

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

This issue of the Newsletter features two articles by club members who reflect on their childhood memories of stamp collecting. Steve Brett is convinced that he, along with his school-day pals, acquired a worldly outlook as a result of their shared interest in stamp collecting. The quest to fill album spaces with exotic stamps was an irresistible allure that was also shared by Jim Scholz. In his case, the childhood *Harris Traveler* album left unfilled later became an adult pursuit that is now near completion. Many stamp collectors are a restless lot (I count myself as one of them) forever looking for new challenges. Jack Sack, a member of the Hamilton Township Philatelic Society in New Jersey (the club I belonged to before I moved to California in 2009), has found an inexpensive and interesting way to recharge one's collecting impulses by taking a look at the countries no one else collects. Last, Jay Smith a prominent dealer in Scandinavian stamps whose thoughts were published in a previous issue of this Newsletter, advises that we should always be aware of the quality of the stamps we mount in our albums. This is especially the case when we acquire more expensive items. I trust you will find this issue of the Newsletter an enjoyable, interesting and informative read. Best wishes to all for holidays ahead.

Queens

Steve Brett

It is 2:00 P.M. on a Wednesday in 1955 at P.S. 38 in Rosedale, Queens, New York. Donald Trump isn't present at this hobby period because he is building skyscrapers with his City Block toy set about 6 miles west of Rosedale in Jamaica Estates. But us middle class kids -- Marty Amster, Vinnie Zollo, John Sutter, Merritt Weisenger and Stevie Brett -- are at a back table behind the rows of bolted down oak and iron desks of the old sort with ink wells. We are completely absorbed in our stamp albums and loose stamps. We are trading and comparing collections. On the other end of the long table which was set up by Mr. Levy, the school Janitorial Engineer, are the other boys in the class who are building, gluing, painting and making realistic noises with their plastic kits of WW II vintage navy ships, tanks and trucks or their customized plastic cars (Chevy's and Oldsmobiles in particular). Flame and pinstripe decals are being lavished on the cars.



The girls are at a table in the front next to Miss Brook's desk. They are working on

beading and looms, sharing 45rpm records (Elvis, Mickey & Sylvia, Fabian, and Rickey Nelson) and showing each other their fan magazine scrapbooks. In setting this scene, I am leading to some speculative musings about what attracted a group of boys to one end of the back table versus the other end.

Who were my stamp collecting buddies and what made us tick? We were pretty similar in our personality makeup and in our activities. We were the youngsters who got on our bikes and pedaled several miles to the Rosedale Post Office or the Laurelton Post Office when we had 12 cents in our pocket to buy the latest commemorative plate block. That twelve cents was sometimes your allowance plus two cents from the penny pot in the kitchen. The postal employee behind the counter was friendly and he'd carefully tear the plate block from the sheet and hand it to you for the twelve cents. No snobbery on his part.

This group of friends also mounted their bikes with their allowance money when a dollar was accumulated and head over to the new Gimbels store in Green Acres, Valley



Stream. Once there, we would take the escalator down to the store basement and zoom over to the stamp counter that was a square of display glass cases manned by a couple of stamp employees. If we blurted out what we wanted we'd be handed a small pencil and one sheet of paper. We were told to put down the numbers of what we wanted. We took our time and looked at everything.

We usually picked about 5 twenty-cent sets of assorted new issues. The sharks from Ifni were very popular as were the U.S. Plate Blocks (Gunston Hall, Florida Statehood and Naval Review).

We often asked one another: "Where'd you get the money for that?" Us kids had many rackets that funded our stamp collecting. Mine consisted of polishing my dad's shoes, whether he asked me or not, and then looking expectantly for a quarter. All of us washed and sometimes Simonized our folk's car(s) and for that we got a dollar and then ran to Gimbels. The great bonanza was a snowfall when we shoveled ourselves into really pricey sets of stamps. For instance, I got \$3.00 for shoveling out a corner house and then trudged 4 miles in the cold to Gimbels, bought a mint set of the Lexington-Concord issue and got 5 cents change.

The trading on Hobby day was brisk as usual. We couldn't wait to get home and fill an empty space with a 50,000,000 mark German inflation issue. I already had several of them because I bought the sack of 1,000 of world wide stamps at the Woolworth store on Merrick Boulevard. But 50 million marks of anything seemed like a must have and as many as possible.

