



# The Philatelic Communicator

Newsletter of the American Philatelic Society Writers Unit #30 • Winter 2024 • N° 223



## How long until our canary stops singing?

Once upon a time, a canary was used to test mines for bad air. When poison gas accumulated, the delicate songbird would fall silent.

Right now, our philatelic canary is still singing—but for how long? Its song is warning us of problems on the horizon.

**Jay Smith**

Regular readers of my newsletter may be tired of me standing on my soapbox shouting about the upcoming loss of philatelic knowledge. However, for a hobby that relies upon and owes its health and vibrancy to the availability of shared knowledge, there are few subjects that could be more important.

This notion was again brought to

### Philatelic knowledge in digital form is at risk

the front of my mind by a recent article regarding the real-world problem of the loss of scholarly knowledge, in the form of millions of digitized scholarly papers. Yes, millions. If this can happen in an environment that supposedly has systems in place to prevent such loss, then it can certainly be a problem in philately.

### A recap

First, however, a quick review. As philately has moved more and more

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*Jay Smith is a N.C.-based dealer in stamps and postal history. This essay is from his weekly email newsletter.*

*To subscribe, send your name, address and email to [js@JaySmith.com](mailto:js@JaySmith.com)*

*Hat tip to John Hotchner for the alert.*

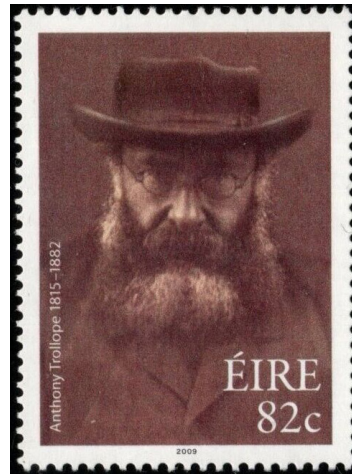
**ANTHONY TROLLOPE**

## A writer's life inside the Post Office

Although he was one of Victorian England's leading novelists, Anthony Trollope's day job, as many philatelists know, was postal surveyor—nowadays we'd call the position 'inspector.' One of his most famous legacies was the introduction of the pillar-box, today an icon of Britain.

While his initial station as a clerk was one he was famously unhappy with, clashing with his boss, William Maberly, and others, he was eventually promoted to a position that allowed him to travel widely and observe the human condition. Besides novels, Trollope, who lived from 1815 to 1882, wrote a number of travelogues; the one describing his 1859 tour of the West Indies and "the Spanish Main," or Central and South America, he considered his best. Anyone who collects these areas would do well to read his colorful and frequently hilarious descriptions of the conditions he found. His official report of his tour led to the General Post Office giving the colonies more control of their own postal services; after 1860, many of them began issuing their own stamps.

In his *Autobiography*, Trollope described his early days as a junior clerk in London, beginning in 1834 and earning £90 a year. Though he hated the work, all was not lost. Victorian novelists as a whole tended to ignore office life or gloss over it with unfavorable summations; Trollope, on the other hand, would describe office life in fascinating detail, picking up its comic aspects and



finding the character-revealing moments amidst the drudgery. A few excerpts from his *Autobiography* demonstrate his typical self-deprecating humor and bequeath us some marvelous vignettes of the inner workings of Britain's postal system during that bygone era.

**"I** must certainly acknowledge that the first seven years of

*my official life were neither creditable to myself nor useful to the public service. These seven years were passed in London, and during this period of my life it was my duty to be present every morning at the office punctually at 10 A.M. I think I commenced my quarrels with the authorities there by having in my possession a watch which was always ten minutes late. I know that I very soon achieved a character for irregularity, and came to be regarded as a black sheep...*

*Sir Francis Freeling was followed at the Post Office by Colonel Maberly, who certainly was not my friend... I got credit for nothing and was reckless.*

*As it was, the conduct of some of us was very bad. There was a comfortable sitting-room up-stairs, devoted to the use of some one of our number who in turn was required to remain in the place all night. Hither one or two of us would adjourn after lunch, and play ecarte for an hour or two. I do not know whether such ways are possible now in our public offices. And here we used to have suppers and card-parties at night—great symposiums, with much smoking of tobacco; for in our*

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*The Executive Committee was reconstituted at the last election. Volunteers are sought for the following positions: Historian, Publicist, Special events, AIPP liaison. Please reach out to the President if interested in helping with any of these roles.*

## Ben Franklin clubs at 50: what went wrong?

**A**s our hobby continues to seek ways to attract new members—the American Philatelic Society’s new publication, *StampEd*, being a notable recent effort—it may be instructive to look

**Dane S. Claussen** back at one of our hobby’s prior experiences targeting a group of potential beginners: the United States

Postal Service’s two-decade experiment reaching out to kids with its school-based Benjamin Franklin Stamp Clubs, which were launched 50 years ago.

