

IP DO-DON'T LIST

By: Jim Astrachan

Spam, Spam, Spam... Spam, spam, spam and egg spam. If Monty Python knew then that he was naming an electronic communication that is so annoying that Congress is trying to stamp it out, well, he might have remained silent.

Once, Spam was only the trademark of Hormel & Co., used to brand its poor man's pork loaf since 1937. It was named Spam because the government refused to allow Hormel to call its product ham since it came from the pig's shoulder and not his hindquarters.

According to legend, Mr. Hormel threw a party at his Texas estate and allowed 170 of his buds to pay for their cocktails by tendering a prospective trademark for each drink. New York radio actor Kenneth Daigneau came up with spam. It's not clear how many drinks Mr. Daigneau.

It may have been a poor man's meal, but Hormel spent heavily to promote the brand, on radio, later on TV and always in print. George Burns and his wife, Gracie Allen, were early hawkers of the product, suggesting that folks should, "Eat a 'Spamwich'".

Fast forward sixty-something years and spam has a totally different meaning, and its not fair to blame Monty Python for even if he didn't create the spam skit, the electronic meaning(?) would still be with us, albeit, called something else. More on this later.

Today, spam means to most people unsolicited e-mails and Congress, believing they are a material problem, has enacted a law regulating spam. Congress needed to keep an eye on the First Amendment.

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