



# The Philatelic Communicator

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American Philatelic Society

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## President's Message

By Robert de Violini

As you are probably already aware, this is International Literary Year, and several countries are issuing stamps in its honor. Late last month the USPS issued a 15-cent postal card that bore the words "The world is an open book." And, early in March, a column in your local paper recently contained these words\* that can be applied to our occupations and avocations:

"The heart of education is in our literature, so read for knowledge and read for pleasure. The person who does not read is no better off than the person who cannot read."

These are both themes that should be promoted throughout the philatelic community, for it is in the specialty journals and the handbooks and the research studies as well as in the weekly philatelic press, that the collector will learn to appreciate and know his collection.

Expose the members of your local club to the world of philatelic literature—make it a topic of a club meeting. Ask members to bring in some of the philatelic literature they use as information resources. Some of the other members will already know about them, but others will learn from what they see. Philatelic literature belongs in every collector's stamp den.

› page 2 column 2.

\*How do I know this was in your local paper? The odds are that it was, since it was written by Abigail Van Buren; she gave permission for its unrestricted re-use. (Dear Abby; March 8, 1990).

## Philatelic Horoscopes

By Ken Lawrence

A scientific survey of *Linn's* readers conducted in early 1988 showed that the paper's most widely read column is John Ross's "Stamp Market Tips," with a regular readership of 62.2 percent.

Ross's closest rival was Donna O'Keefe. Some 50.6 percent of *Linn's* subscribers regularly read her "Philatelic Gems" column.

The only features that draw more attention than Ross's are "Readers' Opinions" (letters to the editor) and "U.S. Stamp Program" (the roster of new and forthcoming stamps and postal stationery). His popularity is virtually guaranteed, given that 63.1 percent of *Linn's* readers say they subscribe in order to monitor current price and value trends.

Michael Lawrence likes to regard *Linn's* as the *New York Times* of the stamp hobby, and

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## The Philatelic Communicator

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### DEADLINES:

Second quarter copy due NOW.  
Third quarter copy due July 20.

> from page 1, column 1.

Joe Frye's "nearly new" laser printer has resulted in a great new appearance for the last several issues of *The Philatelic Communicator*, but it was an early vintage model from Epson, and it may have gasped its last page. Let's hope that a satisfactory replacement is available if necessary. \*

We want to continue the door prize tradition that Barbara Mueller began a few breakfasts back, and must depend upon the generosity of our membership. There wasn't much input for the APS Spring Meeting Writers Unit Breakfast in Phoenix, but we want to have a dozen or so items for the STAMPSHOW breakfast in Cincinnati in August.

Please think of what you have in the way of philatelic literature that someone else would enjoy having. We're not looking for any expensive items; unusual and entertaining and educational pieces of philatelic literature are always welcome. You can send your donations to me.

And it is now time to ask for nominations for the Writers Unit Hall of Fame. You will recall that the HoF inductions have been shifted to the Writers Breakfast at STAMPSHOW each August.

Persons eligible are writers, editors, columnists and publishers, living or deceased, who have made notable contributions to the field of philatelic literature. They may be from any country and do not have to be members of the Writers Unit or of the APS. A list of all the WU Hall of Fame members is on pages 687-688 of *Linn's World Stamp Almanac*, fifth edition.

Nominations and supportive background information should be sent to Barbara R. Mueller, 225 S. Fischer Ave., Jefferson, WI 53549 not later than July 1st. ■

### \* The Epson Laser Printer—

Epson America has not responded to my request for correction of the problem with the laser printer.

I purchased a new Epson LQ-510 24-pin dot-matrix printer in order to have a functioning printer as well as one to use for this issue.

Please let me know your opinion of the appearance of this issue and the date you received your Bulk-Rate mail copy.

Joe Frye ■

> from page 1 column 2.

it is my personal opinion that he is largely successful in achieving that aim, despite all the criticisms of *Linn's* that have appeared in this quarterly. How ironic it is, then, that the success of *Linn's* with most of its readers rests so heavily on such an un-*Times*-like feature as "Stamp Market Tips," whose approach is closer to that of *The Daily Racing Form* than to the newspaper of record.

It is probably true, both for *Linn's* and *Racing Form* tipsters, that gamblers following their advice retain a higher proportion of their original money than their uninformed counterparts betting the daily double on hunches. But as Myron Hill shows in his analysis of John Ross's predictions made six and 16 years ago (when his column appeared in *Stamps* magazine), speculating in the stamp futures advocated by Ross would not have put the kids through college.

Nevertheless, *Linn's* is to be commended for doing away with its old "Investment Page," written by Stan Showalter, and replacing it with "Stamp Market Tips" by Ross, the title *Stamps* has used all along, both when Ross wrote its column, and more recently under Dan Pinchot's byline.

The term *investment* connotes a strong probability of financial profit, whereas the lighter touch of *tips* hints that these predictions are speculative and not to be taken so seriously. *Stamp Collector* and *Mekeel's* are innocent of both approaches, but *SC's* sister publication, *Stamp Wholesaler*, occasionally indulges in fortune-telling, and *Mekeel's* editor John Dunn has done so in other forums.

Following Myron Hill's analysis of the John Ross prophesies and how they fared, I have examined publications that have promoted stamps as sound investments, including some that still do, with a more sharply critical attitude toward them. Needless to say, any of their authors, or others who share their outlook, are welcome to reply in these pages, as is our policy toward the full range of opinions on all philatelic literature.

The third component of this issue's theme is a thoughtful article by L. D. Mayo Jr., who argues that our hobby would be happier if collectors were not burdened by the belief that stamps and covers must return a profit to their owners in order to be enjoyed.

Dann's article warms my heart. Every time *Linn's* Stamp Market Index drops a notch, I silently cheer. If it falls far enough, I may one day be able to afford a set of those Zepps I've

never owned. But the appended *Linn's* analysis always expresses the opposite view: up equals good; down equals bad. Most of my dealer friends agree with *Linn's*. If I state my bearish view aloud, it's as though I'm taking food out of their children's mouths. But now Dann Mayo says philatelic life can continue even after the crash, whether or not the market recovers its former vigor—but only if we redirect our expectations.

On a scale from Hemingway to Faulkner, Dann Mayo's writing occupies the pole of maximum sentence length. Most philatelic editors, put off by his subtlety and wordiness, are unlikely to publish the essay presented here, but I wish they would. The points he makes deserve a wide audience in the hobby.

Dann's philatelic writing (he is co-author of *Civil Censorship in the United States During World War II*) is respected by those who have read it, but his point here—that philatelic happiness does not require an ever-soaring philatelic market—is likely to be controversial in certain quarters. Nevertheless, the issue is crucial to evaluating the service that stamp literature, particularly the philatelic press, performs for collectors. I think many stamp writers and editors feel not so much committed to the mythology of the marketplace as trapped by it. Dann's article thoughtfully shows a way out of the morass, but to work effectively, his vision of philatelic heaven has to be propagated—and debated.

Stamp collecting has survived and thrived in much worse times than these we witness today. It would be foolish to let it be destroyed now by the demands of the market. An alternative exists, if we are wise enough to embrace it. ■

## How Good Are Stamp Market Tips?

By Myron G. Hill Jr.

Many philatelists spend large amounts on their collections or accumulations. Perhaps they rationalize that the stamps will appreciate and eventually they can be sold at a profit—a nice investment. They may even read stamp investment columns and attempt to profit from philatelic investment portfolios.

Will these investors/speculators do better than a serious collector? This article attempts to show what the result may be from following "tips" for a philatelic investment portfolio.

John Ross has been giving us "Stamp Market Tips" for many years. His weekly column in *Linn's* is its most popular column. So how good are his tips? To get an idea the author reviewed Ross's "Stamp Market Tips" published during the fourth quarters of 1973 and 1983. At that time he was writing for *Stamps* magazine.

Ross's strategy in selecting stamps appears sound. He finds stamps that are undercatalogued by Scott and underpriced in the U.S. market compared to higher buying prices of dealers in foreign countries. For United States stamps he compares Scott catalog prices to the buy prices of U.S. dealers. He also notes the number of dealers who are offering to buy each stamp, the quantity issued, and the popularity of the topic depicted by the stamp and the country of issue.

This reasoning appears logical, but the basis for his recommendations is questionable when the value of stamps is related to currency fluctuations. On November 10, 1973 Ross wrote, "The German mark has risen in value against the dollar . . . This increased buying power has contributed greatly to prices of German stamps in this country." In the December 24, 1983 issue of *Stamps* he asserted, "Stamp prices for many issues of Germany are lower for just one reason—a couple of years ago, the value of the German mark was around 55 cents; it now is around 37 cents . . . This is a good time for you to buy some items which are very difficult to find over there and which are bound to rise in price." He then recommended Scott 9N108-10 which has declined over 20 percent since that time.

Thus, the simplistic reasoning of buying when a foreign currency rises, and buying when it declines, does not mean that any particular stamp is "bound to rise" in value.

There is also a practical problem which Ross acknowledges in his column regularly: the stamps recommended are frequently not readily available.

For example, New Zealand Scott L5-8 (Ross Dependency) was recommended in *Linn's* in October 1989, saying that dealers in New Zealand were paying \$25 for the set. A review of *Linn's* ads in a few issues before this ad did not reveal any offers to sell the set. After the "tip" one dealer offered the set for \$27.50, and later another dealer offered it for \$35.

This illustrates how difficult it may be to find bargains after a stamp is "tipped." Dealers read his column and then price their stamps at market. While the value of this set

may be increasing, it cannot be found at bargain prices from dealers who read *Linn's*. It will not be known whether this set is a good investment at today's prices for many years. It will depend on whether the popularity of New Zealand and/or the topic of Antarctica increase, as well as the quantity being held for sale at a later time by dealers and speculators.

Now let us review some past tips and see how a speculator would have fared. Since four or five stamps or sets are tipped each column, a detailed analysis of all tips is not feasible. I believe the compilations of this article are representative.

Recommendations of United States stamps are based on dealers' buying prices and Mr. Ross's own assessment of the market. A person who bought these stamps would have done poorly.

In 1973 he recommended the Boston Tea Party blocks, Scott 1480-83, especially plate blocks. A reflection of the current market is shown by the offer of one dealer in November 1989 of 84 full sheets of the stamp, \$386 face value, for \$375. It took 16 years for that investor/owner to give up.

The 9-cent airmail rate for postcards was effective for only a short period, so Scott C77 plate blocks were tipped in 1973. Today they can be purchased for as little as 50 cents.

The 10-cent orange Special Delivery stamp of 1893, Scott E3, was recommended when it was selling for over \$20. The present retail is \$42.50 in F-VF condition. While retail has doubled, a non-dealer would have had to buy at retail and sell it at a discount from retail. This would mean only a very modest profit after 16 years.

The \$5.00 Hamilton, Scott 1053 was tipped when it retailed for \$15. It now retails \$48 fine and \$65 very fine.

The 7-cent Ben Franklin, Scott 1393D, plate blocks were tipped at \$1.00. Sixteen years later they retail for 45 cents.

United States stamps recommended in the last quarter of 1983 are:

■ QE4a, 25-cent Parcel Post deep green. It was recommended when retail was \$30 or more with dealers paying \$13. The 1990 Scott catalog prices it at \$25.

■ C98a, Philip Mazzei 40-cent airmail perforated 10½ x 11. This variety catalogs now at \$1.00 for the 40-cent stamp which could have been purchased at or near face when recommended.

■ 723, the 6-cent Garfield coil. When recommended it catalogued for \$12.50 with the

advice that it was worth full Scott. The Scott 1990 value is \$7.50.

■ 583a, a 2-cent booklet pane. It was priced at \$75 in Scott 1984, with his comment that it was worth full Scott. The Scott 1990 value is \$75.

■ 1605, the 29-cent Lighthouse definitive. Both dull and shiny gum varieties were tipped with the comment that it could be purchased at most post offices at face. Now the shiny gum catalogs for 55 cents and the dull gum at \$3.00.

■ 1295, \$5.00 Moore, both tagged and untagged. It was tipped with the comment that one should buy both, but the untagged stamp will sell for more. Scott 1990 lists the untagged stamp at \$12.50 and the tagged stamp at \$10.

■ 500, type Ia, the 2-cent flat plate printing of 1917. Ross said that the Scott 1984 price was \$300 and a good buy at that for \$67.50 F-VF and \$135 VF or better. Ouch!

■ J84. It catalogued for \$35 when recommended and dealers were offering one-half Scott. Ross said that it was worth full Scott at that time, but now it catalogs for \$30.

During the period reviewed only one United Nations stamp was recommended: Scott 38, the souvenir sheet. Dealers were offering \$90 for it in 1973, and dealers now offer \$125 for it. It is doubtful that any collector who paid retail price when the sheet was tipped could have made money.

Another popular collecting area is Germany, where Ross's recommendations show similar mixed results, as Table I shows.

TABLE I

Germany 1973 Recommendations	Scott 1974 Catalog Value	German Dealers' 1973 Buy Price in U.S. Dollars	Scott 1988 Catalog Value	U.S. 1990 Dealers' Buy Prices
670-685	392.35	600.00	1019.00	1045.00
702-721	70.38	80.00	250.49	143.00
5N41a (a)	11.00	90.00	600.00	247.00
9N21-34	275.30	400.00	820.50	412.00
9NB8-11	14.85	10.00	12.62	5.50
1983 Recommendations	Scott 1984 Catalog Value	German Dealers' 1983 Buy Prices, in Dollars.	Scott 1988 Catalog Value	U.S. Dealers' Buy Prices 1990
667-8, B-309	83.25	56.00	12.25	35.20
B-105	65.00	40.00	42.50	30.00
9N108-110	88.50	60.00	70.25	26.40
GDR 1983 Recommendations				
155-157	33.85	18.00	28.93	6.60
B21a	70.00	40.00	60.00	19.80

(a) This is the second printing. It is difficult to identify because there is an uncatalogued third type which is similar to the rare variety. The author suspects that many collectors who are not specialists have misidentified this stamp, especially if they lack comparison material.

After holding an "investment" for 16 or 17 years one might expect it to triple in value. If stamps had been purchased at the buy prices of German dealers, none met that goal. However, three of five 1973 tips show substantial gains. The five 1983 tips have been poor investments so far. All have declined in

value. Tables II and III summarize the results of Ross's recommendations for a number of other countries. Where no current buy price could be found, the present retail price of the stamps is given. These current buy and sell prices are based on recent ads in *Linn's*.