John Hotchner has written on this subject, specifically in “Kids and Stamp Collecting, Then and Now,” (posted Nov. 21, 2021, at [virtualstampclub.com/lloydblog/?p=13026](http://virtualstampclub.com/lloydblog/?p=13026)).

Hotchner wrote that all four of his children tried stamp collecting—no surprise since they were getting stamps “in stereo” from his passionate philatelic activities at home and from a Benjamin Franklin Stamp Club at school, for which Hotchner was the adult mentor. Three of his kids even exhibited. But as Hotchner recalled, none of them stuck with the hobby: they were mainly concerned with stamps’ monetary value, despite getting them for free. He blames that on the materialism of the 1980s.

Hotchner pointed to the usual factors limiting kids’ interest in stamp collecting: a wide range of video gadgets, fewer other kids collecting, fewer adult mentors (and shifting social attitudes about adults being with other people’s kids), increasing costs, challenges finding and soaking modern used stamps and the demise of local stamp stores.

I agree, more or less, on all of these points. But I think the implicit lumping together of all children warrants a closer look.

One of the biggest problems in public policymaking is the assumption, for ethical or political or practical reasons, that all children are the same. If you take any two or more children, are they really the same? (I’d be surprised!)

Like the old studies examining whether kids are affected by television and movie violence, which consistently indicated some average effect but with uneven findings, researchers had to set aside their assumption that kids are all the same before they could get meaningful results. Only after controlling for signs of mental illness in children (yes, it can be done), they learned why a few kids were predisposed to being affected by TV violence, while most were not.

With stamp collecting, we know some kids have a stronger predisposition to being interested than others. We need to give up the egalitarian—but unrealistic—posture that stamp collecting is for everyone. No one would try to interest all children in chess or gardening or auto mechanics, so why stamps?

The USPS started its Benjamin Franklin Stamp Clubs in 1974 and, as Hotchner put it, allowed its bean-counters to “murder” them in the early 1990s. By any measure, the clubs were an impressive effort. By 1982, when the Postal Service published an updated USPS *Guidebook for Benjamin Franklin Stamp Clubs* (my own copy looks like it was

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# The challenge of organizing a catalog comeback

I don't think it's mere chance that the surge in interest in first-day cover collecting in the late 1970s coincided with the publication of the first cachet catalogs. The concept was the brainchild of Earl Planty, a business professor, but it was Michael A. Mellone who took the ball and ran with it.

**Lloyd A. de Vries**

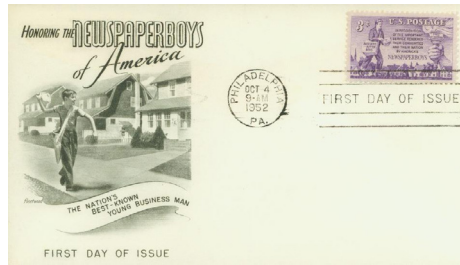
Recently, the American First Day Cover Society secured permission from Mellone's heirs to reprint the existing books and to revise and extend them based on the earlier works.

The *U. S. First Day Cover Catalog of Classic Cachets 1923-1933* was first published by "F.D.C. Publishing Co." in 1974. The company was, in effect, Mellone; a search by the AFDCS found no such business registration in New York or New Jersey. Over the next 20 years, Mellone expanded the catalog to 10 loose-leaf volumes, covering issues through the 1930s.

Then, with help from other FDC collectors, he produced catalogs for the 1940s, 50s and 60s. These books were "perfect-bound," that is, with the square binding of paperback books.

Non-FDC collectors may not grasp the importance of these catalogs. For most U.S. issues of the 20th century, there is a stamp, period. Yes, there are plate and ZIP blocks, sometimes errors or differences in printings, but for the majority of collectors, you obtain one example of the stamp and you move on (I know, that is an over-simplification!)

For an FDC collector, however, there are likely to be dozens of cachets for a single issue and sometimes, multiple first-day cities. Take the 3¢ Newspaper Boys stamp of 1952 (Scott 1015). In the first edition of Mellone's *Specialized Catalog of First Day Covers of the 1950's*, published in 1983, there are 32 different cachets. The next issue, Red Cross—a more popular topic—has 40. And Mike once told me that every time he pub-



Mystic Stamp Co.

*Fleetwood cachet on Newspaperboys FDC*

lished a cachet catalog, he would receive dozens of letters saying "you missed this one."

Planty and Mellone assigned values to different cachets. As with any catalog, these could be subject to debate, but they give an idea of relative worth. For example, a Cachet Craft design by Ludwig Staehle is valued slightly higher than one by Ken Boll.

Mike died in 2018 at the age of 72. A major part of the delay in republishing his books was tracking down his heirs (we didn't find a will) and then waiting while his family tried to extract the data that he had stored in a huge, automobile-size printer with its own hard drive. The family wanted to publish any new editions themselves. However, IT specialists they hired could do no more than get a list of files or folders from the machine.

