

THE SRSC NEWSLETTER

*The Santa Rosa Stamp Club: Promoting the study,
knowledge, and enjoyment of stamp collecting.
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Editor's Note

Dennis Buss

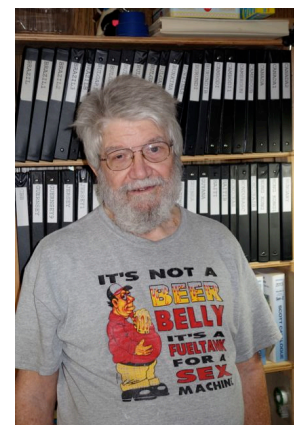
Early this spring I had the pleasure of visiting Ron Thurner and his wife at his home in Santa Rosa. Some of you may remember Ron when our club first got started in 2012. Ron has been unable to attend meetings because his wife now requires constant care because of health reasons. Nevertheless, he maintains his membership and enjoys hearing about our club through the newsletter. As you will see, Ron has a fascinating story to tell to about his collecting adventures over the years. Worldwide collectors will be inspired by his amazing efforts to build and organize his extensive collection. I have to admit, I was flabbergasted to see the dozens and dozens of albums he has on his stamp room shelves. As you will no doubt agree, we have an amazing group of stamp collectors in our club!

Our next contribution comes from Paul Bartolomei, the founder of Palo Albums, Inc. His firm takes pride in being able to supply albums for every country in the world under the Palo Album brand. In addition, his firm is now the official representative of Lindner and Davo albums in the United States. (Full disclosure: I am the happy owner of a Palo Bechuanaland Protectorate and Botswana album.) Paul's article is reproduced by permission from his on-line newsletter. It addresses topics that should be of concern to all of us: the importance of organizing our collections and of making frank assessments of their value.

Get to Know Your Club Members: Ron Thurner

Let me introduce myself. My name is Ronald Walter Cyril Thurner. I am a collector. I collect things that are easily stored. Antique cars are not that easily stored. I was born in 1932 which, I am guessing, had the lowest birthrate year in the 20th century. The depression was a marvelous form of birth control. I feel my parents missed a humorous opportunity. If they had given me a middle name such as Al or Alvin or Alfred, etc., I would have enjoyed applying my initials to all documents.

I haven't the foggiest remembrance of when or why I started collecting stamps. All I recall is that in the late 1940s I haunted the stamp store in Oakland whose proprietor was Jack Hughes. I sold my first collection of Italy and Vatican City when I volunteered for



the Navy in 1952. That was the only time in my life when I did not collect. Apart from the four years in the service, college, marriage, job, kids did not interrupt my pursuit of anything collectable and storable.

Divorce forced me to sell my next collection in 1974. That one consisted of Japan and Ryukyu. To whom did I sell it? To a “doctor” whom I agreed to meet in the Presidio in San Francisco. He then flew immediately to Japan. I assume he used the collection to fund his trip.

When collecting stamps, there is no limit to where that pursuit can lead. For 45 years I worked for a large insurance company. That type of company depends on the mail service in sending and receiving its huge amounts of correspondence. For a goodly number of years I visited the company mailroom and perused that day’s mail residue. I ended up with literally thousands of covers. I kept a few of the more interesting usages but removed the postage from the majority. I soaked, sorted, and bundled commemoratives by the hundreds. I sold these for 35 cents per bundle. This was in the 1970s. My wife often joined me in the quest for the envelopes but not in the soaking. We finally reached our limit with this routine but before that sad day, we managed to sell hundreds of thousands of used U.S. stamps.

