

THE SRSC NEWSLETTER

*The Santa Rosa Stamp Club: Promoting the study,
knowledge, and enjoyment of stamp collecting.
APS Chapter 1584*



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Editor's Note

Dennis Buss

The Covid-19 restrictions create interesting opportunities for stamp collectors, namely tackling the long put-off task of upgrading our collections by sorting through long neglected stamp storage boxes. Stephen Brett took on this job and found unexpected benefits in doing so. As stamp collectors most of us take an interest in the problems facing the U.S. Postal Service. For some of you these problems have hit home with late or even missed daily deliveries. Paul von Gottfried recounts his experience when new policies were implemented back in August. It appears matters have stabilized, but no doubt further changes are in store that will have deep impact on this venerable institution.

COVID-19 – The Silver Lining for Philatelists

Stephen Brett

Have you noticed the burgeoning articles in stamp magazines and newsletters describing the beauty of our stamp hobby in filling empty hours with stimulating challenge, engrossing activities, and discovery? As months passed of limited and cautious outings and contacts I found myself taking on more and more projects with my collection. To my delight, most of these were not contrived but were pent up for lack of adequate time during "normal" times. This added to the satisfaction of tackling and accomplishing one postponed project after another. I once looked upon the rainy winter months as the opportunity time to take on lengthy improvements to my collection but by May or June of this year I realized that this was the golden opportunity to finally accomplish many of the postponed upgrades I had only dreamed of. As I tackled these tasks I felt

very advantaged over non-collectors and, at the same time, my lifelong love of stamp collecting was reinforced many times over by the fun and pleasure I had each day.

One could derive some joy from cleaning out one's garage but while standing there and surveying how neat and organized it is one knows in his heart that in short order the spiders would return and the place would be a shambles in a month or two. Ditto, clearing the garden of weeds and leaves. Ditto, closets.

But, a stamp collection, once upgraded stays upgraded and speaks to its owner and curator. A clean garage doesn't add to its value but a well-organized and amplified collection is more valuable in perpetuity. And, it is forever that much more enjoyable to view.

By June I started pitying those who told me how bored they were due to Covid-19 restrictions. Many articles appeared on the subject of gloomy states of our society brethren. Predictions of depression and even suicides became common. I thought of how I looked forward



to the next day when I would finally crack open this huge plastic bin loaded with "stamp stuff." What can be in it? Unlike the depressed or "down" folks out there, I was eager for the next day to learn what I would find and what I would create with it.

The rest of this article captures my journey through the pandemic. How these purported BAD TIMES turned into productive and exciting times for one stamp collector. I hope the reader identifies himself or herself with what I highlight. I would greatly appreciate your writing to our Secretary (or me) about your experiences. I hope they are similar to mine.

The B.A.P. and What It Leads To

Our pattern of living during this pandemic eventually awakens us to the realization that, hey, we have time to spare. This enforced downtime allows me to do things with my hobby I've always wanted to do. That epiphany leads us all to the B.A.P. And maybe more than one B.A.P. What is a B.A.P? I'll tell you mine if you tell me yours. B.A.P. means BIG AUDACIOUS PROJECT. As said, something(s) I've always wanted to do, but deferred for lack of sweeping available time. I immediately thought of three B.A.P.'s.

The first, finally addressing a meaty worldwide album I won for \$50.00 years ago at a club auction. The second B.A.P. was replacing the 50 or 60 crummy, worn out binders with new ones that didn't flap like wounded seagulls. I realized that I had a choice of replacing them or buying more packing tape to keep their covers on. The third B.A.P was even more daunting: opening those plastic storage boxes containing who knows what. Stamps in glassine envelopes, stamps in manila envelopes, loose stamps, materials with rubber bands around them, materials in stock books, etc. etc. Are these duplicates? Why did I keep this stuff? Are there places for these in my albums? Are there enough Viet Nam Vets around to mail this stuff to?



Since I was in dire need of fun and adventure and not toil and tribulation (yet), I picked the big worldwide album as my first B.A.P. project. Who knows, there might be some valuable stuff in it—after all it is from stamp year zero (1840 to 1940). And so I grabbed my A through B album and set to work on the old klunker with my tongs, Showgard mounts, hinges and Scott catalogues.

