

The PhilateliKid

The newsletter for Stamp Collecting Clubs for Kids (SCCFK)

Collect Stamps (The Most Educational Hobby)

www.stampcollectingclubsforkids.org

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Alice in Wonderland, or Kids in the Candy Store

For a week in late May/ early June 2016 a person entering the main exhibition hall at the Jacob Javits Convention Center entered the Nirvana of modern philately. The venue, New York City, let's face it, is really the epicenter of stamp collecting on this planet. If Alexander Hamilton were reincarnated today and made his first step out of the subway into Times Square, he might not be aware of all the things NYC and NY State rank first in, which are numerous, but for sure, stamp collecting between May 28th and June 4th would have to be added to that illustrious list.

It went by the name of World Stamp Show NY2016.

Historically, events that were philatelic exhibitions had acronyms that ended in "PEX" such as TIPEX (Third International Philatelic Exhibition) and FIPEX (Fifth International Philatelic Exhibition.) More often than not "PEX" is still being used for national and regional exhibitions, such as CINPEX, NAPEX, CHICAGOPEX and WESTPEX. However, some venues have decided to not use the "PEX" at all, for a variety of reasons. I have never heard of a Yukon Philatelic Exhibition, but if and when it does occur, probably YUKPEX will not be chosen. Since 1976 the international philatelic exhibitions held in the United States often eschewed the "PEX" terminology. Hence we had "Interphil 76" in 1976, in 1997 "Pacific 97," and "Washington 2006" held in Washington, D.C. in 2006. The organizers of NY2016 continued that tradition of not using "PEX" and came up with NY2016.

I grew up on a farm in Kansas in the late 1940's and the 1950's. In 1955, at the age of 7, my parents took me on a four-day vacation to NYC. We drove to the Kansas City airport, and checked in. The agent marked our tickets with our seat location. We then lined up at a low cyclone fence next to the tarmac, At a certain point the small gate was opened and we walked to the pane, climbed the stairs, placed our hats on the hat rack, and settled down for an incredibly long flight aboard a TWA 4-propeller Lockheed Constellation at the Kansas City airport, and spent an incredibly long time flying to Idlewild Airport.

Although my father was a stamp collector, at age 7 I had not really caught the stamp collecting bug. That was about to change. The first big thing I remember was going to the observation level (we called it "the top") of the Empire State Building. We took a ferry over to the Statue of

Liberty. I remember being disappointed that the winding stairway up the arm was closed to the public, but it was still very exciting looking out at New York harbor from the windows in the crown. My parents bought me a small brass replica of the Statue and a tiny elephant carved out of ivory. But that was merely prelude to what next happened. We went to a pretty boring department store. It was Gimbel's. We went to the large stamp collecting department, where for the first time I saw a complete set of mint zeppelins (Scott C13-C15.) Ooooooh. Later we were walking around NYC and turned down a street called Nassau. It was like being a kid in a candy store. I *was* Alice in Wonderland.

NY2016 repeated that experience for me – and then doubled it, and doubled it again and again.

Where should I start? NY2016 began for me at Washington2006, where I got my first taste of NY2016 by attending at “kick-off” meeting and making a small pledge. For ten years, I planned attending the event, and by 2016, now living in Hawaii, the plans solidified into a completely filled agenda. My wife Linda, (a very supportive non-stamp collector) and I arrived at Penn Station a day before the show began. We visited grandchildren in Pennsylvania, and took the three-hour train ride from Elizabethtown to NYC with one of our sons, Jason, who has been casually collecting stamps for several years. (That changed!) We checked into the show headquarters hotel, the Marriott Marquis at Times Square, and then walked the “short” distance to the Jacob Javits Convention Center. Although this was not my first trip to NYC, I had completely forgotten that Times Square is NOT exactly close to the JJCC. But it sure was a lot closer than an alternative hotel we had looked at in New Jersey. And it was NICE. We rode for the first time in an elevator that had no floor buttons to push. Floor selection had to be done BEFORE entering the elevator. Something new.