We enjoyed traveling in our 1972 Pinto. We also enjoyed post offices and so on our travels we would use the official post office guide to determine which offices used the old 4-bar canceler and were designated as 3rd and 4th class offices. We would stop, take a picture, and ask the postmaster to autograph a cover, use the 4-bar canceler on that cover and then ask him or her to answer a few questions on a short form. After we acquired a number of these, I decided it would make an interesting exhibit. I cut out a section of a road map showing the location of a town we visited, attached the cover over an unused portion of the map along with the picture of the post office. I attached the completed questionnaire to a separate sheet and put each in a sheet protector and mounted them side-by-side. Eight of these double pages filled a 16 page exhibit frame. I was rewarded for this effort with an “Exhibitor” ribbon. I kind of expected that result but I did not expect the judging panel’s attempt to tell me how to improve the exhibit. I was already doing what I wanted – showing the viewer the what and the where of the post offices we visited. That ended my timid try at stamp exhibiting. Eventually, my attention span once again reached its limit and we no longer chased after post offices. We ended up with over a thousand documented visits and donated all to the National Postmark Museum in Ohio. Post office buildings are sometimes not easy to find in small towns. While searching we often passed by micro-breweries. Hmm. Why not stop? We did. They serve great pub grub and their coasters (beer mats) and labels are quite colorful. We started saving those also. It made our search for post offices that much easier and enjoyable.



In the late 1970s California started up its lottery. Occasionally I purchased scratchers and I was attracted to the graphics used on those early tickets. I knew other states established lotteries and I decided to collect those tickets also. But how could I obtain the out of state tickets? I still had thousands of those used U.S. stamps. Ah hah! I offered ten used U.S. stamps for one lottery scratch-off ticket. I was swamped. I enjoyed the abundant mail and the neat people who collected those colorful tickets. I still

correspond with a number of them. They also turned out to be a great source for both U.S. and foreign stamps. Hundreds of the French stamps I acquired in this period still reside in my French binders.

I could not stop collecting, so after a messy divorce, I decided to concentrate on Mint No Hinge stamps that became the new craze in collecting. I concentrated on stamps from 1950 to 1975 mounting them in Scott International albums. That satisfied me until the early 1980s when I sold that collection through an auction house in Pennsylvania. That furnished the funds for a new pickup truck that I needed after my Ford Pinto was totaled. That was a sad day.

The Santa Rosa Stamp Club

Membership is open to anyone interested in stamp collecting and who agrees to abide by the club by-laws. Dues are \$12 per year, pro-rated on the month of joining. Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Brookdale Lodge, 2375 Range Avenue in Santa Rosa.

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

What became my new collecting interest? My second wife and I started frequenting stamp shows throughout the west. We always picked up show covers. I enjoyed them because someone had actually to sit down and generate a show theme, cache and construct the cover. They are all very distinctive. My idea was to contact all stamp clubs, acquire all the show covers I could from them and then augment those sources by searching dealer wares and boxes. My plan was to organize the covers and develop a synopsis of each club's history into a publishable book. That idea turned out to exceed my attention span. So I sold the covers in the early 1990s. I used the proceeds to buy our current residence.

I still couldn't stop collecting. But what to collect? Scandinavia has always had a pull on me, so there I went. A couple of years later that was followed by BENELUX, and then Germany and Great Britain. At this point, around 1998, I had accumulated mounds of miscellaneous foreign stamps. So, why not the whole world? Good idea. But how? When I started this next undertaking with Scandinavia, I decided to limit my acquisitions to well centered, lightly cancelled, flawlessly used stamps. Because of shade and cancel differences, I decided to limit my collection to no more than five copies of each stamp. I term my method as "I collect one but save five." This approach led me to use Vario stock pages. I use three-ring binders that are very convenient for storing about a thousand different Scott numbers per binder. Each space on the Vario page is Scott numbered which makes filing stamps very easy. About 80% of all the worldwide Scott numbers have been entered on the pages with each space awaiting the appropriate collectable stamp. I am working on entering the last 20% of the Scott numbers. Everything has been entered in my computer so I know exactly what I have and what I need to look for. Currently I have about 55 linear feet of shelf space filled with binders. At this point, I believe my attention span has met its match.

A Quality Collection

Paul Bartolomei

One of our longtime customers recently passed away unexpectedly. He had purchased four different country albums from us, and every year subscribed to our automatic supplement service. There were not any instructions for the disposal of his

collection, and we received a call from his wife wanting to know if we could look at his collection and determine a value, or possibly purchase it. Of course, we agreed to this and the next day she came in with about seven boxes of albums.