Yes, there were some amazing high catalogue items in that old worldwide album even though some cherry picking took place. Do I have your agreement that no matter how much cherry picking occurs THEY CAN'T FIND EVERYTHING and that's what the second owner counts on when bidding on a pig in the poke? The second amazing thing (and you may agree on this phenomenon), these albums often have the one stamp missing from the short sets in my collection. It's a bit spooky on how many times this happens. In a month's time the old album was empty and my collection swelled by its contents, but so did my duplicates. You might suppose that I was now ready for B.A.P. numbers 2 and 3, but something unforeseen happened. Has the following happened to you as well?

The B.A.P. Trail of Events

Yes, it took about a month to transfer about 2,000 items from the old auction album to my collection and with my Scott Catalogues piled up to my right I found some really high valued stamps, particularly from Great Britain. I think like anyone else finding many old valuable stamps in countries one never really focused on you find yourself very pleased with these additions and the thought crosses your mind: this is wonderful to own and enjoy—I would never, ever go to a dealer and buy this or that item for \$45.00 or \$75.00 but now I own it! Wow, this is great. And, there were so many moments like that during this B.A.P.

But on a larger scale, the older album had a ton of stamps from Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Like any worldwide collector, you can't help but have a lot of stamps from these countries but as one adds this old material to your existing collection, you then become smitten by their interesting histories, cultures and achievements. As a result, this interest grows with the



pleasure of realizing that I now have a stronger collection that I can be proud of. For example, the beautifully engraved stamps of Czechoslovakia are fantastic to boot! I realized that this country must have a strong tradition of pride in detailed work and artistry that extends to the design of its stamps.

The completion of this leg of my Covid-19 confinement journey led me into my second B.A.P. question; I wondered how much more Polish, Hungarian and Czechoslovak material was in those piles of plastic storage boxes, cigar boxes and stacks of stock books?

The Journey Expands

The answer is: lots more of Polish, Czechoslovakian and Hungarian stamps, covers, souvenir sheets and related material. Did you ever have that quizzical moment common to all philatelists: Why do I have this? Where did it come from? And, even more daunting: is this a duplicate, and do I have to check my main album again to be sure?

There is a great silver lining (and payoff) in combing through all of your stock page accumulations: you find wonderful stamps and materials you forgot you owned or never knew you owned in the first place. But, here's the good part: I now had time to do something valuable to my collection by systematically reviewing my accumulation. The frustrating part of putting off this task and not thinking through how to address it came to an end one evening with another epiphany: this is material that a veteran would enjoy working with. And it isn't three-cent Liberty stuff either. I realized something that we eventually come to realize: we can't hang onto everything and we don't want to perpetually sort through the same mounds of material over and over again—it almost makes the hobby tedious. It makes one feel good to create a veterans envelope at times like this. Bottom line, I did indeed find a lot of stamps from these three countries and I can safely say I have a collection in each that I would be proud to show. I documented many with my catalogue and I even amazed myself by asking Kenmore and Mystic to send me approvals (specified, of course) in certain time periods where the collections needed beefing up. A short aside: Mystic changed my collector status from Advanced back to Gullible Buffoon.

The Last B.A.F.

When a stamp collector goes for his box opener and waits for a FedEx delivery, that's a sign that the old, beat-up binders are ready to go. Along with new binders come the hole punchers, reinforcements, and bottles of Gatorade or, perhaps, something stronger. The Mrs., seeing the ironing board open in the living room, asks: "While you're ironing, would you do this blouse for me?" To which I answer: "Blouse did you say? I'm working on my Netherlands album. By Halloween I should be through Zululand."

If Covid-19 is the Energizer Bunny

I have a dream. There is a sack in our pantry of all the self adhesive, mainly U.S. stamp clippings I've accumulated since the first adhesive stamp blighted our hobby. I also have several cigar boxes of Showgard scraps accumulated over twenty years and an 1840—1940 album binder. I am dreaming of a B.A.P. #4. Like a lot of aspects of our hobby, this is a chance to create something neat and organized to my own design out of nothing. The really satisfying and enjoyable aspect of this project is: I'm going back to my youth when I clipped stamps, soaked them off envelopes, and dried them on newspaper and then hinged them in my one volume stamp album. Now that U.S. stamps are self-adhesive I leave the soaking to the stamp dealers I deal with. What would I do without them? They are part of my pleasant reminiscences, too.