TABLE II

Japan	253-254 576a	(a) .00 12.00	500.00 24.00
Italy	832-34 J85	(b) 10.00 75.00	5.00 50.00
Korea	283a	(b) 50.00	210.00
Netherlands	B25-32 B208-213	(b) 20.00 8.00	35.00 12.50

(a) No retail given. Dealers' buying price in US was \$200.00 and in Japan \$300.00.  
(b) In country of origin. U.S. collectors were to look for stamps at a lower price.

TABLE III

	1974 Scott	Retail when Recommended	Present U.S. Retail
Great Britain 401 phos.	6.50	5.00	27.50
Ascension 62-74	24.06	20.00	57.50
Australia 218-221	40.25	50.00	155.00
Canada 177 E02	75.00 10.00	45.00 7.00	F-VF 47.50 VF 19.50
Hong Kong 168-173	3.82	1.65	15.00
New Zealand B3-4	55.00	60.00	260.00
Norfolk Island 13-18	25.00	15.00	45.00
Israel 31-2 with tabs 479-483 with tabs	45.00 -	over 50.00 3.00	65.00 3.80

Most of the recommendations in Tables II and III show an increase in value over the 17 years from the original "tip." Of course, some increase is to be expected. The question is whether that increased value, offset by stamps which did not perform well, means that the investment as a whole was sound.

It is doubtful whether there would be a reasonable profit (i.e., if all tips listed in the three tables and the United States tips are combined). However, the reader may draw his own conclusions in this regard.

It must be recognized that some stamps may have peaked and declined in value during

the time period involved. This survey does not take into account the fact that some stamps may have been sold at a higher profit years ago. Furthermore, the examples in this survey are not intended to be a scientifically verifiable random sample of the "tips." Nevertheless, the author believes that they are representative.

If a speculator had purchased the recommended stamps, kept them in a stockbook and hoped for a big profit, he surely would have been disappointed. By contrast, a collector would have had more satisfaction and enjoyment merely by buying all stamps and varieties from his favorite country or topic. ■

## The Literature of Philatelic Investment

By Ken Lawrence

Back when the controversy over Scott's pricing policy touched off some of the most incendiary prose our press has carried in recent memory, Dick Sine, who edits the Scott catalog, was quoted in the major media as having said that pork bellies make sounder investments than stamps.

For uttering this opinion in mixed company, Dick was pilloried by an unhappy group of stamp merchants. At first they claimed also to be speaking for the American Stamp Dealers Association, but later withdrew that assertion.

Dick may still be smarting from those memories. In the March issue of *Scott Stamp Monthly*, he declined to state his opinion on stamps as investments, even as he posed these questions to his readers:

"1) if you are 'investing' in stamps, do you know of anyone who has been successful in that area? That is, do you know personally such a person? Has the person done well with large sums of money, or by way of 'percentage return'?"

"2) if you are 'investing' in stamps, are you concentrating on material that has shown to steadily increase in market value over the long term or on material that is being hyped as having tremendous short-term potential? If the latter, what is the track record of the person/firm from whom/which you are making the purchase?"

Good questions, those, especially in an issue featuring Les Winick's "Stamp Market Report" column on "how you can start as a collector and possibly turn your stamp collection into an investment." Les was careful to include several sobering words of caution, but it looks as though Dick felt they didn't go far enough.

In fact, stamps are not investments, and writers should not call them investments. They do not create value, as true investments do.

Those who buy stamps (or paintings, or baseball cards, or antique furniture, or vintage automobiles, or campaign buttons, or autographs, or Tiffany glass, or other collectibles) in the expectation of selling them at a profit in the future are *speculators*, not investors. Some occasionally do make money this way; I have done so myself many times. But most intelligent stamp purchases do not, and cannot, reasonably be expected to appreciate in value.

The factors that affect future value in the stamp market are mainly cultural, not economic. As collecting fashions change—from stamps to covers, from traditional to topical, from Zepps to Ducks—the market is continually revolutionized. Much of our hobby's literature has a whiny edge because it is written by people who bitterly resent these changes, often from a self-interested financial perspective.

Only a handful of stamp holdings can be regarded as liquid. To his recent article cited above, Les Winick appended a chart of the auction market for U.S. Zeppelins from 1948 through 1987 as calculated by Washington State University professor Glenn H. Petry. These stamps are exceptions in an otherwise illiquid marketplace.

Adjacent to the graph is a comparison to the Standard and Poor's index of 500 stocks. Supposedly, if one had bought the Zepps at the bottom in 1948 and sold at the peak in 1980, the rate of return would have been 14.2 percent, as against S&P's 11.5 percent. (The figures for 1948 to 1987 are given as 9 percent and 11.9 percent, respectively, which are not so flattering to the stamps. It would have been interesting to see the large negative figures for the years of the crash from 1980 to 1985.)

All these numbers are misleading. Even those hypothetical speculators in blue chip stamps who bought and sold at the most favorable moments actually did poorly, because nearly all of them had to pay a ten percent premium when they bought, plus expertizing costs, a ten percent cut when they sold, and in the interim they had to pay for storage and insurance on "capital" that produced nothing and may even have deteriorated. If investors in stocks or Treasury bills had comparable expenses and worries, they would lose money too.

Most other stamps do much worse, since they realize only a small fraction of retail value when a collector/speculator sells them. Despite all the harangues to the contrary, mint stamps purchased at face value and later sold as discount postage lose less money than the usual sale of a collection of high-quality stamps that had been purchased from reputable dealers.

A reader will not find any of this information, nor much else of value, in the brochure titled *The Stamp Dealers' Obligations and Responsibilities When Selling Stamps As An Investment*, published by ASDA. Yet it must



be said that this pamphlet is exemplary in its evenhandedness when contrasted to some of the literature touting stamps as investments.

Nine years ago, Delta Airlines' *Sky* magazine ran an article titled "Postal Profits" by Bernie Ward. The teaser said, "... stamp collecting has emerged as a viable field of investment activity which appears immune to the fluctuations of the economy." Florida stamp dealer Kenneth R. Laurence was quoted as saying, "There has never been a downslide with stamps."

Every writer who may be tempted to employ the term "stamp investment" as a self-evident idiom ought to take a look at the April 1981 *Sky*, and realize that you, too, could end up looking that foolish if you're not careful. If, after due consideration, you decide to persist, I recommend you balance your coverage with a quote from famous philatelic investment genius Isaac Newton: what goes up must come down.

Actually, Ward's article in *Sky* is a quality piece of writing compared to the ravings of Alan Shawn Feinstein. Remember him? Not much has been heard from him lately, but in his heyday few could rival his zeal for self-promotion. Credit him with chutzpah: there with the stamp market crashing all around him after the speculative balloon burst, Feinstein was still plugging away, promoting modern error stamps as the ticket to fabulous riches. One cannot exaggerate, or even effectively caricature, his shamelessness.

Here is an excerpt from a 1983 mailing ("Not for public release until Nov. 1, 1983,") all ellipses in the original:

"On June 26, 1982, 180 people gathered in Providence, Rhode Island for a private meeting.

"They had come from throughout the world. To see and hear one man. A man whose moneymaking discoveries had been proving *astonishingly* valuable.

"At the end of the meeting they waited in line to shake his hand. To speak to him . . . To get his autograph . . .

"Who is this man? . . .

"His name is Alan Shawn Feinstein."

The most recent report I've read on Feinstein was in the October 1989 issue of *Wigwag* magazine:

"From all across the country, 5,207 people forked over ten dollars each to make contact, via thought waves, with extraterrestrials. Alan Shawn Feinstein, a Rhode Island financial adviser, solicited the money (plus self-addressed, stamped envelopes), and in return, in

a confidential letter, told the participants to look up into the inky black sky at 10 p.m. on June 27th and ask, 'Is there any way we can communicate? Can you send me a sign of your existence?'

"The members of Operation Indigo were then instructed to note any unusual thoughts or dreams or happenings for the next twelve days. A team of analysts investigated the findings, but the experiment was private and the results are unknown. Feinstein says he didn't initiate the experiment to make money, but he took in over \$50,000."

No doubt at this point several readers are thinking, "Yes, yes, but Feinstein was a patzer who couldn't play on the same board with grandmaster stampscam schemer Marc Rousso. Rousso had personal access to President Ronald Reagan and was assisted by the U.S. State Department in his deal to produce propaganda stickers for the CIA-backed UNITA rebels in Angola and to market them as postage stamps. Minkus catalog prices were rigged to bolster his telemarketing schemes. In 1986 *The Wall Street Journal* credulously reported Rousso's claim that his computerized International Stamp Exchange had done \$1 million in transactions during its first six months. Pressing outrageous reporting to the extreme, *Parade* magazine in 1988 reported Rousso's income from stamp dealing as \$40 million."

Fair enough. Rousso's investment literature is in a class by itself. His full-color, full-page advertisements in investor magazines are awesome, as are his slick brochures and annual reports. Week after week in 1987 he advertised a steadily rising "U.S. Stamp Index" in *The Wall Street Journal*, following his news release predicting "a five year bull market in stamps." But would anyone care to argue today, as some were doing just a few years back, that Rousso or Feinstein have helped the hobby? I never found a knowledgeable collector or dealer who would defend their forecasts. What would we say today to the hundreds or thousands of their victims?

Are the minor league stamp investment publications any better?

In 1964, Max W. Clere began publishing a mimeographed sheet called *The Stamp Investment Bulletin* on a monthly basis, touting—surprise!—stamps he was trying to sell. His first (November 1964) issue declared, "It is my opinion that fantastic price increases lie ahead of us in carefully selected material." His "Best Bet" in that very same issue was Italy Scott No. 143-146: "Rapidly becoming scarce. Good



topical for religion specialists. Retailers about \$5.50 but is higher from dealers who are aware of its potential." Today that set has a Scott catalog value of \$2.70. In fairness, most of his recommended sets have appreciated somewhat in retail value since the mid-1960s, but overall, taking into account that sellers must accept a small fraction of retail, his typical customers suffered a net loss. Clere must not have been very persuasive, because one finds him plugging the same sets time after time, as though his stock of supposedly scarce and desirable material wasn't selling very well.

Another bush leaguer is more difficult to evaluate. I have a few issues of Jeffrey L. Needleman's mimeographed bulletin, *Going Up*, from the early 1980s when I was his customer, plus two editions of his introductory brochure, "A Practical Approach to Stamp Investing and Collecting." Here is how his spiel begins:

"History was made in 1980 when a single stamp from British Guiana sold at public auction in New York for a record-shattering \$935,000.00. The owner was an agent for a syndicate of eight hard-headed businessmen buying stamps solely for investment purposes, who had purchased the same stamp at the same auction for \$280,000.00 in 1970. The previous owner had paid \$42,000.00.

"Yes, tremendous profits are possible in stamps. The examples above are spectacular only because of high prices,"

On its face, this seems like a persuasive argument for stamps as investments. Actually it isn't. When the amounts spent for the Penny Magenta are adjusted to take into account the buyer's premium, seller's commission, bank storage, and insurance, the rate of return from 1970 to 1980 was approximately 10½ percent compounded annually. That is not an exceptional return, particularly for the bluest blue chip in philately during the wildest boom years the hobby has ever experienced. If its current owner were to put it on the block tomorrow, should he or she expect a hammer price of \$3.12 million? That's what would be required to match the 1970 to 1980 gain.

The thing that makes *Going Up* difficult to analyze quantitatively is that there's no reliable reference for today's market in many of the gimmicky items Needleman was peddling a few years ago: huge multi-country omnibus issues, modern foreign proofs, unlisted overprints, booklets, gutter pairs, souvenir covers, year packs, and postal stationery. But

some items can be readily found in the 1990 Scott catalog, and I have checked all those.

Needleman should have called his bulletin *Going Down*. Although a few items he offered for sale between 1981 and 1983 today have catalog values a tiny bit higher than his original prices, the great majority have declined, some precipitously. In 1981 and 1982, Needleman was selling Belgium Scott No. B34-47 for \$1400. Today the set has a Scott value of \$466.85. Even if Needleman's "investors" could find purchasers willing to pay full catalog for their stamps, they have lost a lot of money.

Since the early 1970s, Dr. Robert Rabinowitz has been publishing advisory newsletters predicting market performance of United States mint singles and plate blocks. (It is unclear to me how a doctorate in chemistry qualifies him as a stamp seer or dealer, but he has always promoted himself degree first.)

Bob had promised to supply several issues of his newsletter for this review, but he never sent them, thus passing up his opportunity to show off his greatest crystal ball gazing successes. I have therefore relied on issues made available by others, whatever happened to be available at random.

In their early years, the newsletters were separate, one touting mint singles, the other, plate blocks. More recently Rabinowitz has merged them into a combined *Plate Block and U.S. Single Newsletter*.

The earliest one available in this survey is the June 1976 issue of the *Plate Block Advisory Newsletter*. Rabinowitz's "Plate Block of the Month" was Scott No. 1021, the 5-cent Tokyo Bay commemorative of 1953. He urged his clients to buy it, paying up to 85 cents. Today, almost 14 years later, it has a Scott value of 90 cents. Some items he plugged in the same issue—the 50 State Flags sheets and Bicentennial souvenir sheets—have fared better, but still not as to have produced a return comparable to a prudent genuine investment. Others fared worse: He urged paying up to 75 cents per plate block of Scott No. 1456-1469, the 6-cent Colonial Craftsmen issue, which today catalogs for 65 cents. He recommended buying full sheets of Scott No. 909-921, the Overrun Countries issue, for "under \$115." If you count all the premiums for inscription blocks, the Scott catalog value has not quite doubled that buy price, but this is one of the most widely discounted items on the U.S. market, available for \$89 today.

The very first issue of Rabinowitz's *Mint U.S. Single Newsletter*, dated June 1977, shows the same mixed, but overall poor, result. The "Mint U.S. Single of the Month" was Scott No. 756-765, the imperforate National Parks set, recommended at any price up to \$6 per set. Catalog value today is \$13.57; retail ranges from \$8.50 to \$12 per set.

In May 1980, the "Mint U.S. Single of the Month" was Scott No. 828, the 24-cent Benjamin Harrison stamp in the Presidential series, "up to \$4.00-4.25, maybe a bit higher, is recommended; downside risk is minimal." Today it catalogs for \$3.75. Other Prexies tipped in the same issue have also declined in value since then. He was still promoting imperf Parks, this time at up to \$20 per set! Fortunately some of his followers would have been able to cost-average their losses downward on that one, if they had also bought at the recommended price three years earlier.

