeing Executive Coordinator of Laundry Facilities for NCU, commented, "The old way wasn't working. The laundry machines kept getting broken into by several students, likely by the same ones who watch R-rated movies in their dorm rooms, and

quarters were being taken. That means, in essence, laundry was free to everyone on campus. The truth is that NCU students don't pay enough in tuition to expect free laundry, so we had to develop an alternative."

"Two years ago we introduced the MAC-GRAY system as an option. This year, after fixing some bugs in the system, like the one where the satellite machines eat people's cards, we made it policy and screwed screws into the coin slots on the laundry machines. Now they can't steal laundry unless they steal someone's card. It's foolproof."

"Plus, we get a dollar for each card that is purchased in Miller Hall from the MAC-GRAY company," Schmitzberg added. But is it really necessary to get that money from the cards? "It's more than necessary! How else do you think NCU pays my salary?"

Rowe doesn't think any of it is fair. "I used to be cool, man. Now I'm the reject. No one wants me. No one loves me. I was the center of all NCU laundry commerce, man! That's *epic*! People even used to stick signs on me for stupid stuff like department chapels and guest speakers and junk. I hated it at the time, but now, without it...I almost feel naked. Plus, the last ones left the sticky tack stuck on and no one's taken it off yet."

Rowe's plight is surely regrettable. After all, he was once instrumental in providing perhaps the campus' most necessary service: providing change for laundry. Without his presence and action, people might have said that North Central "stinks," only this time in a very literal sense.

Students have barely even missed him. "I'm too postmodern to truly care about some antiquated relic. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to go volunteer over at Augustana Nursing Home," said Sophomore Julian Strate.

Candace Frompty, freshman, concurred. "I didn't even know we had a change machine. What does it change about people?"

A few seniors and alumni remember Rowe's long legacy of service to the NCU community, however. Bill Markham, Senior Worship Arts major, recalled, "He was always so fair. Four quarters for a dollar, twenty for five dollars...plus we got the pleasure of seeing the coins tinkle into his little metal cup. It always felt like I'd finally won all my money back that I gambled away on tuition at North Central – I mean Vegas – I mean...church!"

"I remember he was only out of quarters once. In seven years of college and four more of working at NCU on staff, he's only been out once. They had him reloaded within an hour and I got my laundry done," Mary Kush, Head

Developmental Master of the Student Leadership Retreats Planning Committee and Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies graduate of NCU, reminisced. "That was only a year and a half ago too."

Despite fond memories of fairness, legendary customer service and downright nobility, Rowe remains sad and alone. He ended the interview with one final message to the North Central student body. "My time with you has been amazing and fulfilling, but I now realize it has come to an end. Please don't cry when I'm gone some day, and please know that I love you all, even that one ugly kid who always tried to give me ten-dollar bills and then got angry when I gave them back. A new dawn is here, a new day with new adventures. Go forward, my children, and take on your destiny."