Let us know what creative things you've spent time with during the Pandemic. I hope that between what I've shared with you and what we may share of your activities we can all derive ideas that make this long "down" period for many a fruitful, productive, enjoyable and may I add exciting period for those of us who collect stamps. Long Live The Greatest Hobby of Them All!

USPS Residential Deliveries

Paul von Gottfried

Dear club members,

This article is intended for information purposes. On Monday, August 17, I did not receive any mail. A little unusual, I thought. Two of my neighbors also said that they didn't receive any mail. On Tuesday, I asked our regular carrier what happened. He told me that Monday was his scheduled day off and that the Santa Rosa office simply did not assign anyone to his route. He said that this has been going on all over Santa Rosa, wherein routes are simply not delivered on a particular day. He said he believes it's happening sporadically throughout the United States. People aren't aware of it because they assume they just didn't get mail on that day. It's deliberate, partly because local USPS offices are overwhelmed. The only exception is package delivery such as priority and express mail that is different from regular carrier flat mail duties. He went on to say their hours had changed so that they're coming in later, like 9 AM and that he doesn't finish delivering mail until after 7 PM.



I notified our local Congressman, Mike Thompson and Senator Feinstein. In subsequent conversations with him and other letter carriers, it was revealed that long-term carriers (20 years service) have never seen anything like the very recent changes made to USPS. Equipment has been removed, including sorting machines and mailboxes throughout town. I know of two mailboxes in Rincon Valley alone that are no longer there. Employee morale is low and even though they're not supposed to work overtime they do it anyway to get the mail out. I asked three different carriers why they don't hire more staff. The answers were the same: there is an apparent freeze on hiring and the application process has becoming difficult. One carrier described the process as counterproductive.

The carriers all made one other comment. There has never been a problem with mail-in ballots in Santa Rosa or Sonoma County. They all urged people to get their mail-in ballots as early

as possible. Two suggested that people hand deliver their ballots directly to the Registrar's office.

The recent lapses in service and the obstacles to prompt mail delivery have increased. What used to take 1-2 days to deliver a letter within Santa Rosa now typically takes 3-5 days. This is shocking to me. The USPS is underfunded. This is not a political issue and should not be. The delivery of mail is sacrosanct, guaranteed by the Constitution. Recent management decisions and practices have weakened the ability of the USPS to fulfill its legal obligations appropriately.

So how do we support the USPS? Until quite recently it has been the most reliable, safest and inexpensive mail service in the world, with the possible exception of Vatican City. We should report issues to our elected representatives. We should support our local carriers. They are wonderful workers. Morale is down. Let's cheer them up and express our support. They are truly remarkable.

I suggest we each contact our local, state and federal representatives to express our support for the USPS. Send a letter or card to a friend. On Saturday I received a letter and card from an old family friend from New Jersey. It warmed the cockles of my heart. And right now, we all need a little warming of the heart. I know it's more time consuming to write a physical letter but I think it's important. My carrier told me that they like delivering cards and letters.

Update: I hand delivered my ballot as well as the ballots of two others on 10/12/2020 to the County Registrar's office. The person accepting the ballots said that thousands were voting in this manner. Millions of people across the country are responding by either mailing or delivering their ballots early.

Ask Phil A. Tellick
Paul von Gottfried

Dear Phil,

How do you feel about stamp clubs meeting remotely during the covid-19 pandemic? Is Zoom safe? Do I need special equipment? What if something comes up for a vote? I'm kinda technology challenged. I just learned to program my VCR...

Dear Challenged,

Most laptop computers are equipped with built in cameras. You can easily download the Zoom app. The host of the Zoom meeting can send the meeting particulars in an email that you can click on. It's not difficult to adjust the video and audio settings. Most Zoom meetings are for one hour. It's easy peasy.

There's a lot you can do remotely. I've thought of offering a public service to people who suffer from dry mouth or xerostomia. I will lick their stamps for them remotely. I wonder if I can get non-profit status for this important service. My slogan would be "here's licking at you."