At the JJCC Friday afternoon, I was a registered volunteer, so I picked up my badge and walked into the main hall to get a feel of things. The exhibits had not yet been set up, but most of the dealers were present and busy setting up. I said hi to several I've known for years, but left them to complete setting up their business. We returned to the hotel and ate a late lunch/early dinner at Juniors Restaurant. I ordered a matzo ball soup (something not available anywhere on Maui) and my 36-year old son tasted it for the first time. Yummy!

The show opened on Saturday, with the President, Wade Saadi, cutting the ribbon with a giant pair of scissors. People poured through the two entrances – each about 25 feet across – into a room where a road map immediately became beneficial. A layout of the convention floor was fortunately provided in the programs stacked high at each entrance. A souvenir program – a book of about 150 pages – also was available for only \$10, which I considered to be a bargain.

Have you ever been aboard a ship and gazed at the horizon, only to find that you could not determine where the water ended and where the sky began? The main convention room

seemed like that. A massive quarter acre was high level exhibits with something for everybody – times 100. They extended as far as the eye could see, and then when a person walked to that spot, even more became invisible. I learned that there were over 5,000 *frames* on exhibit, and each frame contained 16 pages 8 ½ by 11 each. Each of those pages was filled with philatelic gems. I managed to see about a third of the exhibits, which were mostly in English.

There was a special room called the Court of Honor, with guards both inside and outside the room. Much of the time there was only a short line, or no line, to go into the Court of Honor, but if a person had to wait half a day it was worth it. (Nobody waited more than about 15 minutes.) The unique 1 Penny British Guyana Magenta was on display for the first time in decades. I've been collecting for 58 years, and this was my first time to see it. I went back three more times, so I saw it also for the second, third, and fourth times. In the Court of Honor were also incredible exhibits that apparently had won top medals so many times that they were prohibited from ever again being entered into competition. Also, there were two almost complete mint sheets of the Penny Black and the 2 pence Blue. Those almost complete sheets had a few stamps cut away but are the largest surviving "multiples" of stamps that were issued in the millions back in 1840 England.

The dealers were busy and happy with the crowds. I observed numerous cases where people were standing in line to buy from dealers. There were about 50 philatelic society booths. The largest of them all was the APS booth, and it was always busy. Dozens of foreign countries had booths selling their stamps. Like thousands of attendees, I obtained a free booklet called a "Passport" with spaces to stick a stamp from about 100 different countries, and then to get that country's cancellation, mostly very fancy cancels. Australia's cancellation, for example, featured a panda bear.

The guest speakers were so numerous that one often had to make a difficult choice between two, or three, that were occurring simultaneously in different rooms. The subjects ran the gamut from Stamp Collecting 101 to the Sarawak Study Group. Want to learn how to protect your stamps from humidity, insects, heat, sunlight, "bad" album paper, glassine envelopes, rubber bands, paper clips, scotch tape, etc ? Want to learn about collecting precancels? Want to find out about the 1905 Jamestown issue? Classic stamps? Special cancels? Plate number coils? Perfins? Postal stationery? Sarawak? ... There was all that and lots, lots more.

The United States Postal Service (USPS) states that less than 1% of its revenue comes from stamp collectors. Yet, the USPS outdid themselves with a First Day Issue Ceremony on May 28th through June 3rd – yes, that was seven (7) consecutive days of First Day issues. I do not believe I have ever seen anything like that before, and many of the issues had multiple stamps. In addition to giving away free programs to every attendee, the ceremonies were very well attended and quite interesting. The ceremonies were always held at 11 a.m. in the same large room, which held 400 people and most of the time there were many who were standing at the

back. One of the ceremonies was televised live. Each ceremony had a color guard present the flag, and each had an acapella singer do a beautiful job (I mean it!) singing the Star Spangled Banner. By the way, once the ceremony was over, the attendees could get their programs personally autographed for free by the individuals who had been on stage. Like many others I attended all seven of the FDC's and really enjoyed them.