These examples are representative of all the Rabinowitz newsletters I have seen, including a couple of later combined issues from 1985. One could qualify these points in the same way Myron Hill qualified his review of John Ross's columns, but with one significant difference. Rabinowitz charges more (\$18 per year for 11 issues) and delivers less. Perhaps a larger sample would require adjustments in my comments here, but certainly not in any fundamental way. Mint United States singles and plate blocks are not, and cannot be, good investments.

All of us in the hobby—collectors, dealers, and especially writers—have an obligation to tell the truth about these realities, and not to obfuscate or mystify them. Yet often when I discuss this with colleagues, I am told that the truth will dampen enthusiasm for the hobby. I don't believe it.

Whether or not pork belly futures are advisable, I can't say. But I do believe some people owe Dick Sine an apology. ■

## **Value, Price, and Profit in Philately**

*By L. D. Mayo Jr.*

Over the past year or so there seems to have been an increasing concern with the issue of value and prices amongst stamp and postal history collectors. Value has always been important to philatelists, who traditionally have had to defend themselves against bemusement, amusement and even the jeers of non-collectors ("You mean you really spent that much for that little piece of wastepa-

per?!") and even against the resentment of non-collecting spouses. It has been nice to be able to say, "Well, yes, it's a lot of money, but you see I expect I'll be able to get XXX percent of it back when I decide to sell it."

Actually showing a profit on a sale takes the wind out of the sails of quite a few mockers, and transforms the triumphant philatelist into someone who is perhaps strange but canny, rather than strange and an idiot. Thus, for many (I would say most) philatelists, the issue of value/price takes on an importance beyond the obvious monetary aspect; it also gets tied up with their ideas of self worth. Any insecurity in such a crucial area tends to be broadcast to the trade, the media, and to other collectors.

The past year or three have, I think, seen the emergence of several factors which threaten the confidence of philatelists in the worth of their collectibles and the worthiness of their avocation. First and foremost is Scott's jiggering with their catalog values, yielding three pricing structures in three years—each of which has been loudly and persistently called wrong by various experts. Without getting into the merits and demerits of Scott's change of philosophy or its specific actions in support of that change, I think it is fair to say that the mere occurrence of these changes in the generally acknowledged "bible" of American philately has created a sense that a very large part of pricing in philately is artificial and arbitrary.

In a sense stamp collectors are suddenly finding their "charts" unreliable and uncertain, placing them in a market situation more similar to that of postal history collectors long used to sailing in uncharted or poorly charted waters. It is my feeling that this very lack of reliable market pricing for postal history material contributed to many of the stamp collectors' decision to stay away from postal history in the first place.

Now, to say that philatelic pricing is artificial and arbitrary is not to say that it is, or need be, a total crapshoot. When we are all deciding to be arbitrary and artificial in the same way (such as believing that that piece of paper with all of the ink marks that add up to a \$10 bill is a good trade for something "worth" \$10), everything is fine and life and business go on, for better or worse, in an orderly manner. However when, especially in the case of material with no intrinsic value, people's arbitrary valuations do not agree, all hell is likely to break loose. Trade may go on, but at a reduced level, and with a lot less

confidence on the part of the traders that the game is worth it.

The second factor is that, for the vast majority of philatelic material that is bought and sold (i.e., stamps), we have had a decade-long falling market—and it is damnably difficult for the collector to come up with that third "X" in defense of his buying price when it comes time to sell in such a market. People have of course known about the falling market for years, but it has not been an urgent problem for most of them. Absent death or severe illness (conditions which render the seller beyond caring about the result, and which do a wonderful job of stifling complaints) most have been under no pressure to sell and (if there is any substance to the cries of auction houses throughout this period that good material just has not been available as it was in the '70s) have not been selling.

The idea of holding on to the old collection until a better day down the road has always been there to comfort the afflicted and, in the meantime, the drop in prices has afforded many the opportunity to "buy smart" in anticipation of the coming revival of the market. However, ten years is a long time to be optimistic in our push-button society, and when one adds to that weight of years the uncertainty introduced by the catalog-pricing brouhaha and stories in the philatelic press about the demise of stamp stores, the possible coming decline in bourse dealers, and how a single show such as World Stamp Expo may be make-or-break for a number of dealers, it is easy to see how people might begin, all of a sudden as it were, to worry about whether they have in fact been buying smart or throwing their money down a hole.

The third ingredient in this recipe for heightened concern over value is the fact that there appears to be an increasing feeling that the spread between what (both stamp and postal history) dealers will pay for material and what they charge for it is widening. In addition to making even that second "X" in the percent-of-purchase-price-realized-upon-sale look mighty anaemic, one senses that this is causing increasingly large numbers of collectors to perceive (wrongly, I would say) that increasingly large numbers of dealers are playing them for chumps by arbitrarily and rapaciously raising prices charged while lowering prices paid. The idea that one will not get an even break on the buying end, added to the gloomy market prognosis and the uncertainty over just what basis people will

have for trying to agree about value—all of which adds up to a potential bath on the selling end—does nothing to brighten the philatelist's day.

All these collector concerns are perfectly normal and understandable.

At this point, I suppose I could advance all sorts of reasons why the situation will get better but, frankly, I do not see those reasons on the horizon. My assumption is that the forces driving the market now will still be operating for the foreseeable future. It will take several years for a consensus to form about how catalog values and market values relate, and even longer for the faith of an earlier day, that there is real, trustworthy, continuing value in articles philatelic, to be restored.

As has been the case for the past several years, there is no apparent reason to assume that the market is on the verge of a period of long-term growth. And all signs visible to me indicate that dealers as a whole will continue to be faced with overhead costs that are rising faster than volume of demand, which means that the only way for them to stay even will be to increase the profit margin on each transaction.

Assuming these conditions, let me suggest that there are only two rational responses for the thinking philatelist. The first is to redefine philatelic happiness to hinge less (preferably not at all) on return-on-investment and more in terms of quality leisure-time experience. The second is to cut your losses or not, as you choose, but in any event to stop making new investments in this overwhelmingly negative investment climate, and to get a new hobby with more money-making potential.

(This last option is not so far-fetched as it might seem. My dentist, a very bright man, has been tracking and modelling the stock market on his computer for several years, as a means of tension release. He is now sufficiently confident of his abilities to invest real money on stock futures. He reports that he is a) having a ball and b) making money. My local paper has recently carried a large spread on the growth of investment clubs that should make stamp clubs envious. This tip is provided free of charge for those of you who have seriously asked, as one exasperated customer recently did, "Isn't there any way that a collector can come out at least even without being a dealer?")

Okay, for those of you who have not decided to run for greener pastures, let's talk

about value for your money in this new, return-on-investment-de-emphasized mindset.

Now, value is a pretty simple concept as defined by the law in terms of what a willing buyer will give a seller for something in a transaction free from any duress on either side. However, in practice, it's a bit tougher to figure out, and for things lacking intrinsic value, their value has the added charm of being extremely short-lived.

I have maintained for some time that philatelic material is without intrinsic value—defined in my legal dictionary as “the true, inherent and essential value of a thing, not depending upon accident, place or person, but the same everywhere and to everyone.” What I mean by this is that, if you were to go to your local purveyor of fast food—or almost anywhere else in the world—and lay a philatelic treasure down on the counter in payment, the odds are you'd be laughed out of the store. Notwithstanding my belief, as one quick-witted listener remarked recently, I have a lot of money tied up in this intrinsically valueless material. So, while believing that philatelic material has virtually no value to the vast majority of people, still I obviously believe, and fervently hope, that philatelic material has some value to someone. Living under the need to fulfill that hope is my burden, the essence of my work as a dealer—in fact, the quintessential difference between dealing and collecting, as I see it.

Getting back to the “simple” issue of value, consider for a moment the flight cover from Upper Whozit that dealer A just sold for \$25 to collector X, and another, essentially identical cover, which dealer B just sold to the same collector X for \$50. Now let's assume that dealer C, privy to both transactions, finds that he can buy from dealer D for \$20 a third cover which is a twin (triplet?) to the ones sold by A & B. Jackrabbit-quick he snaps it up, decides to quickly double his money, and offers it to collector X for \$40. Collector X says, “Why, thanks for showing me that, but I just recently bought two of these so I could show both sides of the cover without exploding it. While your price is certainly reasonable and I wish I'd seen yours before I spent \$50 on this other one, I just don't need any more.” Dealer C is not as happy as if he'd sold the cover in a quick flip but, what the heck, he showed his man he was trying hard for him, and he still has a cover that X said was reasonable at \$40 and for which he actually

paid \$50. So, C puts the cover into stock at \$50 and waits for it to sell.

Given actual sales of \$20, \$25, and \$50, the refusal of an offer at \$40 by the man who had just paid \$50, and the presence on the market of one such cover at \$50, what are these things *worth*? The answer, as best I've been able to observe, is what you can get for them—which is a scary answer to a lot of collectors, and to not a few dealers. While many dealers operating in waters uncharted by catalogs, myself included, tend to view a real-life sale price as a good indicator of what the same or essentially similar material should be expected to bring the next time it is offered (after all, this is much more scientific than our usual flying-by-the-seat-of-the-pants approach), it is in fact nothing more than an extra bit of education in a valuation system built on more-or-less educated guessing.

Add to the equation the fact that many items are bought for reasons that had absolutely nothing to do with why the dealer priced them the way he did, and this bit of information may turn out to be a bit of misinformation. I recently had a collector who I knew to be very serious about XXX and colonies go through my stock pulling out covers from everywhere else but, ending up with a large 3-figure purchase. I was flabbergasted, and wanted to know why; he was a good guy, so he told me. Seems he'd just bought every cover I owned with a ZZZ backstamp, because he had decided to study mail routings through ZZZ. Needless to say, the last thing I would have priced for—even had the ZZZ backstamps registered with me—was ZZZ backstamps.

The facts are that sale price tends to be set on the demand side, not the supply side, and that from person to person, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, the strength of the compulsion to acquire varies, and the value of money itself varies depending on factors such as the individual's emotional attachment to it (bless Scrooge McDuck for providing a handy illustration) and how much of it he has. Making the situation even more “interesting,” these factors can vary within the same individual over time, their significance within his individual equation for assigning value being affected by extraneous factors so that the cover not worth buying one day is more than worth it the next.

Finally, markets for many types of items (especially true for postal history, but also true in the case of truly scarce stamps) are

rendered volatile by the fact that they tend to be small and fragmented, with relatively low levels of information transfer between the various fragments. In practical terms, this means that the death or retirement from collecting of one or a few serious collectors of a given area, or the discovery of just a few additional specimens of a much-sought after item can severely alter the value of material in that type of item in at least some parts of that market.

For the collector concerned about recouping his "investment" or about not looking like a foolish victim of some wily dealer, this can be scary because he doesn't know whether he is "spending too much" for something. (In fact, the more naked intrusion of this "it's worth what you can get for it" valuation system due to the uncertainty over what catalog values mean nowadays is what causes me to assign that factor priority as a cause of the current increase in concern over value throughout stampdom.)

Now let's get down to what all this means for you and me in philately-as-pure-enjoyment. In a nutshell, it means that whatever money is spent on your collection should be written off as the price of a ticket to the ball (no part of which will ever be refunded to you) or as the ante in a sociable poker game (where you may or may not get it back depending on the luck of the cards, but where you really don't care about this, as you are there for the play itself, so that the money is of secondary importance).

The first rules to collecting in this manner are 1) to figure out what it is you will enjoy collecting; 2) to figure out how much you can spend on your collection without it ceasing to be fun; [2½) to verify that you can handle 1) within the limits of 2)]; and 3) to stick within that budget—all while studiously refusing to consider what you can get out of your collection when you are done with it. The minute you start thinking in terms of "What am I getting out of this besides the joy of the moment?" you, and only you, diminish your enjoyment of the moment in favor of worrying about something with so many variables beyond your control that the only sane things to do are to stop collecting or to stop thinking about it (again). If you are lucky in what you buy, there will be a better market for it when you are done, and you'll get some or all of what you spent back, or maybe even a profit. However, that is a major, a monumental, maybe even a monstrous "if," and it is best for the

sake of your present enjoyment to ignore the possibility totally.

When jeered at by mainstream America for this quaint squandering of valuable assets, rather than falling back on the—probably spurious—"smart investment" argument, the collector-for-pure-pleasure should then be ready with something along the lines of "You know, it is really strange the way people spend their excess funds. Some like to go on cruises where they can overeat and dance so late into the night that they have to take an extra week off to recover before going back to work. Others like to put weird chemicals into their bodies even if it can kill them. Others get the greatest kick in the world buying expensive golf clubs and paying for lessons and greens fees so they can hit little balls into little holes over and over again while risking heat stroke or death by lightning. So why are you picking on me when you don't give these people any garbage about not getting any of their money back? What I do gives me a lot of pleasure, I won't get AIDS from it, it won't make me fat or fry my brain, and when I choose to do it with others we do it inside and it doesn't scare the horses. If you're really concerned about saving other people's spare change, go pick on someone else. And if you're not, and have a spare minute, let me show you this really neat cover from Upper Whozit that I just bought."

This is not to say that the pleasure-driven collector should take his stamp budget, run as fast as possible to The Gaping Hole Stamp Company and pour it in (unless he is the warped exception to the general population—which believes in getting the most bang for its buck—in which case, pour away if that's what turns you on). Most of us do not get pleasure from a sense of having overpaid for something, however we have arrived at a sense of what a proper price is, and whatever our future plans for the items we purchase. What this works out to is the fourth rule for the collector-for-pleasure: learn to pass up those purchases that do not make you happy, and to indulge in those that do make you happy (whatever the absolute cost, so long as it is within your budget).

If experience indicates that something, when it is available, is available for say, \$5, and that such items pop up with consistent frequency, the average person would not be happy paying \$25 for it—in which case, he should pass up the offer at that price. On the other hand, if it's something that turns you



on even though it costs ten times what you've ever spent on a single item before, your budget will handle the purchase, and you know you'll hate yourself in the morning if you don't buy it because you've never seen one in your umpteen years of serious collecting and have no reason to expect to see another in the next umpteen years, do you really have any business losing sleep over the size of your supplier's mark-up, or the fact that you may have just set a new price record for Upper Whozit flight covers?

The fifth and sixth rules for the collector-for-pleasure are to try to avoid an adversarial relationship with his suppliers and to consider each transaction within the long run. The former task would seem to be self-evident. After all, life is full of tensions—we can fight daily with our bosses, employees, kids, spouses and total strangers, so why the heck would we want to fight with our stamp dealer? Philately is for *relaxation*, for Pete's sake, not (for most people) for letting oneself be had then hating it, or for taking coup in negotiations over price. Yet, I repeatedly hear people griping about how much they had to pay so-and-so for something, or how they worked up a sweat to get him down to a merely far-fetched rather than a blatantly outrageous price, or (excess of piggishness) how they were able to haggle someone down from a starting price that was a bargain in the first place.