Looking back at my collecting buddies, what traits did we have in common? We were all readers and had high reading grades. We periodically surprised our teachers by knowing a thing or two about world geography. When we were given history books we were not unfamiliar with famous names. We knew people like Benjamin Franklin by sight and if Nathan Hale happened into the hot lunchroom we could say: "Hi Nathan." We wouldn't confuse Martha Washington with Martha of the Vandellas. This may sound immodest, but, yes, we were the better students, the more organized students, the students who collected and had a sense of markets and values. The biggest decisions we faced was:

Classic Comic Book or Plate Block? Our biggest fear was not returning approvals from Garcelon Stamps and their phoning our house. My Dad sayng, "What the heck are these people calling us for? And my mother asking, "What did you do now?" From my room, I'm whimpering while hinging an Ifni hammerhead shark in my album, "I didn't send back the approvals (sniff, sniff). "Well send them back for God's sake!"

I'd like to think today that, like me, my old P.S. 38 friends at the back table went back to the hobby in their thirties or forties. That one of them might have served time because he kept approvals without remitting payment. I'll bet they are all still avid readers of histories and biographies and they are trying to interest their grandchildren in the hobby of kings (in Queens). The Donald may have become a billionaire by starting his life with Block City but WE had all the fun!!

On Completing My Childhood Stamp Book

Jim Scholz

My parents gave me my first stamp book when I was 10 or 11. It was *The New Traveler Album for Postage Stamps of the World* by H.E. Harris and Co, printed in 1955. I only focused on the US since I was receiving many US stamps from relatives. I enjoyed filling in the stamps.

Twenty years later I moved to Clearlake, California, bought a home, started a business, and joined the local stamp club. Still interested in US only, I bought the *United States Liberty Album* also by Harris. And so, I continued my interest in US stamps, enjoying their historical aspect. I enjoyed the earlier stamps especially.



Thirty-five years later, after I retired, I considered getting into the hobby again. One day while driving around Clearlake I stopped at an Auction House in Upper Lake. They had six lots of stamp materials for sale. The owner offered me a good deal to buy all the lots. It was a mix of US and Worldwide. I wanted the US and thought I could sell the foreign stamps at the stamp club. I bought all six boxes.

Back at home, while going through the boxes, I noticed that the foreign stamps were pre-1955. And, then I thought of my childhood book printed in 1955. At this point, I became a worldwide collector.

I thought about rejoining my local stamp club only to learn that they disbanded 12 years earlier! I then looked into the Santa Rosa Stamp Club (fifty miles and an hour and a half away). I went to one of their meetings and found them to be a friendly group. They asked me to introduce myself, which I did, telling them that I was starting to collect worldwide. After the meeting one of the member offered to let me go through his worldwide seconds at a very reasonable cost. And this added to my worldwide collection.

At club meeting auctions I was able to buy five albums dated before 1955. I've had a lot of material to work with. After four years of being with the stamp club my childhood book of 11,000 spaces for stamps is approaching completion. In fact, I only need 8 more stamps to fill the book.

The countdown actually started with needing 64 stamps. I went to stamp stores and stamp shows. When the count got down to 25 stamps I went on the internet and found 3

stamps, gave my want list to stamp friends and found 1. I put an ad in our stamp club newsletter but so far have received none.

When I was down to 21, I went to a large (28 dealer) stamp show in Sacramento, CA. The show delivered a total of 13 stamps! I was then down to 8 stamps to finish the book. And this is where I now stand in my quest to finish my childhood book.

Countries Nobody Collects

Jack Sack

Many collectors specialize in United States stamps, or countries in Western Europe or perhaps British Colonies. One of my current interests is collecting stamps from countries that “Nobody Collects.” It began about six months ago when a dealer offered me a set of old, empty Minkus albums from about 1985 that he had obtained from a worldwide collector. Most of the albums in the collection had already been sold, leaving only a dozen or so from countries nobody else wanted. I found some more unwanted albums on-line, and now have about 50 different countries in my collection.



Many of the albums are for countries in South America (Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Uruguay, Paraguay), the Middle East (Afghanistan, Iran, Syria), or Eastern Europe (Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey). Even Asia has countries nobody collects such as Viet Nam and Mongolia.