Just one example of the fine programs the USPS held for FDC's: The Repeal of the Stamp Act of 1766. This historical event is not well known except to historians. I had heard of it, but learned a lot about how this was the precursor to the angry attitude colonists had about "taxation without representation" that culminated in the American Revolution. The USPS brought a Benjamin Franklin expert from Philadelphia who entertained the audience with a 7-minute narrative about Benjamin Franklin. He began by talking about some proverbs from Poor Richards almanac: "A penny saved is a penny..." and the audience responded "earned." "Three can keep a secret if" And one person in the audience said "If two of them are dead." Laughter prevailed. How a person can take a subject like the Repeal of the Stamp Act of 1766 and get an audience laughing... well, that was just the kind of quality programs the USPS gave us. In case you are wondering, no, I have never worked for the USPS, and I am not getting a commission for writing nice things about them. They get a lot of criticism, occasionally well-founded, but they also do an incredible job. We are lucky in the United States to have such a nice USPS that cares about stamp collectors.

One totally unexpected yet unforgettable event took place on Thursday, June 2nd at 3:00 p.m. Rumors that day began spreading that a Brinks truck with ten armed guards were going to arrive, along with the FBI for an impromptu meeting held just in front of the genuine Curtiss Jenny biplane located prominently in the lobby. Seven camera crews were present, as well as at least a dozen free-lance photographers to see Scott English accept from the FBI the recovered Inverted Jenny C3a which had been stolen in 1955 and was discovered by a young Irish man who found it among his deceased grandfather's stamp collection. We not only got to see the actual stamp handed over, but also we saw the young man receive the \$50,000.00 reward that had been offered over a year earlier by Donald Sundman, the President of Mystic Stamp company. English held the stamp high for all to see, in a black 3 x 5 stamp mount, then casually placed it into the inside breast pocket of his suit jacket. I doubt it remained there very long.

There were nice dinners planned by many different organizations. We were able to attend just three of them, but they were each wonderful in different ways. NYC is not an inexpensive place to go, and dining there is no exception. Fortunately, we had ten years to prepare for this 8-day event. On the first night, Saturday, the Collectors Club dinner was held at the Bryant Park Grill. It was sold out with a waiting list. At \$150 per person it was expensive, but the opportunity to meet and talk with top-level philatelists was an opportunity not to be missed.

There were some high-level awards presented, and a few short speeches. The food was excellent. The noise was at about 100 decibels, with occasional sirens from the nearby streets adding to the cacophony. Being held outdoors under a tent with the hot humid weather, even in the early evening, caused many of the men present to remove their jackets and ties. Well, at least I did.

The next night, Sunday, was the Tiffany Dinner. Attendees paid for tickets which were about double the normal price, but the extra amount was a donation to the APS. It was quite interesting as a formal dinner, with many participants wearing costumes from the 1920's and 1930's. A very interesting guest speaker talked and showed slides about his visiting very remote places on earth. The first place was the Pitcairn Islands. Just getting there is quite an experience. It is famous because it was the place where the mutineers from HMS Bounty ended up staying, knowing if they were ever found, they would be executed for their mutiny. Today the Pitcairn Islands have a nice little business printing beautiful stamps that are quickly gobbled up by stamp collectors.

The final formal dinner we were able to attend was on Thursday night. It was the "Palmares" dinner. In case you don't know what "Palmares" means (neither did I) it somehow relates to giving away trophies and ribbons. These dinners are usually so boring that I rarely attend, but this one was very different. I **guaranteed** my wife that she would not get bored, and lucky for me that is how it actually turned out. The venue was the historic New Yorker Hotel, built in art deco style. The main ballroom was filled with an international crowd. There were just the three top awards presented – the dozens (maybe hundreds) more awards were presented the next day during the afternoon at the JJCC. Already, a good sign, but wait... there was a lot more. The people who organized this dinner outdid every other Palmares dinner I have ever attended, or even heard about with a stunning performance by dancers and by live music. Later an excellent DJ played oldies that caused the fairly large dance floor to become crowded with over 200 dancers. Linda and I did a few dances, but finally left when it was just too crowded.

For the past 14 years I have been a volunteer working with children in public elementary schools and teaching them stamp collecting. I volunteered to help with two sessions (2 hours each) with the Youth area at NY2016. I would have liked to do more, but there were only 64 hours in the 8 days that the exhibition would be open, and I had so many things to do. It turned out that the youth area was well "manned" (and "womanned" – Debbie Friedman was the person in charge) so I was asked to help out at the (adult) beginners area. I was able actually to work there 4 times. I enjoyed it so much that I gave up attending some good lectures, but that is just the way it was. I am sure hundreds of new stamp collectors left the NY2016 with the philatelic "bug."