Practically speaking, when the collector-for-pleasure sees a given dealer as a persistent gouger (or as otherwise unpleasant), he should simply drop him like a hot rock and take his business elsewhere. Conversely, when a dealer is found to be high on some items, the smart collector-for-pleasure will not run off with the "bargains" and leave, or even haggle over, the "overpriced" items so long as he can get everything he wants within the price he's willing to pay for everything. If, for example, he sees two covers for which he would gladly pay \$25 each, and one is priced at \$15 and the other at \$35, he'd do well by himself to pick them both up—he gets more of what he wants at an overall price that is fair to him. The fact that he also may be doing very well by his supplier on the "overpriced" cover should not be a turn-off, either to the purchase or to the collector's enjoyment of it. Even-handedness will help make the dealer's job more enjoyable, and it might just help keep that dealer in business, to the ultimate benefit of the collector who finds him a useful source of pleasure.

The smart collector-for-pleasure should not, however, expect to benefit by taking the savings from the reasonable source and using them to offset the excessive prices charged by the persistent gouger. Over time, this raises the odds that the previously reasonable dealer either will start gouging too, or that he will leave to dig ditches or empty septic tanks, or something more profitable if not more fun than stamp dealing, leaving collectors to the not-so-tender mercies of the gougers! Either way, you lose.

Finally, the collector-for-pleasure should always be honest with himself, and responsible for his actions. Foremost, realize that sellers may set prices below which they will not sell, but buyers set prices at which sales are actually consummated. Prices asked may go up for any number of reasons, but usually because there is a sense that there exists someone willing to pay them. Prices *stay* up when collectors (continue to) accept them—because the price of material that collectors reject either goes down, or it stays constant year after year as the item languishes in the dealer's stock, until either the right buyer comes along, inflation catches up, or it gets "blown out" as part of a bulk sale. The proper response for a collector-for-pleasure to a price that is so high as to interfere with his enjoyment of an item is to pass up that item. And the proper attitude toward a price that he is willing to pay ("I wish I could have gotten it for less" being a constant), is to forget about it so that he can get on to enjoying his new acquisition.

So much for the collector's rules to enjoy by. What obligations does the dealer have? Self-diagnosis and self-prescription are always risky, and as a dealer I may be less than qualified to say what it is that a dealer owes his clients—perhaps this section would be better written by collectors. However, having taken a great deal of time to tell collectors what they should be doing to make collecting more fun and less stressful than it has come to be, it is only fair to lay out a few guidelines for dealers.

The overriding duty that a good dealer owes, jointly to himself and his clientele, is to keep himself in business at a level of rewards and in a manner which make him happy, so long as the practices spawned by these considerations do not make his clientele unhappy. What this comes down to is a delicate balanc-



ing act. What happiness is will vary from person to person, client as well as dealer, so what this implies for dealer goals and the manner in which he conducts his business will vary from dealer to dealer, and for any given dealer over time.

Some dealers require only the basic comforts of life plus the joy of being able to work at a job they like—and some clients are happy providing no more than this. For other dealers, it takes a high standard of living, the ability to have a lot of time off, etc.—and if they can develop and keep a clientele that does not object to providing this, no one outside the relationship should complain. Whatever it is, the dealer owes it to himself to achieve it, while at the same time he owes it to his clients to achieve it without making them unhappy—because in the collecting-for-pleasure world, what he is selling is happiness, the stamps or covers or whatever he exchanges for his clients' money being merely the vessels in which the essence of the transaction is conveyed.

Whatever the type and level of rewards sought by a dealer, certain commonsense maxims come to mind. For example, don't sell something for what it is not—and this applies equally to not selling arbitrarily-priced items with no intrinsic value as "(sound) investments" as it does to not selling regummed stamps as original gum. Be honest, even about pricing, if you're asked. (I was once asked, when I put a reasonably aggressive reserve on something I'd never seen before, and which I thought was an exciting piece of postal history, why I had reserved it that high. My only honest answer, which seemed to satisfy my questioner—his bid came in at an even higher figure—was "I like it that much, and anyone who wants it is going to have to like it that much or more.")

Don't put yourself into a situation where the only way you're going to make a decent profit is to put on a price that makes even you cringe—purchasing on the greater fool theory leaves you viewing your clients as greater fools, which is a lousy way to repay your clients for their non-adversarial approach. Conversely, charge what it takes to stay in business and be happy, if necessary even without feeling guilty over monumental profits. Your market will tell you if you are consistently too high, and will either evolve to

support your prices or will eventually drive you into other employment.

I hope that the current confusion and concern over values is an indication that philately is finally working its way out of its investment phase—the current disenchantment arising from a lot of collector/investors finally realizing that they are in a hole from which there is no exit for the foreseeable future. If this is the case, and we can get back as close as possible to the idea that philately is a special form of entertainment, a fascinating way to dispose of leisure time and discretionary dollars, the future will be a better time for those of us, dealers and collectors, who decide to remain with the hobby. The stamps and covers are still there, waiting to be collected, enjoyed and loved for themselves. ■

### **Whither the German Postal Specialist ?**

*By Ken Lawrence*

The most dramatic events in the past 40 years began unfolding in East Germany last fall—the mass exodus from East to West by way of Hungary, huge popular demonstrations in Leipzig on October 9 and weekly thereafter, the opening of the Berlin Wall on November 9, followed by the resignation of the communist government, the sacking of secret police headquarters, the re-emergence of openly fascist movements, the election of a non-communist government headed by conservatives, and the step-by-step march toward unification with the West.

The political drama is reflected in the postal and philatelic record of the past six months. In this country, one should be able to read about it most authoritatively in the *German Postal Specialist*, monthly journal of The Germany Philatelic Society. Unfortunately that is impossible.

Some time last year the *GPS* fell way behind schedule. The July issue, containing the annual dues renewal notice (due to be paid by August 31) arrived late in October; the August issue on January 9; the September issue on February 8; and the October issue (which repeats September's contents page) on March 22. November came on May 3.

That would be a tragedy for any philatelic publication, but the timing of the *GPS* problem makes it doubly so. Proprietors of auction houses must be aggrieved that their full- and

half-page advertisements appeared months after the events they promoted, further complicating the journal's difficulty.

At Chicagopex, during the first week of November, the *GPS* was awarded a gold medal. No doubt the next issue, whatever its cover date, will proudly report that achievement. I cannot imagine how it could have happened.

The society has a dozen affiliated study groups, with two more in formation. I am a member of three and considering joining a fourth, each of which issues outstanding literature, none of which has been honored with a gold. If the umbrella group's organ consistently carried material of comparable quality, I would have no quarrel with the Chicagopex literature jury.

According to the *APS Manual of Philatelic Judging*, literature is evaluated at national shows according to a 100-point scale. Even if *GPS* got all 60 available points for presentation, treatment, and technical matter, it would still need about 33 of the 40 for originality, significance, and depth of research to qualify for a gold.

Or, to translate this into John Hotchner's vernacular, "A classy society journal characterized by balance that serves the needs of its readers, is well presented, easy to use, has substantial content of long-term reference value, is accurate and appropriately illustrated should be given a gold medal." (*PC*, First Quarter 1989, page 9.) Both by these criteria and by Diana Manchester's (*ibid.*, page 4), that the virtue of literature competitions is in the critique and consequent improvement, the *GPS* gold is dubious.

Taking as my sample the 12 issues that actually arrived in time to have been entered at Chicagopex, they bulge with society news and housekeeping, new issues reports, and filler—most notably the final installments reprinting portions of Herman Halle's unreadable but important reference book, *Passing in Review: German Postwar Postal History 1945-1949*, that the society had published without benefit of editing in 1984; and a four-part series on Hitler Photo Cards by George Kuhn—an area of collecting related to philately and worthy of publication, to be sure, but not to overshadow the philatelic content of the journal as that series did.

There were some significant articles of enduring value, especially on forgeries, but original scholarship and in-depth research were sparse, especially when contrasted to the society's study group publications. Aside from the unfairness to worthier publications, how

does a gold medal, whatever critique may have accompanied it, provide an incentive for improvement? The subsequent virtual disappearance of the journal at the very moment when collectors (especially writers) need it more than ever merely highlights the discrepancy between the connotation of the gold award and the reality of the *German Postal Specialist*.

As a member of the organization, I hope the newly-elected officers of the Germany Philatelic Society will do whatever is necessary to put things right with our journal. As a philatelic writer and critic, I urge literature judges to take more seriously the APS instruction, "Judges shall not consider 'appearance,' binding, or other factors of strictly commercial significance."

The *GPS* gold fits a pattern whereby slick glitzy philatelic publications receive high awards while their homely counterparts do not. Despite the rules, form does triumph over content in practice. Had the Chicagopex jury awarded a higher medal to the *Inflation Study Group Bulletin* than to the *GPS*, as would have been proper, I would be less skeptical about the virtues of literature competitions. Given the actual result, the burden for reversing the form-over-content trend weighs heavily on those who uphold literature competitions as a vehicle to upgrade the quality of our publications. ■

## Pick of the Litter— —ature Award II

By Ken Lawrence

I have a hunch, though I cannot prove it, that playful writing will always offend someone. This conclusion is reinforced by its corollary: any piece of prose that seems to please every one of its readers is so tepid or vapid as to render it toothless in all respects. If the Gettysburg Address instantly leaps to your mind as an exception, I recommend you extol it to a crowd of "better class" white people South of the Mason-Dixon line and measure the result.

Thus, *quod erat demonstrandum*, it cannot and should not be an editor's duty to please all readers, unless one accepts that it is all right to limit a publication's content to matters that are of strictly technical interest or otherwise insufferably boring. He or she who sets himself or herself the goal of pleasing everyone is pursuing a chimera. The solution is not to avoid publishing writing that is

interesting and fun, but to develop guidelines for evaluating it that anticipate, in a sensitive way, the feelings of those readers who will not be pleased, and to provide them adequate opportunity for rebuttal, and space to pursue their interests that may not please the first bunch.

Most of the time, in the hobby context, an additional useful test is whether an author wrote with a smile, but even here there are exceptions. Some sharp exchanges are useful and necessary, even when the spirit motivating the writers may be devious, venal, or otherwise suspect. Just because a writer has a hidden grudge or a base purpose does not automatically render his or her point worthless. In these cases, editors must be guided by personal standards of taste, and should strictly observe the right of reply.

Tom Maeder has performed this balancing act with consummate skill during the two years he has edited *Coil Line*, monthly newsletter of the Plate Number Coil Collectors Club. No other factor can account for the unprecedented success of that organization. Additional benefits of membership in PNC3 include discounts from a handful of dealers and the opportunity to participate in club auctions, but it is the quality of the newsletter that commands members' loyalty, and is celebrated here by giving Tom Maeder this quarter's Pick of the Litter-ature Award.

Unfortunately certain officers of the club have not fully respected Tom's achievement, and have tried to become back-seat editors of *Coil Line*, particularly in deference to the self-interested agitation of one chronic complainer, even after the non-collecting nag had been given more than adequate space to flatter himself and puff his business.

Tom insists that editorial interference from some of the club's officers was not a factor in his decision to depart the post. Perhaps not, but the meddling had transformed his job from a labor of love into a monthly ordeal. And Tom's resignation under these circumstances strengthens those who interpret the power of elected officers to include encroachments on the editor's job. That does not bode well for *Coil Line's* future.

Under the best of circumstances, Tom would be a hard act to follow. I wish his successor, Harold A. Brown, the best of everything, but in order to achieve that, he will have to be fully in charge, and dedicated first and foremost to the interests of the collector-

members. It remains to be seen whether that can happen. ■

## Coming Up

Some copy is already in for the next issue, and more is due soon. I would appreciate more by the end of May, especially from those who have comments to make on postmark literature—yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

That is emerging as a focal point for the issue. It is my opinion that this is an area where our literature lags behind the rest of the hobby, especially as topical collecting overtakes country collecting in popularity.

I also have some copy "in the bank" addressing aspects of philatelic writing and publishing on the most basic level, including local newsletters. With this much already in, we could have the Second Quarter issue in press in early June, and in members' hands before y'all head for your summer playgrounds.

That means responses to material in this issue should be submitted by return mail. Deadline for the Third Quarter will then be July 20.

Other matters on which I would invite articles and correspondence from writers include these questions:

■ Why did the 1989 *Linn's* and *Stamp Collector* polls show different results for the most popular U.S. stamp issue, the first time ever?

■ As writers, how do you handle reader correspondence? Do you answer every letter? Only those readers who enclose SASEs? How much work will you do to answer a query?

■ What are the consequences when philatelic publishers get into banking, aside from the fact that Jim Magruder's competitors can now demand that deadbeat advertisers use his credit offers to take the money and pay their bills? *Stamp Collector* readers have been offered VISA cards by direct mail and high-pressure telemarketing (I accepted; the cards are highly collectible), and *Stamp Wholesaler's* Memberloan program offers dealers unsecured loans up to \$10,000.

■ What is the proper relationship between a philatelic organization's officers and its journal editor regarding matters of editorial policy and content?

■ What is your opinion on writers who conceal their identities and avoid accountability for their potshots, shielded by a pseu-

donymous trademark such as "The Fly" in *The Philatelic Exhibitor*, "Heard on the Strand" in *The Philatelic Exporter*, and "Staple" in *The Interleaf*?

A number of members have volunteered to review books in their specialized fields of interest, for which I'm grateful. Now I need volunteers to review books of general philatelic interest, and on oddball subjects that don't fit existing categories.

Finally, I would welcome articles on current copyright law and its effect on us, as recommended by Karen Weigt. This could become an issue focus if one or more WU30 members would be willing to advise us on the tangled matter of using registered trademarks in articles. I can supply volunteers with pertinent clippings.

Ken ■

## Watching the Weeklies

By Robert A. Greenwald

At hand is the December 30, 1989 issue of *Stamp Collector*, the most impressive superficial feature of which is its heftiness—it logs in at 48 pages. Having watched several of the weeklies, especially *Linn's*, shrink over the past 2-3 years, I felt a sense of expectation that some "meat" would be at hand. Alas, upon opening this issue, I quickly learned that there were only two pages of editorial content; the remainder of the issue was devoted to the ever-popular "buying guide" composed of endless listings of dealer names and addresses organized into what I estimate to be about 180 different categories. *Linn's* also produces a guide similar to this; the *Linn's* guide is designed as a pullout section ostensibly of such permanent value that it should be retained. [Had I known that I would someday be writing this review, I might have kept mine.] If the weeklies feel so strongly about devoting space to such an endeavor, then perhaps a review is in order.