So far, I have limited myself to spending no more than 25¢ per stamp. Even so, I have made a pretty good dent in many collections. I have found a good way to get started – buy a “beginner’s” collection to fill in many of the common stamps. That gets the country rolling usually for 2¢ or 3¢ a stamp. I can now spend the day at our local stamp dealers’ bourse trying to fill in the rest of the collection.

I have estimated that I would need around 100,000 stamps to fill the albums, with most valued at less than \$1 per stamp. On a good day, I can find 300-400 stamps I need at less than 25¢. At that rate, it will take me about 250 more stamp show visits. That does not include a number of albums, such as West Indies (Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic) that I haven’t even started yet!

The Santa Rosa Stamp Club

Membership is open to anyone interested in stamp collecting and who agrees to abide by the club by-laws. 2017 dues are \$20 per year, pro-rated based on date of joining. Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Steele Lane Community Center, 415 Steele Lane in Santa Rosa.

For information about membership call Dennis Buss at 707-774-6296 or send an email to srsc2012@yahoo.com

Quality, Quality, Quality

Jay Smith

I am sure you are tired of hearing the real estate axiom about location, location, location. In philately it is quality, quality, quality.

There is no "correct" answer as to what quality of stamps you or anybody else should collect. You should collect what makes you happy. If getting more stamps for your dollar makes you happy, then lesser quality may be perfectly okay to accomplish that. If you would rather have one perfect stamp than 20 almost-perfect stamps, that's perfectly fine too.

However, what is important is that the price you pay should be appropriate for the quality you are getting. And, you should certainly be getting the correct identity of the stamp you are expecting.



This subject comes to mind because recently I have encountered a couple situations in which collectors who were wanting to build collections at high speed and for the least cost and, in my opinion, were not getting what they were paying for (from other sources, especially online sources).

Keep in mind that catalog values are invariably for a specific standard quality level; in the case of the Scott Catalog the values are for Very Fine (VF) centering/quality (see the information in the catalog's introduction section). A stamp that is priced at half catalog, but only Average centered, may not be such a great deal after all. It should probably be priced at only one-third catalog. And if that stamp has a small thin spot, its correct price level may be only 10-15% of catalog value.

I am starting to see far too many collections, that have been built largely from online (especially eBay) sources, that are filled with stamps that were not what they were touted to be. Collectors who thought that they were getting a "great deal" are often actually over-paying! These range from incorrectly identified stamps (wrong watermark, perforations, color shade, etc.) to faked or repaired stamps (filled thins, ironed out creases, added margins, re-perforation, re-gumming). Beyond those plainly wrong situations, there are many stamps that are simply lower grade (centering) but sold at mid- to higher-grade prices.

I frequently hear statements such as, "Oh, I am buying from larger dealers on eBay and their stamps are surely okay because they have a good reputation." That has not always been my experience. It would not be right of me to generalize too much, but let's just say that name and supposed reputation don't seem to mean as much as they used to. At the same time, more of the online-buyer collectors don't have close personal contact with other collectors who can explain to them what's wrong with some of the stamps that they are buying.

The buyers of such incorrect, altered, or overpriced stamps become terribly disappointed when they find out the truth. That hurts not only the individual collector, but the entire hobby.

Protect yourself by not assuming (as most of us tend to do) that you know more than you really do; remember that some sellers are counting on that! Make philatelic friends and look at each others' collections. Share your knowledge with other collectors and let them share their knowledge with you. Get second opinions before it is too late (i.e.

before purchase or immediately after purchase). Get certificates for costly or problematic stamps.

If you have a good relationship with a stamp dealer are a long-term client, you might consider asking the dealer to review parts of collections to point out quality problems, fakes, altered stamps, etc. While maybe none of us actually want to go searching for bad news, it is always better to know for sure exactly what you have and then you can better decide how you wish to proceed in further growing your collection.

(Jay Smith is proprietor of Jay Smith & Associates, P.O. Box 650, Snow Camp, NC 27349-0650. He can be reached at E-Mail: js@JaySmith.com or by Toll-Free Phone: 1-800-447-8267. Jay specializes in Scandinavian stamps as well as US and worldwide issues and collections.)



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ATTEND THE ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13 FROM 11:30 AM TO 2:00 PM

AT THE VILLA RESTAURANT

3901 MONTGOMERY DRIVE IN SANTA ROSA