Phil

**JOIN THE NEXT SRSC ZOOM MEETING
SCHEDULED FOR TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10 AT 7:00 PM**

Dear Phil,

This is a follow-up question to an earlier one about CTO's: I have a plethora of Eastern Europe communist era CTO's. Thousands upon thousands in fact, some in sheets. My wife wants her linen closet back. What do I do with them? Start a bonfire?

Thanks,

Iron Curtain Paper Collector,

Dear Iron Monger,

I posed your query to Connie Suer. Even she questions your taste and collecting habits. I suggest you take the Albanian, Bulgarian and Czechoslovakian stamps (otherwise known as the ABC's of wallpapering) and start a part-time business wallpapering people's bathrooms. Use the sheets for wrapping paper. Betty's Fish and Chips might be interested in stamp sheet wrapping paper. You might recoup a pittance of what you paid. Be persistent, even when people raise their eyebrows. Please contact me after you are released from the Behavioral Wellness Center in Vacaville.

Good luck,

Phil



Amazing Stamp Stories #3

Stephen Brett



It was a cool, crisp autumn day in Brooklyn, New York as seasoned stamp collector Myron Blitzer departed Sam Spiegel Stamps (est. 1946) with a real "score" that completed his 1968 Ajman pages. Spiegel Stamps was able to locate Michel 333B-338B for Myron and now he had the complete Apollo 7 set of 6 imperforates. What a day! Little did Myron know that Ajman had printed 220 million of this set. But, that's a story for another day.

As Sam emptied the glassine envelope on his kitchen table he noticed there was a note penciled on the back of the 10 DH Edward

White stamp. Upon closer examination, he determined the nature of the note: "For a Good Time call 212 - (real number protected)."

After Sam consulted with his Good Donald Duck vs. his Bad Donald Duck he decided, "What the heck" and called the number. His heart jumped when he heard his wife's voice recording at her place of work.

He called his mother-in-law who informed him that Rosalie and your stamp dealer are attending an International Stamp Show at the Hotel Manhattan. Being resourceful, Sam quickly eliminated that possibility.

Later that afternoon, a despondent Sam walked the Coney Island Boardwalk. He spotted Sam and his wife playing ski-ball at Faber's Fascination and in a moment of rage hit the stamp dealer in the head with a ski-ball. The dealer never recovered.

Months later Myron was convicted of second-degree murder. Considering the circumstances the jury recommended leniency and a three-year sentence. However, Judge Borken amazed the court by adding two years to Myron's sentence . . . for collecting Trucial States.

Amazing Stamp Stories #4

Stephen Brett

A fourth generation independent dairy farmer with deep roots in Liberty, Kansas got the surprise of his life recently. Seems his son, Lem, a budding stamp collector, left his latest copy of Linn's on the kitchen table one morning. His Dad, Emerson, slept in that morning and, absent the newspaper that usually arrived at 5 AM, he found himself perusing the page 87 want ads, "Mixtures for Sale." While

still a bit groggy with sleep, the *Haybale* ad caught his eye and for only \$10.00 for the *Haybales*, he considered it a sweet deal. Seven days later his *Haybale* arrived from the Stamp Farm, Rice Lakes, Wisconsin. A loud "for the love of Pete" rang through the barnyard. "What the Sam Hill am I going to do with this?" But, this led to his inspiration; "Says its a world-wide mixture, may as well mix it with the sorghum for Bessie and Mable." And so he did.

The next morning as he entered the barn he was amazed to discover that Bessie and Mable had attached their milking machine apparatus to their udders by themselves. The instructions were lying in their stalls open to "Operating Steps." Emerson was convinced that indeed philately is a hobby that could increase intelligence in anyone or any Holstein cow. As a result, Emerson ordered two more *Haybales*, one for his his wife and two for his brother-in-law who lives with them . . .



SRSC

The Santa Rosa Stamp Club meets on the first Tuesday of the month from 6:45 pm to 9:00 pm at the Finley Community Center, 2060 W. College Road, in Santa Rosa. Membership dues are \$20 per year. Following a discussion of club business matters, the meetings feature a philatelic presentation and a member auction. **Regular group meetings have been suspended while the Covid-19 restrictions remain in place.** For further information about the club visit our website at <http://www.santarosastampclub.org/home.html>

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