For starters, I turned immediately to the category representing my major collecting interest, stamp booklets. To my amazement, I found no fewer than 17 dealers listed in this section, a number far greater than I would have expected [and more than I recall seeing in the *Linn's* pullout, which is not at hand as I write this]. A more detailed study showed that the 17 names could be broken down into three subgroups: 1) dealers known to me who actually do specialize in booklets (there were eight of these); 2) dealers obviously listed in error due to sloppiness in compiling the list

(two of these, both known dealers in philatelic literature, were clearly confused in the editorial and/or advertising office between booklets of the type that contain stamps and are sold in post offices and those that are created by authors and contain text); and 3) seven dealers unknown to me completely!

It is the inclusion of the latter group that starts one to thinking about what this dealer listing really means. Obviously, the folks at *Linn's* and *SC* think that they do their readers a service in publishing guides like this. If so, then it is legitimate to ask, how is the user to take advantage of the listing? Like you, I am always looking for new sources of material to add to my collection, and so one would think that here I have a bonanza—seven new names of dealers putatively specializing in my area of interest. All I need do is compose a cover letter and/or a want list, send it off to each of these seven newly identified sources, and await a shipment of approvals, a price list, a catalog, or a personalized listing of material available.

Alas, loyal readers, I'm afraid I have been at this game a bit too long. For years, I have been writing "cold" letters to dealers, using names culled from classified ads in a variety of sources (including all four weeklies, *The American Philatelist*, several specialized journals, etc.). I can predict from experience that blind letters to these seven dealers will yield approximately the following mix of results: four or five will go unanswered, one or two will reply politely but have nothing to offer, and at most one will offer something that I already have. The answer rate, incidentally, is independent of the enclosure of an SASE. Years ago I did an experiment, writing blindly to 16 dealers, enclosing an SASE in half the cases. There was no benefit in doing so. The response rates were equally low in both cases! I am not alone in such experiences; as recently as January 29, 1990, a reader of *Linn's* wrote to comment on a similar experience. In my estimation, the odds of getting something I need for my collection by writing blindly to seven dealers are under ten percent—not worth the time, trouble, and postage.

So we return to the question, of what use is this listing to the collector who subscribes to the weekly that published it? Well, one use is obvious—updated addresses for thousands of dealers. Lurking in the list may be the current address of the dealer who sold you that marvelous cover three years ago and then disappeared; you can now reestablish

contact and perhaps get another bargain. Of course, you need to remember his name, and you may have to peruse several categories before you find him, but if he has paid his listing fee, then perhaps he can once again sell you something.

I suppose that if you are a general collector in a certain area rather than an ultra-specialist, and if price is of importance, then the listing could be useful in view of the competition it engenders. The country listings seem more manageable than the more general topics; if your need is for some recent sets from Bermuda or Suriname, you can shop price by writing to dealers listed for those areas. If you are seeking an offbeat album supplement, the listing under Accessories is intimidatingly long and unlikely to be of much direct use. The listing is certainly not "user-friendly"—unlike the classified ads or even the (real) Yellow Pages, no distinguishing information is provided within each listing category to set one dealer apart from another.

Beyond that, I cannot see what use these things are to the subscriber. From the publisher's point of view, these supplements provide a smooth way to garner extra revenue (I assume that listing is not done gratis) and to publish an issue of the paper without having to ask the editorial staff to crank up the old Underwoods. If anyone out there has kept their advertising listings and uses them frequently, I would like to hear about it. I tossed mine out a few months ago after another set of cold letters went unanswered! ■

## Desktop Publishing— Feedback

By Kenneth Trettin

My article "Desktop Publishing—what is it?" in the Third Quarter 1989 *PC* is tied for evoking the most response I have ever gotten from a philatelic article—two letters. I must thank Karen Weigt and Ranes Chakravorty for their letters. Both bring up several important points and will provide the subject matter for this column.

Karen, who is the editor of a local club newsletter for the Badger Stamp Club and for the *Philatelic Observer* published by the Junior Philatelists of America, objected to a statement that I made in the article. In commenting about how to get along without purchasing a laser printer I said, "Do not buy your own laser printer; use one at work, use

a friend's, use one at a copy shop for about 50 cents per page."

While I will stand by what I said, Karen's comments must be given consideration. She writes that she doesn't have access to a laser printer at work and if she did she wouldn't use it for personal purposes, nor would she encourage others to do so. She adds, "Naturally, I have no gripe if this is a specific employee benefit." Karen further comments that she now owns her own laser printer as the result of scrimping and scrounging and that she would not dream of allowing a friend to use it, "as a matter of fact, I'd consider it downright brazen if a friend even asked!" She further considers it impractical to run to a copy shop for each draft she produces.

Keeping Karen's comments in mind, I should expand slightly on what I previously wrote. I have always worked for a family-owned firm so I often fail to consider that the equipment at work is someone else's. However, many firms do have a specific policy regarding the use of copy machines and the like, often setting a daily limit or just stating "a reasonable number." In any case, respect your employer's wishes regarding use of office equipment for personal use.

This brings up another consideration—are you simply producing one copy of your publication to be used as a mechanical by a print shop, or are you producing all of your copies on the laser printer? They are expensive to operate and their life expectancy is less than that of an ordinary copy machine that they resemble. Except for several very large (desk-sized, not desktop models) they are not intended for anything other than producing a very small number of copies. The cost of printing your newsletter or journal by offset at a quick print shop becomes cost-effective at a very low number of copies.

Dot-matrix printers can be used to proof your pages before making the final copy on a laser printer other than your own. With some systems, it might be necessary to print in a graphics mode; Macintoshes always print in this manner but some computer/printer combinations only make use of basic letters built into the printer rather than printing what is displayed on your computer's screen.

Finally Karen writes that she cannot quite accept my statement, "Do not buy the most advanced system, just one that will do what you expect it to do . . ." She offers the sage advice that all shoppers should at least take into consideration the possibility of wanting to do more in the future and should therefore



consider purchasing a system with capabilities for upgrading at the most nominal cost.

Ranes is the editor of *Scalpel & Tongue*, published by the Medical Subjects Unit of the ATA. He comments that a laser printer is a luxury that one can easily forsake and that even a nine-pin dot-matrix printer can give satisfactory results. To this I would add, yes they can, provided at least some basic care is given in their use. Just as with a typewriter, make sure the print head is clean and in working order and *always* use a good-quality ribbon that prints dark. If your printer uses built-in letters, make sure they are easy to read; some dot-matrix printers have lacked even the elemental descenders for letters such as "p, q, g" and "y". If you are printing with a dot-matrix printer that uses the same fonts that are displayed on the screen, make sure you select one that is easy to read.

Other printer consideration would also include the letter-quality printer that uses a plastic daisy wheel (like electronic typewriters), ink-jet printers of the 24-pin, near letter-quality dot-matrix printers. Compatibility of these printers with various computers varies widely just as does their price. At the low end they are not much more expensive than some of the nine-pin printers, at the high end they cost more than the cheapest laser printers now available. And be aware that the market for this equipment is changing very rapidly. If the last time you shopped around was six months ago, then you do not know what exists today.

Ranes also noted that he likes *First Publisher* version 2.1 and considers it adequate for most philatelic desktop publishing. *First Publisher* is one of a group of page makeup programs for both MS-DOS and Macintosh that have opted for the low end, giving few features at a much lower price and easier operation. He also notes that word processors such as *WordPerfect 5.0* can even be used by themselves. To this I would add that most high-level word processors can be used to produce a newsletter. However, they are more limited in their abilities than a page-layout program, and although the end result may look similar, the ease in getting there can vary drastically.

So we will leave it here, and next time continue with a discussion of the differences between various types of programs, so that you might have a little better idea what you might want in desktop publishing software. As always, if you have any comments at all, please write or call me. (Box 56, Rockford,

Iowa 50468 or (515) 756-3542. This number is at home but will not be answered by anyone if I am not home, no answering machine either.) ■

## In Defense of Computers

By Bob Rawlins

Actually, the title is just a grabber. Computers and Word Processors need no defense; they are here to stay for they give us a capability and flexibility that we could only dream of years ago.

The first newsletter for my society [Universal Ship Cancellation Society-ed.] was issued, some 57 years ago, as a mimeographed publication. But with only a hundred or so members, that was adequate. Of course, each page was laboriously typed by the editor, who carefully corrected each error with a fluid daubed on the mimeo mat so that he could type over the mistake.

After eight years, the society went modern and began to publish a printed newsletter. Copy was edited, typeset, corrected and retypeset if needed. A master was prepared by cutting and pasting the typeset copy onto a mat, leaving space for any illustrations. The printer did the rest. That system worked well for a dozen or more editors over the next 48 years.

Fifteen months ago, when I assumed the editorship of our newsletter, we jumped into electronic publishing with both feet. I edit the copy, deliver some to a typist who inputs the copy into her computer memory via a scanner, then makes the necessary corrections and sends the finished product to the desktop editor via a modem. I type my portion of the copy into my word processor (I use *WordPerfect*) and then copy the final product onto a diskette which I deliver to the desktop editor along with a complete layout of the newsletter, page by page.

The desktop editor transfers both inputs into her *Ventura Publishing* program and creates the newsletter according to the layout I developed. She prints a draft for me to review and correct, and then produces a high-quality master with her laser printer, superior to the old cut and paste product. I paste in the photocopied illustrations or mark any photos for halftoning and inserting by the printer. I make a reference photocopy of the master before mailing it to the printer, who takes care of printing and mailing.



The transition to desktop editing was not without its problems. In my first two issues, *Ventura* ate every hyphen that I typed until we figured out that I must use a hard hyphen, which requires an extra key stroke. Every issue has a typo or three, mostly in the copy that I processed, and sometimes a more substantial error. So I insert a correction in the following issue. We now have 1600 members in our society and I have yet to receive the first complaint about the organization or quality of our publication. That makes me, as editor, feel good.

Without a personal computer and a desktop editing capability, I am not sure that I would have accepted the editor's job. In the old days, B.C. (before computers), I wrote a regular column for our newsletter. First, I would commit my article to paper, then work it over and, finally, type it with a bottle of correction fluid or a pad of type-away at my elbow. If something needed to be changed later, I would break out correcting tape or cut and paste the page to make whatever modification was necessary. Fortunately, by that time we had photocopiers, so I never had to send one of my doctored originals to the editor.

If we were still using the old typeset system, as editor I could submit written copy to the typesetter, but my handwriting is execrable and my typing is anything but error-free. However, with my word processor, I can type, add, delete, correct, move words, sentences and paragraphs, and then even have the computer check my spelling and count the words in my article before I print the hard copy. True, the word processor will not help me if I have split an infinitive, dangled a participle or misplaced a modifier, but neither would a typewriter, whatever its vintage.

In sum, I am a confirmed electronic publishing nut. Creating a newsletter in this manner is work, to be sure, but it is also challenging, exciting and, best of all, fun. ■

## Letters to the Editor

From Lloyd A. de Vries:

I'm ending my first day cover column in *Stamps* with the April 28th issue, and beginning a first day cover column in *Stamp Collector* in the May 12th issue.

Also, Al Starkweather was fired last month as editor of *Stamps* magazine. That prompted

me to take a look around and see what other opportunities might be available. However, I did not leave *Stamps* because of his firing. ■

From Larry McInnis:

To paraphrase Harry Meier (*PC*, fourth quarter 1989), Harry Meier "serves no purpose" when he suggests that *PC* should have ignored the opinions of philatelic writers about some of the important news events of the past few months.

Such criticism is, simply put, a form of selectivism (if there's such a word, and if there's not, there is now) that says to *PC*, "Publish only what I'm interested in." Some would call that censorship. Others—many others—would call it an attempt to stifle opinion. Some might say it's an ostrich-like view: grains of sand obscuring clear vision. Well, that's what I say.

If Harry Meier had a problem with "The Prussian Passive," or still has, then he should reconsider his day job, as the idiom has it, and forget real writing.

After all, if he can't read writing, he shouldn't attempt to write reading.

Unless that nasty, nefarious Ken Lawrence has edited Harry Meier's letter to be as grammatically atrocious as it is, which I doubt, then I suggest Mr. Meier "hang in there." He'll not only learn about some important issues, but how to write about them. ■

From Herman Herst, Jr.:

It certainly was not my intention to deprecate the approval activities of Todd Patric and the Sundmans, all of whom have been very good friends of mine, and whose fathers were particularly close to me.

But I must maintain the truth of the remark, "Today, for the most part, the approval service does not exist," especially in the numbers of firms engaged in it.

For everyone in penny approvals today (the term "penny approvals" is analogous to the words "penny postal card") there were hundreds years ago. ■

From Bob Greenwald:

In response to "Software for Shakespeare," your commentary on computer-assisted publishing which appeared in the last *PC*, the editor doth protest too much, methinks!

I greatly appreciate your kind words about the quality of *The Interleaf* when I served as editor. Indeed, I believe, as I am sure you do, that the overwhelming majority of WU30 members would rather see substantive content in readable albeit unadorned format versus boring drivel fancifully beribboned. There is widespread consensus that current issues of *The Interleaf*, despite its state-of-the-art look, keep its readers occupied an average of only 2.4 minutes per quarter.

Alas, dear friend, that is not the issue in 1990. We must accept as a given that the content of what we are publishing is worth printing, and the question then becomes one of using old methods vs. new, not a debate of whether to trade off content quality against looks. As you bang away on your old Underwood, bear in mind that there are no manufacturers of slide rules left in business in the U.S. (perhaps in the world); the hand-held calculator has made that device archaic.

The non-maven in computers perhaps cannot fully appreciate the meteoric advance in technology that transpired over a mere ten years. When I started editing *TI* in 1982, I had an ancient Apple II+ and a crude dot-matrix printer. About halfway through, I acquired a letter-quality daisywheel, and near the end, I had access to a laser printer. The era of true desktop publishing was just beginning as I exited editing. Constant upgrading is a fact-of-life for the personal computer user, and one merely bides one's time and waits until funds and space become available. Lasers, sophisticated software, and the other essential tools are now readily available, if not nearly ubiquitous, in the circles in which philatelists work and play, and their usage should be routine.