It did not take me very long to realize that just about everything was worth very little - we see this quite often. As a young collector I had made the same mistake: when selling my worldwide stamp collection after 20 years of collecting, all my hopes were dashed when I realized that what I had accumulated was extremely ordinary and worth very little. I learned the hard way, just as I am sure many collectors do.

So how can you prevent this from happening when it comes time to sell your collection? How can your stamps be worth so little when you have invested all that time and money? In my opinion, there are two factors contributing to the worth of a quality stamp collection.

First, is organization - or lack thereof. As in the aforementioned case, all seven boxes were extremely disorganized. There were USA stamps in 15 different places; and, oddly enough, no stamps in the USA album. There is nothing more aggravating to a dealer than having to go through mounds and mounds of disorganized material. With lack of patience, dealers tend to go through the collection quickly and do not take the time to see what is really there. And because of this, the purchase offer is oftentimes very low.



Conversely, if the material is organized chronologically in albums or stock books, it is much easier to see what is present. Clean, organized albums enable the examiner to see the percentage of completion. They do not necessarily need to be fancy albums; even homemade pages will do, so long as all is clearly marked.

The second contributing factor to a great collection is content. No matter how well organized, if the content is not quality, the collection will not be quality. As in the case above, the USA stamps were a mixture of mint and used. All stamps from the 1800s were of the common, inexpensive type and damaged. And as many of you may already know, any 20th century mint stamps can be purchased for under face value and used for postage. Many collectors are under the misconception that if a stamp is 50 years old, it is worth a lot of money. However, regarding USA collections, the opposite is true.

In our customer's collections, I saw the albums that he had purchased from us, as well as all the yearly supplements he had subscribed to. I was shocked to realize that there were no stamps displayed in any of the supplement pages - seven years of empty supplements. As much as I would like to think that stamp albums are worth something, they are absolutely worthless if there are no stamps in them. After all, we are stamp collectors, not stamp album collectors. In addition, my customer had a smattering of various foreign stamps, many First Day covers and dozens of stamp articles that were well organized in binders. Unfortunately, organized articles also have no value.

If you would like to recoup at least some of the money you invest in your collection, collect in an area with a solid plan. Say you collect 20th century USA: you will need to know that you will never make much money as an investment. Therefore, collect all mint, or collect all used, in order to solidify your content. A mixture of the two looks sloppy and generally has no value for a more astute collector. If you collect 19th century, go for quality,

not quantity. If it is too expensive for your budget, then either wait until you have the funds or collect something else.

Knowledge of what is in high demand helps. You may want to pay attention to what the trends are. For example, China is an extremely popular collecting area right now. Stamps are being sold for almost full Scott catalog value, sometimes more. If you're savvy enough, you can sometimes guess what the next popular material may be.

Meanwhile, collecting worldwide does not have much value unless one was to collect every single country with each country at least 75% complete. To do so would amount to around 2000 stamp albums – how likely is that? Even collecting 30 different countries all at once would involve spreading your time and money too thin. Specializing in several individual countries, not too many at one time, is a smarter option. Concentrating on a few at a time and making sure they are accurate and of good quality would amount to a worthy investment. If a stamp costs more than you can afford right now, just wait a bit longer and get it later. I know this takes more time and money, but you'll be thankful for this later.

So, what could I say to the unfortunate widow? How was I to tell her that there was nothing of value in the collection of her recently deceased partner in life? Gently, I told her that she was best off donating the collection and claiming a tax write-off. And, most importantly, I stressed that she could be consoled by the fact that her husband spent many enjoyable hours with his collecting. I am sure all of you can relate to this – a hobby is, first and foremost, a passion.

But for those of you looking to get something in return for your collection, take away this: poor quality material will never result in anything but heartache. Collecting with this in mind takes more time and money, but you will be happier for it in the end. And with whatever collection you finally decide upon, don't just throw everything in boxes or envelopes – organize it!

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