I enjoy sitting in the audience and attending auctions of stamps I know I will never be able to afford for my own collection. NY2016 did not disappoint. There were five (5) separate auctions featuring philatelic gems. I had time to attend only two, so I chose the William Gross collection of Hawaiian stamps, and the Jenny 95 auction. I now live in Hawaii and am a member of the Hawaiian Philatelic Society. Hawaiian stamps have always fascinated me, and this auction had the best of the best. In case you did not know it, “Bill” Gross is a billionaire collector who periodically sells off parts of his collections, with 100% of the entire proceeds going to charity.

The Jenny 95 auction had just one stamp in the entire auction. I got to the auction room 35 minutes early, and obtained a front row seat. Members of the press were present, and photographers. After a lengthy explanation of the rules, the auctioneer told the crowd – overflowing into the hallway – that this stamp was encased, and that it is in the exact same condition that it was when he sold it back in 2005. Mr. Charles Shreeve began the auction with a mailed-in bid. The auction took about seven minutes, with lengthy pauses between most bids. This was because there were agents in the room, speaking by telephone to their clients, reporting the last bid and getting new bids. The bidding went:

\$450,000

\$500,000

\$550,000

\$600,000

\$650,000

\$700,000

\$750,000

\$800,000

\$850,000

\$900,000

\$950,000

A bidder in the room asked if the auctioneer would accept \$975,000.

Mr. Shreeve responded, “I’ll accept that.”

Then Mr. Shreeve asked, “is anyone going to go to the magic number?”

The next bid was for \$1,050,000.

\$1,100,000

\$1,150,000

\$1,175,000 was then bid and accepted, and the bidding was done. The Inverted Jenny C3a with the rating of 95 (nearly perfect centering) was sold. The buyer had to pay the buyers fee of 15%, so the total cost was over \$1.3 million.

On the final day I left at 1 p.m. because I had to check out of my hotel room by 2 p.m. As I walked away from the “Registration Row” – once filled with 14 volunteers registering attendees, I wondered if I would be able to attend Boston 2026 – the next International Philatelic Exhibition in the U.S.

I am already making plans to attend. You can look it up at www.boston2026.org

Stamp Collecting on the High Seas

Whenever I am traveling I carry along 10-12 of the beginner stamp albums that I have created for the grade school children in Stamp Collecting Clubs for Kids. I also carry along about a dozen pairs of tongs, a couple thousand hinges and approximately 2,000 foreign stamps. I also carry along for postage about 500-600 mint US stamps, mostly the past 50-60 years. On numerous occasions I have given away albums, stamps, hinges and tongs to children, and also to beginner adults.

Whenever my wife and I take a cruise ship I bring along some of my own stamps for my own collection, which I will work on when there is a lull in the activities. This usually happens on days when the ship is not in port, i.e. at sea all day.

During NY2016 I was able to purchase at face value from Gary Posner about \$600.00 mint US sheets, mostly stamps I believe will be interesting to kids and beginners. His firm had a large booth with three large tubs filled with mint US for sale at face. Those tubs had stamp collectors digging through them almost every minute of the entire show, and I admit to spending over an hour there.

One week after NY2016 we took a short 5-day cruise in the Caribbean. As usual, I carried with me the usual quantity of stamp albums, stamps and hinges that I had re-packaged into 20 small glassine envelopes containing about 100 hinges each. I had about 80 pairs of children size tongs that I had carried to the NY2016 to let children use, and a dozen adult size tongs. Of course, I had the mint US for postage, and the supply of mint US that I had acquired at NY2016.

This particular cruise ship did not have a bulletin board, which I normally use to let other passengers know that a stamp club meeting was taking place, time and place. Nevertheless, I spent four of the five days collecting stamps in the Game Room, where people meet to play cards or board games. Apparently the word got out because many children and a few adults came by. Many stayed for longer than an hour. We had a lot of conversation about stamp collecting, including talking about the famous Inverted Jenny that had just been recovered and returned to the APRL at NY 2016. I gave away all the albums I had brought, except one, which I used to have the ship print up ten more, and gave away all but 4 of the reprints. All but two of the albums went to kids under 12 years of age, and one of those was taken by a grandfather who wanted it to give to his granddaughter when he returned home.