I will readily admit that I have a tendency to occasionally split my infinitives, and that good writers can improve many aspects of my writing. All the more reason why the editor of *PC* needs a computer. If you as editor seek to maintain a uniform quality level and enforce your style standards, which you should certainly do, then you should be prepared to personally edit every piece that comes your way. [I am uncertain why you left my piece unedited if there were stylistic anomalies that cried out for correction; if you felt limited by your or Joe Frye's time and effort, then you are hoist by your own petard.]\* Surely you cannot defend the "red pencil—have someone retype it" method versus on-screen editing of text submitted on disk. (I won't raise the

subject of software that corrects split infinitives; there are several such programs.)

I stand by my thesis that efficient editing in 1990 requires computer assistance. There are no publications that will consider for publication a handwritten manuscript; it will soon be a requirement in many places that submissions be made on disk. It behooves us to take advantage of that which technology brings forth. Bad content should be rejected out of hand; good stuff should be published correctly spelled, stylistically uniform, and attractively. *Chacon à son gout*, but very few members of WU30 would live today in Jackson, Miss., without air conditioning. ■

\* Would you prefer the Buckleyesque "occasionally to split" and "personally to edit" or the less formal "to split occasionally" and "to edit personally"? Which does the software dictate? K.L.

From Larry Rosenblum, Secretary—  
Treasurer of the Booklet Collectors Club:

I read with some dismay your history of *The Interleaf* in last quarter's issue. I have no problem with your use of *The Interleaf* as a case where the introduction of a computer was accompanied by what you consider to be a decline in editing standards. As with any opinion, not everyone will agree. However, the circumstances of the change in editor are not relevant to the topic at hand, and your assassination of Gerry Korn was uncalled for.

While I was and am an admirer of Bob Greenwald's writing, not everyone is. Further, not all the members considered *The Interleaf* to be "open, interesting, and fun," as you did. It didn't "teem with BCC membership input and feedback," either; fewer than half of Bob's issues had letters to the editor.

Your pronouncement of the death of *The Interleaf* is premature. The BCC now has over 290 members and is growing steadily. *The Interleaf* receives compliments from many members. While it no longer has Bob Greenwald's wit, it obviously still meets the needs of many booklet collectors. Any club member who feels otherwise should make his opinions known to the BCC Executive Committee. ■

From Bob Rawlins:

I read the fourth quarter 1989 *PC* with considerable interest, but also with some dismay. The supplement on philatelic writing and publishing with computers was excellent and filled with information of value for anyone

who is into or wants to learn about electronic publishing.

What disturbed me about certain of the articles and letters to the editor was the backbiting and even personal attacks contained therein. I fully understand the desire of a writer to defend or advance his or her position, but I question why this must be done in a venomous manner in a professional publication such as the *PC*. What, for example, is to be gained by holding up to ridicule the literary style or stylistic lapses of a contributor? The *PC* is not English Comp 101 and I can think of no valid reason to grade articles as compositions.

When I accepted the editorship of my society's newsletter some 15 months ago, a friend and member of WU 30 advised me to join for professional reasons. I sent off my check immediately and even ordered the back issues for that year. By and large, I have been informed and uplifted by the *PC* and I hope that I will continue to be. But I also hope that differences of opinion, no matter how strongly held, can nevertheless be expressed in the publication diplomatically and without invective. Telephones, telexes and the U.S. mail all are more appropriate media for personal attacks. ■

From Frank Caprio,  
editor of *Maneapa*:

I would like to compliment you on the outstanding work you are doing as editor of *The Philatelic Communicator*. I have especially enjoyed the recent supplements on editing a society journal and the uses of computers in philatelic writing.

I would like to add one comment to Bob de Violini's article "Home Computers and Club Newsletters," which appeared in the last supplement. Mr. de Violini restricts his discussion of printers to the most inexpensive. Philatelists should be aware, however, of at least two other printers which provide superb output for a little more money.

These are the Hewlett-Packard *DeskJet* (and now *DeskJet +*) and the Hewlett-Packard *LaserJet IIP*. The former produces near laser-quality output, is quiet, easy to maintain, and supported by many major software packages. It can be purchased for about \$600. The *LaserJet IIP* gives the user even more power and flexibility, and currently sells for about \$1000.

I have used the *DeskJet* for two years in the publication of the Tuvalu and Kiribati Philatelic Society's journal, *Maneapa*, as well as to make up my own album pages. I highly recommend it to those philatelists who are willing to spend the few extra dollars. ■

From Gary A. Van Cott:

I enjoyed the most recent number of *The Philatelic Communicator* very much despite the editor's Luddite (troglodyte?) views on computers. For those who find them useful, perhaps I can add two more publications to their reading list.

White, Jan V., *Graphic Design for the Electronic Age*, Watson-Guption Publications, New York, 1988 (ISBN 0-8230-2121-1). This is not a desktop publishing book but rather one about communicating in print regardless of the equipment used. You may be able to find some of Mr. White's earlier books on graphic design and magazine layout in your local library. They are worth looking for.

*Ventura Professional!* (ISSN 1046-9885) monthly by the Ventura Publisher Users Group, 7502 Arron Place, San Jose, CA 95139. \$36.00 for one year and \$65.00 for two years. *Xerox Ventura Publisher* is one of the leading desktop publishing programs for the PC. For the serious user (and as much as it costs who can afford to be a casual user) this magazine is a must.

I trust everyone knows that the addresses and telephone numbers of book publishers can be found in *Books in Print*. This useful source of information can be located at your local library or bookstore. ■

From Ken Lawrence:

In an interesting article in the March 15 issue of the *New York Review of Books*, "What Can't Computers Do?", John Maynard Smith reports a near consensus among experts that "computers are still very bad at some tasks that people do effortlessly, particularly tasks that have to do with language, or with visual perception." ■

From John M. Hotchner:

I have had several recent discussions with Bill Welch, the editor of *The American Philatelist* of APS, about the need to have more material in the magazine of interest to

the collector of United States stamps. A recent survey showed that a large percentage of APS members collect principally U.S. stamps. This gives added emphasis to the need for more U.S. content.

In order to "put my money where my mouth is," I am sending this letter to many friends and acquaintances in hopes of interesting you in contributing an article on your U.S. specialty.

I say "contribute" but Bill does pay an honorarium upon publication. There may be a waiting period of 18 to 24 months, but Bill has indicated that he does take submissions out of strict order of receipt to achieve balance in the AP.

Articles need not be long. In fact, shorter is probably better since that gives him maximum flexibility in using items.

I urge you to write to Bill today—or at least within the week—to offer an article. Specify subject, approximate length, illustrations proposed, and tell him something about your qualifications if the two of you don't already know each other. I would consider this a personal favor.

He is a delightful person, very easy to work with, and a talented editor. His address is:

Mr. William Welch, Editor  
*The American Philatelist*  
P O Box 8000  
State College PA 16803

Not only will your work help APS to better serve its members, but it may gain you useful feedback on the subject matter, and make some converts to your collecting area. ■

From Ernst M. Cohn:

I received a copy of the rules for STaMp-SHOW literature exhibitions, which still leave something to be desired. I have pointed out some of these issues previously, but apparently nothing was done about them. I shall give this memo a bit wider distribution, in the hope that, at last, someone will help the APS write better rules!

Rule 1: It is not necessary to restrict entries to English-language text. I am sure some volunteers from some of the specialty groups (GPS, F&CPS, etc.) would be happy to volunteer for screening entries in foreign languages. Some of us U.S. members—like Felix Ganz and myself—even write in foreign tongues! And what if someone writes in one of the American Indian languages, for the benefit of kids on Indian reservations, for example?

Please, let us not be xenophobic! Remember, we have foreign members, too.

Rule 5: Why must binders not exceed 9" by 12"? What if someone writes a column for the *New York Times* and wants to submit it in the original size? In other words, isn't this, like the preceding one, an *unnecessary* restriction? Why not simply omit it?

Rule 6: "One award per entry" is yet another unnecessary restriction. This might be read that, e.g., if the APS was given a special award for, say, the best quality paper on which an entry is printed (just to be ridiculous), the entry that gets this award doesn't get the silver medal or whatever. Yes, I know that is not what is meant, but that is the way it reads! In any case, it is another unnecessary restriction, due to poor phrasing. What is meant is, "Only persons whose applications and fees have been accepted are eligible for awards." Also, it is not the submitter of the entry form who will get a pass, etc., but the persons as defined above.

Bottom warning: "Submission of Entry Form Signifies Acceptance in Full and Understanding in Detail." Frankly, who does understand these rules? Not even their writer seems to . . .

If you have developed good rules for another literature section, why not give Dan Asmus a copy of same, for his consideration? Isn't it about time that STaMpSHOW have some acceptable rules for that stepchild of philately? ■

From A. Ben David (in *World Philatelic Congress of Israel, Holy Land, Judaica Societies Newsletter*):

Recent philatelic newspapers, magazines and journals contain polemics, accusations and counter-accusations concerning stamp repairers, fraudulent expertization certificates and shady, not to say criminal, deals to the detriment of the collector. It is not up to us to judge or to comment on these alleged fraudulent activities and we can only advise our readers to follow the reports in the philatelic press and form their own opinions.

However, certain facts concerning stamps of Israel, and the dealings of one firm in Arizona, that have come to our notice are extremely important and must be shared with our member organizations, so that they can warn their members to buy from honest dealers only and be careful with certificates of expertizing they accept.

I am referring to one specific deal, the purchase of some early used Israel stamps with tabs by our friend Edward T. Superson from Mr. Simon Sharp, also operating as Bond Enterprises of Scottsdale, Arizona. The deal involved early Israel issues, used with tabs, and the amount involved was \$2,570. The stamps were declared genuine by S. Pinchot & Son ("Mr. S. Pinchot, EXPERT, former official Senior Consultant of the Philatelic Foundation, retired").

Upon examination by the Israeli expert, Mr. Y. Tsachor of Tel-Aviv, some of the major and most expensive items were found to have reattached tabs or selvage, forged Jerusalem postmarks, various reperforations and cleaning of perforations.

When receiving Mr. Superson's complaint supported by Mr. Tsachor's certificates, Mr. Simon Sharp refunded the full purchase price and included 50 percent of Mr. Tsachor's expertizing fees.

Mr. Simon Sharp, alias Schajowitz, of Bond Enterprises is known to me from an experience with Safad stamp forgeries submitted by him as genuine to an auction house in Germany and one in Detroit. I had to call in the fraud squad of the Canadian Royal Mounted Police, Toronto Branch, to have him investigated. He was forced to bring all the Safad stamps he owned (all forgeries) to me and in the presence of two mounties I applied front and back a stamp "FORGERY".

Soon thereafter Mr. Schajowitz left Toronto and reappeared as Simon Sharp and Bond Enterprises in Arizona. ■

## **Buying and Selling Stamps**

*By Felix Ganz*

*Collecting Stamps for Pleasure and Profit* by Barry Krause. Betterway Publications, Inc. White Hall, Va. 1988. 143 pages. \$8.95.

*Top Dollar Paid!* by Stephen R. Datz. General Philatelic Corporation, Loveland, Colo. 1989. 167 pages. \$9.95

If one wishes to be brief about it all, one could say that the first book advises on how to get into stamp collecting, and the second one on how to get out of it!

Stephen Datz's "Getting Out Of It" is written in a facile, humorous, and truly anecdotal style—with each chapter containing an easily perceived moral, to the point that one might wonder how much is truth and how much fiction. In philately, however, truth is often stranger than fiction, and thus one is

tempted to believe the odd, hilarious, somber, or even obnoxious characters that wend in and out of his stories of acquiring collections—or at times coming off second best.

What pervades Datz's *Top Dollar Paid!* is the constant reminder of a stamp dealer's need to make a substantial profit on any acquisition bought for resale . . . a bit of truth collectors preparing to sell their holdings do not really enjoy hearing. Yet it is true and necessary to know. Before Datz regales us with his actual purchase stories he treats such varying topics as Ways to Sell, Condition of the Collection, as well as changing values of stamps in different markets/countries, old vs. new vs. dead country collections, etc., etc., or the many avenues open to a collector for selling his stamps. The advice is very much down to earth, and someone desirous of or forced to selling his/her philatelic holdings will most likely be less belligerent when the time of accepting or rejecting an offer has arrived. It should also be noted that the better a seller is informed of the condition and value of his/her holdings, the easier it will be to come to terms between seller and buyer.

Mr. Krause's book, also paperback but of larger (8½" by 11") format, starts by addressing the young collectors (in the dedication) but does not really continue in the same vein as the book progresses. At least it seems improbable that a young collector thinks of collecting as an investment, or gives too much thought to stamp repairs and fakes.

The introductory chapters on collecting (including an historical detour on "The First Stamps"), types of collectors, basic collecting tools, condition, and stamp manufacture are probably helpful to a novice collector or collector-to-be, and so are the ten-page glossary and an index at the end of the book. Hints on protecting and preserving one's stamps are quite helpful, too.

But the rest of the book contains too many things crowded into too little space, and the selection process is not always clear. On page 64, for example, in the chapter titled "Buying Stamps," there are four auction houses listed for the entire United States, followed by an immediate disclaimer that the author has any interest in any of them. In a country with approximately 100 mail and public auction houses, it is hard to determine how these four have been selected or singled out.

Although permission was secured for using Scott's catalog numbering system, only

the stamps on the color title page are identified thus. On other pages it states merely "catalog # . . ." which could at least be confusing. While *Linn's, Stamp Collector, Stamps,* and *The American Philatelist* receive nice descriptive write-ups, *Mekeel's* is left out. And unless one checks under "Stamp Societies" one might get the impression that these four stamp weeklies or monthlies are all there exists in philatelic literature in our country.

Should one recommend either of these two books as "staples" in a philatelic library? Probably not. Datz fits better into one's novels and funny stories library (and there will hold its own) while Krause's opus is too ambitious and too thinly spread, which detracts from its good points. ■

## The 1989 Congress Book

By Steven J. Rod

*The Congress Book 1989* edited by Barbara R. Mueller. American Philatelic Congress, Inc. 7" by 10", hard covers. 187 pages. 1989. ISBN 0-929333-15-2.

I am probably the wrong WU 30 member to review this book, since my first criticism is one that no other reviewer would have mentioned. The cover and the title pages both note that the book was issued at World Stamp Expo '89. This is incorrect, as the book was actually issued at WORLD STAMP EXPO '89. Don't laugh. Serving as editor of the show's Guidebook, I quickly discovered that the USPS was manic about always having those three words in upper case letters. Manic refers to "excessive and unreasonable enthusiasm." Trust me.