Some of the stamps that were particularly desired were the 25¢ dinosaur stamps (Scott 1234) and airplane stamps (Scott 1345.) One girl (going into second grade, she told me) spotted the Barbie Doll in the souvenir sheet (Scott 1456f) from the 1960's "Celebrate the Century" set. I showed her how to tear out that one stamp, and she was very pleased. I put to work a couple parents who were there with their kids by asking them to carefully separate some of the stamps. The ones which are self-adhesive, of course, are always more difficult to separate because there invariably is one or more edges that are not completely covered by the backing paper, when separated, and tend to stick to other stamps. I also asked several parents to help look for different countries among the used foreign stamps I had brought. They enjoyed learning what Magyar, Helvetia, RF, RSA and Nippon stand for. I allowed each child to take one Disney stamp per day from the "World of Disney" sheet I had just bought (Scott 1567,8,9 and 1570). Several of the kids returned on subsequent days asking for more Disney stamps, which I was happy to give to them.

In case all this sounds like an expensive give-away, I calculate that the total face value of all the mint US that I gave away was around \$25. Many of the stamps had a face value of 3¢, 4¢, and 5¢. The most expensive stamp I gave away was a mint \$2 Inverted Jenny from the souvenir sheet (Scott 5678) given to a parent who also had taken an album and spent over an hour collecting stamps.

One thing I have started to do is to provide a business card that my wife had printed up for me that gives not only my address, but my email and the web site for Stamp collecting clubs for Kids. Many adults have expressed a desire to contact me after the cruise was over. I will let you know what type of response I get. I encouraged everybody to contact me by US mail, of course, instead of email, and to place a nice stamp on the letter. I let them know that I do respond to all mail, and those which use a nice stamp will get a bonus in the letter I send back to them.

So far I have never heard any complaints from any stamp dealers that I have been taking away business from them by giving away free stamps, albums, hinges and tongs. On the contrary, I

think that dealers who sell items that are interesting to youth and to beginners will find that their business will increase. I know some will start subscribing to Linns, and at least one has signed up for membership in the APS.

Subscriptions, Memberships, and Literature

I do not push either of those very hard because first, it is somewhat expensive, and secondly, I find that the literature in Linns and in The Philatelist are very often way too advanced for beginners. It may be hard to believe, but we stamp collectors have a very challenging jargon and use of abbreviations that is like Greek to beginners. The following is a small portion of what is currently in use:

NH, VLH, SON, FDC, PF, USPOD, USPS, USSS, NSSF, S/S, CC, CTO, CLU, ECU, BEP, APS, APRL, ATA, AAPE, RPSL, ESPERS, and words like Scott, Linns, approvals, perfins, Cinderellas, thins, perfs, pulled perfs, imperfs, grids, bullseyes, penny blacks, black jacks, zeppelins, numones, covers, provisionals, St. Louis Bears, freaks, dead countries, Lindner albums, fancy cancellations, Dunes, Match Factory, Missionaries, certs, topical, slabbed, soaking, *tete-beche*, coils, and precancels. Sometimes FDC means First Day Cover and sometimes it means First Day Ceremony. A grade of Good means Bad. And then there is of course the Circle with a Dot inside it. Another problem with a lot of literature is that articles frequently focus on very expensive stamps, rarities, and auction results, all very interesting to advanced stamp collectors but way too complicated for beginners. Okay, I was just toying with you - CLU has nothing to do with stamp collecting.

N.B. The St. Louis Bears are not a football team. If you have something relating to stamp collecting that you think might be appropriate for this newsletter, please feel free to send it to Robert W. Martin at the address listed below.

Comments? Write Robert W. Martin, P.O. Box 1809, Kihei, HI 96753-1809.

Stamp Collecting Clubs for Kids is a 501 C (3) organization. All donations of \$10 or more are provided written receipts.

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