So, I was delighted that editor Barbara Mueller was guilty of the same "error" I made while working on the Guide. Misery loves company. As long as I am on obvious faults, let me go over the only other one I observe in this wonderful, exuberant, and refreshing publication. In the 1988 edition, with some fanfare, Mueller introduced "The Congress Challenge," which had as its purpose, "Holding up a mirror to contemporary philately; to raise issues and consciousness; to propose solutions and policies." With so many potential issues to pursue, I was disappointed that what I had anticipated becoming a regular feature was nowhere to be found. Let's hope it's being worked on for the 1990 edition.

There are ten "original philatelic papers presented by invitation" in this year's *Congress Book*, each a significant contribution to original research in its field. As a writer who focuses primarily on general stamp collecting, United States stamps, and philatelic literature, the 1989 *Congress Book* is most welcome to my library. In fact, what makes the *Congress Book* so great is that there are 54 previous volumes standing to the left of this newest number. One of the items I find very useful in my writing is the comprehensive "Congress Books Index," which is the 100-page 1987 3rd quarter edition of the *Philatelic Literature Review*. This invaluable index covers the first 52 books, through 1986. Copies are available from Bill Welch at APRL for \$5.00.

The 1989 *Congress Book* would have been worth the money if all it had was its first 30-page article by George W. Brett on 19th Century production dies, and yet it has ever so much more. Brett's article is a useful resource on the classics and post-classics period of U.S. stamp production. It's an illuminating piece with regard to both the techniques involved as well as data on the specific stamps.

Space does not permit even a line or two about each of the articles. Each is particularly useful to research needs of philatelic writers, and together they represent a diverse and interesting set of subjects.

I particularly loved John Boker's personal reminiscences about the Boston stamp dealer, Warren H. Colson. As a writer, I wish there was a central place to turn for this type of information, and it would be wonderful if the *Congress Book* could regularly feature one in-depth portrait per issue. Oral histories are not something we seem to be serious about in philately. As I read obituaries regularly in the philatelic press, I am afraid we lose a lot of important information when we lose our older, more knowledgeable characters. It's great that Boker took the time to put this story together. If you are capable of doing the same, now is the time to do it. We need to record the history of our hobby.

It is symbolic that replacing the Congress Challenge at the back of the book is a great piece on "Modern Philately and the Frama Challenge" by Ken Lawrence. I don't know if the title came from the author or the editor, but it's a great reminder to restore the missing innovative section. (The President's message notes that this article follows the Challenge philosophy mentioned above. I



disagree.) Lawrence provides us with a very helpful history of these postage stamps of the future. This will be an oft-quoted piece as the USPS, and others, expand their involvement in producing these postage stamps of tomorrow. His quest for answers to how Framas should be collected has potential for many of our WU 30 members to pick up where he has left off in their columns and articles.

I always look forward to my new *Congress Book*, and while it's difficult to outdo a perfect publication, Barbara Mueller continues to outdo herself with each successive volume. If you don't have your copy, please write to APC secretary Russ Skavaril, 222 East Torrance Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43214-3834. It's a must for the philatelic writer's bookshelf. ■

## **Post World War II Austrian Censored Mail**

*By Ernst M. Cohn*

*Censorship of the Civil Mails in Occupied Austria 1945-1953*, by Richard A. Krueger. 1989. vii+203 pages. 8½" by 11", softbound, typed, many maps, tables, illustrations, \$22 postpaid in U.S. and Canada, \$25 (surface) or \$28 (air) to Europe. From Richard A. Krueger, P.O. Box 441004, Fort Washington, MD 20744.

This second printing represents a review as well as research results obtained by the author, of a very complicated—and hence quite intriguing—story of relatively recent postal history. He sets the stage carefully by historical accounts of how Austria was occupied and then split among the Allies into four zones of individual occupation and a fifth, joint zone, i.e., Vienna. He also dates precisely when local mails started, then intra-zonal, interzonal, and finally foreign mails, until the end of censorship requirements.

Because each of the five areas of Austria had its own rules, each is treated separately. These treatments are preceded by a general introduction covering every conceivable subject that the reader would want to know about: administration, procedures, markings, organization of the five main chapters, sources, bibliography, index notes, to name just the most important ones.

The main chapters, each with the same structure, concern the U.S., British, French, and Soviet zones, plus Vienna. These are followed by an index and a last, blue page, to be sent to the author, so the owner of the book might obtain the latest information on the subject as it develops.

The author apparently at least mentioned all relevant information, even if it is little known or poorly documented previously; illustrated everything he has seen himself; and has pointed out areas of potential research.

A topic often slighted, but considered in detail here, is what the Germans call *Überrollerpost*, i.e., mail held over from the Third Reich to Allied Occupation at post offices and then eventually processed. That in itself is fascinating.

The chronological tables for the five areas are particularly useful and clear.

Being fairly familiar with the appearance of some of the censorship markings from World War I, I was astounded and amused by the similarity of styles of many Austrian circular marks to those from World War I, and the similarity of some French oval markings to the French marks of World War I. One wonders whether some of the old marks—applied by the Austrian Empire and by the French Republic—were exhumed in the following war.

If another edition of this work will eventually be needed, use of a better printer is recommended for more legible typeface and more uniform print. Also, the hand-lettered tables could profitably be replaced by printed ones. The binder can easily be replaced (by the buyer) with a roomier one that permits the pages to lie flat. Proof-reading was good and errors are minimal.

The over-all impression of the contents is excellent, testifying to the large quantity and high quality of the author's search and research. It is highly recommended to those interested in censorship generally and that which operated in Austria specifically. ■

## **The Big Red Books**

*By Ken Lawrence*

*Stanley Gibbons Stamp Catalogue. Part I. British Commonwealth. 1990.* Stanley Gibbons Publications Ltd. 8½" by 12", hard cover. 1074+GB104+unnumbered advertising pages. ISBN 0-85259-219-1. Imported by Lighthouse Publications, P.O. Box 705, Hackensack, NJ 07602-0705. \$64.50.

*Scott 1990 Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue. Volume 1. United States, United Nations, Canada, Great Britain and the Commonwealth.* xxi+1129+unnumbered advertising pages. ISBN 0-89487-120-X. Volume 2. Countries of the World A-F. xxx+1171+unnumbered advertising pages. ISBN 0-89487-121-8. Volume 3. Coun-

tries of the World G-O. xxxi+1126+unnumbered advertizing pages. ISBN 0-89487-122-6. Volume 4. Countries of the World P-Z. xxx+101+unnumbered advertizing pages. 8½" by 10¾", soft cover. Scott Publishing Company, 911 Vandemark Road, Sidney, OH 45365. \$25 per volume.

*Scott 1990 Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps.* Scott Publishing Company, 911 Vandemark Road, Sidney, OH 45365. 8½" by 10¾", soft cover. lxiii+551+unnumbered advertizing pages. ISBN 0-89487-124-2. \$25.

*Zumstein Briefmarken-Katalog 1989/90.* Band 1. Europa-Nord. xxxv+442 pages. Band 2. Europa-Mitte. xxxiii+987 pages. Band 3. Europa-Süd. xxxiii+1511 pages. Nachträge zum Zumstein Briefmarken-Katalog Europa-Ost 1989. 32 pages. 7" by 9½", soft cover. Zumstein & Cie., Postfach, CH-3000 Bern 7, Switzerland.

*Zumstein Katalog Schweiz/Liechtenstein. Campione und Vereinte Nationen, Genf, 1990.* Zumstein & Cie., Postfach, CH-3000 Bern 7, Switzerland. 5½" by 8", soft cover. Color illustrations, viii+454 pages.

I recommend the 1990 Stanley Gibbons British Commonwealth catalog for the philatelic writer's reference shelf. It won't replace the Scott catalog, but it has many useful listings of stamp issuing entities that Scott doesn't recognize.

Topical writers especially will find those listings indispensable. Writers who cover Britain and the Commonwealth will need the specialized listings that go far beyond Scott. Almost no one will find the prices useful, but because of the great debate over the change in Scott pricing policy, the Gibbons prices may draw more attention than they deserve.

Here we shall examine complaints against Scott's pricing changes advanced by Greg Manning. Manning's charges have focused most heavily on Australia, and he has relied for support on his Australian colleague, Glen Stephens.

At World Stamp Expo, Michael Sanig, editor of *Australian Stamp News*, told me that Glen Stephens has misrepresented the Australian stamp market. In this February's *Philatelic Exporter* Sanig wrote, "Certain elements try to talk everything up, but I wonder if anyone is really fooled. We all know that every exhibition is not a success, that every auction does not achieve record prices, and that sales are not booming."

At one point in the published debate, Greg Manning alluded to his own full-page

priced buy ads, implying that they had been running in March of 1988 when the 1989 Scott catalog came out and ruined everything. I wrote to Manning for a copy of the ads which, as it turned out, actually ran in June of 1987. I am grateful to him for supplying a copy, because it sheds useful light on the debate.

Of 117 British Commonwealth stamps he wanted to buy, the total offer for one of each amounted to 33.5 percent of 1988 Scott values, and the same dollar amount is equal to 61 percent of 1990 Scott values for the same stamps. Given the change in Scott policy, that seems eminently reasonable to me, even if the market had not slumped as it has, leaving ample margin for Manning to realize a fair profit on his purchases.

Now let's take a second look, from a slightly different angle.

The U.S. stamp weeklies do not at present carry priced buy ads for Commonwealth material because the market for it is sluggish, but publications in Britain and Australia do. Much of Manning's and Stephens's complaints were directed against Scott's pricing of the Australian Kangaroo issues, so a close look at the actual market in 'Roos may be useful.

No one is advertizing to pay full Scott or more for any of them in hinged condition, which is how they are priced by both Scott and Gibbons. Current published buy prices are approximately 60 to 70 percent of Scott, 35 percent of Gibbons, when the currencies are converted at £1 Sterling = \$1.60 U.S. = \$2.08 Australian.

Although Scott is not priced for the foreign market, it has evidently succeeded there anyway. Stamps purchased at those prices would logically sell at full Scott, and that is approximately what the sell ads indicate, for sound stamps and very fine centering.

On the other hand, the retail market is approximately half of Gibbons. For collectors unfamiliar with Great Britain's standard catalog, a bit of explanation may be helpful. The preface states, "The prices quoted in this catalogue are, as always, those at which Stanley Gibbons Ltd. offer the stamps for retail sale, if in stock, at the time of publication." That is both literally true and highly misleading.

It is true in the same sense that the H. E. Harris catalog is a listing of Harris's retail prices, or that the old Minkus catalogs of 1982 and earlier were. If you walk into the Stanley Gibbons store at 399 Strand in London and ask for any odd stamp, they'll sell it to you at

the catalog price if they have it. But stamps they are actually promoting sell for a heavily discounted price. In practical terms, Gibbons still uses what Scott calls a "mythical multiple" of the actual market value to inflate its price listings.

Even so, dealers in Britain have already likened the price-slashing by Gibbons to the Scott changes. Otto Petoorn, a dealer who specializes in Rhodesia and South Africa, wrote in last October's *Philatelic Exporter*, "Stanley Gibbons 1990 catalog no doubt follows the Scott pattern, another lesson on how to devalue dealers' stocks and collectors' stamps . . . Between '86 and '87 there was a substantial cut of 22%; fine, I say, make one good reduction which probably brought prices closer to market prices. But then there was a further reduction in '87/'88 by 9% followed by 4% '88/'89 and now another whacking 18% '89/'90; total reduction 44% between the 1986-1990 catalogues."

The grass is always greener, however. Now that Gibbons has announced plans to publish a catalog priced in dollars, some U.S. dealers have announced plans to jump ship from Scott to Gibbons. But the market for Volume One material is soft, both in the U.S. and Britain; prices are falling; and the catalogs are reflecting the market, not creating it (not "dictating prices" as Keith Harmer contends), whether their pricing is near retail, as Scott is striving to be, or systematically inflated, as Gibbons remains.

Despite the posturing, the Scott catalog will remain the U.S. standard stamp catalog, as it properly should, even though it can stand improvement in several areas. In reality, catalogs are not required to know the state of the stamp market: the Far East is hot, Germany and topicals are strong, most of the rest of the world is down.

Kurt J. Weiss, a stamp dealer based in Guatemala City, deserves an award for the most creative use of the Scott controversy. The scheme was not really original with him, however; it is a variation on real estate block-busting.

First he sent out a series of gloom-and-doom, there-goes-the-neighborhood form letters, reprinted in several philatelic publications, on how Scott ruined the stamp market and put him out of business. He called for a boycott of all things Amos. Now he has sent dealers a letter offering his assistance in disposing of their philatelic property Scott

has rendered worthless. My guess is that few dealers are as stupid as Weiss-thinks they are.

Scapegoating and shooting the messenger of bad tidings is a time-honored human tradition, so it should come as no surprise when it affects our hobby. But it is wrongheaded and counterproductive to allow the notion to spread that the crisis of the stamp market can be solved by jacking up catalog prices to fantasy levels.

If we could liberate the pages of our publications from such preposterous proposals, we could then convey to our readers some interesting facts:

The Scott catalog is getting better all the time. Its editors are more open, accessible, and responsive to corrections and suggestions for improvement from the collecting public than ever before in Scott's history. More Scott catalogs are being sold than ever before, and more album pages too. Collectors are buying stamps for those albums, and they are joining the American Philatelic Society, whose membership continues to grow.

For collectors of Great Britain and the Commonwealth, the Red Book, as the Stanley Gibbons catalog is known every year, is the best, most comprehensive resource available.

Both catalogs should have a place on every stamp writer's shelf, and most serious collectors should have access to them.

Why then do we need Zumstein catalogs from Switzerland?

Aside from the fact that Zumstein's retail pricing policy refutes the doomsayers in the Scott controversy, for U.S. stamp writers these catalogs fulfill the same promise with respect to the stamps of the European continent that the Stanley Gibbons catalog does for Great Britain and the Commonwealth: a more detailed and specialized treatment than we can get from our Scott catalogs.

First of all, there are the stamps that Scott completely omits, such as Frama stamps from the countries that have issued them. Although several specialized catalogs exist for collectors of automatic vending machine stamps, they properly belong in standard catalogs.

Zumstein's listings of the provincial stamps of the Soviet Zone of Germany 1945-1946, and the handstamp overprints of 1948, prove that this task, too, can be performed by a general catalog as well as by the Michel and Lipsia specialized catalogs. (East Germany is included in the Central Europe volume, not

the Eastern Europe volume. This year's Zumstein for Eastern Europe is merely a 32-page 1988-1989 supplement, not complete listings, for Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, and the Soviet Union.)

Collectors of Turkish Cyprus won't find their stamps in Scott, but Zumstein lists them. By listing the fads (such as Framas) and the topicals (such as those of Turkish Cyprus) that Scott omits, Zumstein catalogs are a ready reference now for listings we all will need from Scott eventually.

The Zumstein Switzerland-Liechtenstein specialized has one feature that every catalog would do well to emulate—price trend arrows. Whether a stamp catalog attempts to reflect market prices at the retail level, as Scott now does, or at a predetermined premium above retail, as Scott once did and Stanley Gibbons still does, the specific prices are not necessarily useful indicators of the stamp market, because some prices may remain steady for years at a time in the absence of any recorded sales. But an indication whether a price is up, down, or level compared to the previous year's listing greatly enhances the information supplied.

This year, by coincidence, all three of these important references have red covers. Each of the 1990 red books of philately provides important information not available in the others, as well as considerable overlap or confirmation. Writers should be encouraged to use Scott, Gibbons, and Zumstein to complement and supplement one another, a much more fruitful attitude than to view them as rivals, even though they may be that also.

### **Coming Literature Competitions**

The deadline for entries in this year's APS STaMpsHOW 23rd Annual Philatelic Literature Exhibition is May 1, 1990. I hope Dan Asmus will consider accepting late entries from anyone for whom this is the first notice of the competition.

STaMpsHOW 90 will be held in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 23 to 26. Literature entries will compete in these categories: handbooks, special studies, catalogs, periodicals, and articles. Awards will be presented at the Writers Unit Breakfast.

A copy of the rules and an entry form may be obtained from STaMpsHOW 90/APS, P.O. Box 8000, State College, PA 16803.

\* \* \*

The prospectus for the 13th Annual Sescal Philatelic Literature Exhibition is now

available. Sescal 90 will be held in Los Angeles, California, October 12 to 14.

The Sescal competition has three sections: handbooks and special studies, journals, and research articles published in a regularly-issued philatelic journal. The latter is a new category this year.

Each entrant is promised a written critique from the literature jury.

For a copy of the Sescal 90 literature prospectus, send an SASE to Bob de Violini, Sescal Literature, Box 5025, Oxnard, CA 93031.

The Chicago Philatelic Society will present its 24th Annual Philatelic Literature Exhibition at Chicagopex '90 in Rosemont, Illinois, November 9 to 11.

The competition includes two categories: handbooks (bound and unbound, but must be published; manuscripts are not acceptable), and philatelic periodicals. Deadline for entries is September 6.

For a copy of the literature prospectus and rules, write to Chicagopex '90 Literature Committee, P.O. Box 43953, Chicago, IL 60690.

The Council of Philatelic Organizations (COPO) is seeking entries for the 4th annual national competition for writers of philatelic articles published in non-philatelic publications, known as the 1990 Lidman Prize Competition, named in memory of David Lidman, the *New York Times* stamp columnist 1960-1973.

Prizes are awarded in five different categories defined by circulation size, and a grand award, the Lidman Prize, for the best of all the entries. This year the Lidman Prize winner will receive a \$500 cash award.

Nominations may be made by anyone.

Rules and entry forms are available from COPO, Box COPO, State College, PA 16803. ■

### **Literature Awards**

The 1989 Lidman Prize, announced at WORLD STAMP EXPO '89 in Washington, was awarded to Peter M. Rexford, stamp and coin columnist for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and 20 other papers by syndication.

Gold awards were given to: Bill McAllister, *The Washington Post*; Frances Pendleton, *Sports Collectors Digest*; and Joseph Zollman, *Huntsville (Alabama) Times* and syndication.

Silver awards went to: Fred Korotkin, Post Publications in Minneapolis-St. Paul; and John Weigle, *Ventura (California) Star-Free Press*.

Bronze awards were presented to: Charles Teed, *Grand Junction (Colorado) Daily Sentinel*; and Gayle Turim, for "The Stamp Doc-

tor" in *AIMPlus*, a national arthritis information magazine.

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The 1989 Philip Ward Memorial Award for excellence in first-day cover literature will go to the five authors of the symposium, "What is a 'Real' Modern FDC?" edited by Charles Yeager, in the December 1989 issue of *The United States Specialist*.

The authors and articles sharing the award are: Part I, "Evolving First-Day Fashions" by Ken Lawrence; Part II, "What is a First-Day Cover?" by George W. Brett; Part III, "A PNC Dealer's View" by Ed Denson; Part IV, "Thoughts on the Legitimacy of Contemporary First-Day Covers" by Allison W. Cusick; and Part V, "PNC First-Day Covers Still Can Be Faked" by Dr. Robert Rabinowitz.

The Ward Award ceremonies will be held at the American First-Day Cover Society annual convention in Syracuse, New York, August 31 to September 2.

\* \* \*

These are the literature prizes awarded at Colopez '90 in Columbus, Ohio, April 6-8.

In category A, Handbooks and special studies, the Grand Award went to the *1989 American Philatelic Congress Book*, Barbara R. Mueller, editor, which also received a Gold. Vermeil awards went to *Stamps of Barbados* by Edmund A. Bayley and *Zeppelin Weltrundfahrt* by John Provan. Silver awards went to *Germany Philatelic Society 40th Anniversary Anthology* edited by Diana Manchester and *Great Britain Philatelic Literature Annotated and Price Listing, Second Edition*, by Tom Current. Silver-bronze awards went to *Philatelic Writings* edited by L. J. G. Franks, *Scandinavian Collectors Club 1989 Library Index* edited by Dr. W. E. Melberg, *Space Craft Covers: a Monograph and Catalog* by Charles J. Vokotich Jr., and *A Specialized Album of Stamps for the German Empire* published by John L. Taylor. Bronze awards went to *Plate Flaws in "15" Agricultural Technology India Definite Stamp* by S. P. Bansal, *Postal System of Kotah State* by N. K. Jareth, and *USA Revenue Stamps, 1989 Supplement*, by Elbert S. A. Hubbard.

In category B, philatelic periodicals, the Grand Award went to *Postal History Journal* edited by Harlan F. Stone, which also received a Gold. Vermeil awards went to *British Caribbean Philatelic Journal* edited by Mark W. Swetland, *Chesstamp Review* edited by Russell E. Ott, *The Confederate Philatelist* edited by Dr. Stefan T. Jaronski, *Ice Cap News* edited by Russell E. Ott, *Journal of the Postal History Society of Canada* edited by E. B. Manchee, *Mexicana* edited by Edward M. Nissen, *Postal Stationery* by John R. Weimer M.D., and *The United States Specialist* edited by Charles H. Yeager.

Silver awards went to *The China Clipper* published by Clarence S. Springstead, *The EFO Collector* edited by Howard P. Gates Jr., *Maneapa* edited by Frank Caprio, *Tell* edited by Steven S. Weston, *Tin Canner* edited by Janet Klug, *Transit Postmark Collector* edited by Douglas N. Clark, *Ukrainian Philatelist* edited by Inger Kuzych, and *Universal Ship Cancellation Society Log* edited by Robert D. Rawlins. Silver-Bronze awards went to *Bull's Eyes: Journal of the Brazil Philatelic Association* edited by William V. Kriebel, *The Canadian Connection* edited by John G. Peebles, *The Indo-China Philatelist* edited by George E. DeMeritte III, *The Informer* edited by Dr. Frank J. Novak, *Meter Stamp Society Bulletin* edited by Richard Stambaugh, *Metropolitan Air Post Society Bulletin* edited by Robert S. Miller Sr., *The Obliterator* edited by Nicholas Shestopole, *The Page And Panel Journal of the ASPPP* edited by Ron Walenciak, *Scapeland Tongs* edited by Ranes C. Chakravorty M.D., *Seaposter* edited by Tom Hirschinger, and *Way Markings, A Quarterly Journal of Virginia Postal History* edited by Tom Stanton. Bronze awards went to *Calgary Stamp-ede* edited by Dale Speirs, *Forerunners* edited by William C. Brooks, *ICAR—Interstate Cinderellas and Revenues Newsletter* edited by Elbert S. A. Hubbard, *Journal of the Liberian Philatelic Society* edited by Roy P. Mackal and Henry Chlanda, *Menelik's Journal* volumes 4 and 5 edited by Huguette Gagnon, *Philamath: A Journal of Mathematical Philately* submitted by secretary-treasurer Estelle A. Bussino, and *The Stamp and Tongs* edited by Kenneth T. Stewart. ■

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from page 32.

So one wonders if the benefits of using a USPS special postmark offset the trouble encountered in obtaining timely delivery of a notice sent in this manner.

72 members returned with special cancel with the ir dues. If any member wants as many as 20 of these cards, send me a #10 SASE, your name, full address, and indicate how many cards you'd like.

Back issues of *The Philatelic Communicator* (formerly known as the *News Bulletin*) 1984 through 1988 still available. \$2.50 per single copy or \$10.00 per calendar year—postpaid. Send order with check payable "APS Writers Unit 30" to me at address below.

Help Us Keep Your Mailing Address Current—Some are still not sending changes to me. Prompt notice assures receipt of each issue of *The Philatelic Communicator* and saves postal fees.

George Griffenhagen  
WU30 Secretary-Treasurer  
2501 Drexel Street  
Vienna VA 22180 ■

TO:  
Librarian APR Library  
P. O. Box 8338  
State College PA 16803-8338

### SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT—

(As of May 1, 1990)

#### WU#30 Breakfast in Phoenix a Success

The Writers Unit #30 Breakfast in Phoenix was held on Sunday, April 22, at the Hermitage Inn with a total of 24 members and their guests in attendance. Members received reports from President de Violini and Secretary-Treasurer Griffenhagen, and participated in a discussion on the future relationship of WU#30 with AIJP led by Charles Peterson. Those in attendance included: Claussen, Robert and Mrs. de Violini, Emery, John and Mrs. Fluck, Griffenhagen, Hotchner, Jacquemin, Jones, McCumber, Nettleship, Charles and Mrs. Peterson, Ralph and Mrs. Richter, Rod, Schumann, Sellers, Springer, Swanson, Van Cott, Winick, and Welch.

#### Welcome

We welcome the following new members who have joined WU#30 since our December 5, 1989, report:

1556 Paul Kayfetz, P O Box 310, Bolinas CA 94924. Author: *Malta: Finding a Treasure Trove of Information*; and various philatelic articles. Sponsor: Steven J. Rod.

1557 Richard E. Kalnins, 39 Sugar Loaf Mountain Road, Ridgefield CT 06877. Editor *BPS PhilaNews* (Brookfield, CT philatelic society). Sponsor: John M. Hotchner.

1558 Dr. Douglas B. Quine, P O Box 220583, Chantilly VA 22022-0583. Chairman, BIA Modern Postal History Committee. Sponsor: George Griffenhagen.

1559 Kenneth T. Stewart, 5482 Bunker Hill Road, Milford OH 45150-9610. Editor: *Stamps and Tongs* (Clermont County, OH Stamp Club); Author: *Street Car R.P.O. Service in Cincinnati and Cleveland* (Mobile Post Office Society). Sponsor: Robert de Violini.

1560 Peterson Marshall Rexford, P O Box 50377, St Louis MO 63105. Columnist: *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, *Sacramento Bee*, *San Diego Tribune*, *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, and 25 other newspapers. Sponsor: George Griffenhagen.

1561 Gerry Weinberger, 566 Auburn Street, Newton MA 02466. Columnist: *Stamp Collector*. Sponsor: George Griffenhagen.

1562 Richard Louis Thomas, M.D., 8607 North 84th Street, Scottsdale AZ 85258. Columnist: *Linn's Stamp News* "Who's Who on U.S. Stamps." Sponsor: George Griffenhagen.

1563 Robin Michael Ellis, P O Box 8468, San Antonio TX 78208-0468. Editor: *Souvenir Card Journal*. Sponsor: George Griffenhagen.

#### Closed Albums

We regret to report the death of the following WU#30 members:

1408 Joseph von Hake of Paupack, Penn.

1430 Raul Gandara of Santurce, Puerto Rico.

#### Resignations

0761 Erwin Engert of Lakewood, Colorado.

0849 John Taddy of San Antonio, Texas.

0947 George Bowman of Lompoc, Calif.  
1055 Robert Murphy of Webster, Texas.  
1308 Clarence Brew of Reno, Nevada.  
1346 Charles Whittlesey of Portland, OR.  
1386 Lawrence Reis of Katy, Texas.  
1400 Bob McDonald of Iowa City, Iowa.  
1416 Frederick Kozub of Richmond, VA.  
1483 Michael Strother of Lexington, KY.  
1490 Robert Everett of New Orleans, LA.  
1513 Robert Malch of Orlando, Florida.

#### Lost

1423 Willis D. Moss (formerly of 906 C Street NW, Washington DC 20002) — If you have his current address, please send it to the Sec.-Treasurer.

#### Contributions

We thank the following members for special contributions to assist the work of the AFS Writers Unit #30:

0943 Wm. Thomas Lockard of Wellston, OH.  
0113 Charles J. Peterson of Laurel, MD.  
1279 L. Norman Williams of London, England.  
1432 Carl M. Burnett of Melbourne, Fla.

#### 1990 Membership Dues

Writers Unit #30 1990 membership dues notices were sent on an America the Beautiful postal card with a December 1 America the Beautiful postmark from WORLD STAMP EXPO as a souvenir. Many members thanked us for sending the special postmark, and among the comments received were the following:

"Nice idea to send the dues notices out from WSE."

"I loved the card with postmark, it was very thoughtful."

"Postal card with special cancel is a great idea."

"I took your advice and kept the WSE cancel — Thanks!"

"Thank you for the beautiful card."

"Thanks for letting us keep the card with WSE cancel."

"Your WSE reminder card was too nice to return."

"The postcard and cancel are beautiful."

But an unexpected series of events took place. A number of WU#30 members received a notice from the USPS which read: "This cover has been supplied in replacement of one that was spoiled in the process of cancellation." But alas, the "replacement" did not include the dues notice. So 69 WU#30 members whose dues had not been received by February 6 were sent a second dues notice, and the result was that some members wrote with their dues check: "I've been wondering why I received the America the Beautiful card with an Expo cancel" or "This is the first dues notice I have received." Another member wrote: "I did not receive my World Expo card until late January 1990." And to make matters worse, the USPS now sends WU#30 a bill in the amount of \$16.45 for canceling 329 postcards (the first 50 were "free").

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