Let this be a lesson to all of us: If our files, even our backups, are stored on obsolete media, they might as well be gone. I know I still have data on 5¼- and 3½-inch disks. I keep saying "one of these days, I'll start up my Apple IIgs and retrieve that information." Don't hold your breath.

Then the pandemic intervened, and I put aside talking to Mike's sister.

The fact is, any data on that hardware had not been updated since 2005. The

illustrations in the existing books are mostly scans of black-and-white photocopies. New cachets have come to light. What's important is first of all, being able to supply copies of the older books to today's collectors—the AFDCS keeps getting requests—and then continuing the work of updating.

As president of the AFDCS, I have turned over exactly how we will handle this project to the chair of our education department, Michael Lake, and our publications chair, Mick Zais.

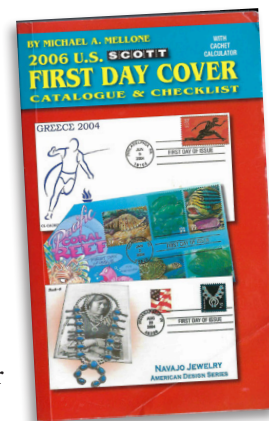
My preference is that any new versions be digital downloads that can be updated quickly without leaving behind piles of dusty tomes that might as well be stored in tombs.

The *U.S. Scott First Day Cover Catalogue & Checklist* by Mellone is a separate but related problem: The book grew out of Mike's 1977 book, *Discovering the Fun in First Day Covers*. He wrote the introductory material that was in the later Scott editions, and interpolated into the listings cachetmakers' significant first FDCs and their values. However, the last of these appears to have been in 1987. After that, Mike's involvement seems to have been minimal.

The last edition of the Scott FDC catalog appeared in 2009. It was sold in bookstores with a list price of \$9.99. Today, the prices for post-2000 editions can be \$60 and up.

The management at Scott Publishing feels it needs the Mellone estate's permission to publish any further editions. I disagree: new introductory articles can be written and the outdated material jettisoned.

The catalogs and journals that we philatelic "wordsmiths"—writers, editors, publishers—produce are key to stamp collecting and its longevity.



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# The canary sings

*Continued from page 1*

toward publishing in electronic formats (websites, discussion forums, PDF files, videos, and so forth), and away from print, we have all benefited from wider dissemination of, and easier access to, philatelic information.

However, there are virtually no agreed-upon best practices (and certainly no organized and properly financed preservation systems) in philately for the long-term preservation of such digitally published philatelic knowledge.

Websites disappear when their owner or author stops paying for them to exist. Certain sophisticated websites will also become non-functional when their underlying content-management software can no longer be updated or maintained, thus no longer meeting the standards necessary to operate on a modern Internet. Discussion forums, with their valuable ask-and-reply content, vanish for various reasons. PDF files will eventually become very difficult to read as software and operating systems evolve. CDs and DVDs rely on physical devices to read them, as well as the actual physical condition of the discs themselves; those devices are already headed to the antique store and the discs are degrading. Who knows what will happen to online video content over time?

Presenting information on technologically evolving platforms requires periodically migrating the information to current hardware and software. Otherwise, the old hardware and software must be maintained indefinitely—from personal experience, I know that maintenance is difficult to do for more than 20 or 30 years.) While migrating a single website to modern software platforms may not be that big of a deal, somebody has to do it and somebody probably has to pay for the work to be done. That migration process suddenly becomes a monumental challenge when we start talking about thousands of websites, tens of thousands of PDF files, CDs and DVDs, millions of discussion

forum messages, and so on.

Of all hobby areas, philately has one of the most—if not *the* most—well-developed banks of knowledge. However, from a practical standpoint, that knowledge only continues to exist if it actually continues to be accessible.

As the largest-ever (and possibly the largest there ever will be) generation of stamp collectors and philatelists passes on, the urgency of capturing and maintaining their accumulated *digital* philatelic knowledge increases every day.

I personally know of more important philatelic websites than I can count that are owned by individuals who are no longer able or interested in maintaining them, but who still pay for them to exist—for now. When those people get tired of paying the bills, or when they die, those important websites will disappear unless we (that is, organized philately) have taken the necessary actions to obtain eventual control over them and do the work to maintain them.

## The scholarly papers problem

As I said, this philatelic problem again came to mind because of a recent article in the well-regarded journal *Nature*. Its title is “Millions of research papers at risk of disappearing from the Internet” and it can be found (open access) at: [www.nature.com/articles/d41586-024-00616-5](http://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-024-00616-5)

The world’s systems of scholarly publishing include structures and processes for preserving published papers and supporting widespread access to them. Today’s researchers do not have to suffer searching in the basements of obscure academic archives in just a few cities of the world. Virtually all of today’s scholarly publishing is in electronic form and a lot of important prior publications have also been digitized to support international access. However, even these well-organized systems require dedicated people to keep it all working and the information accessible.

The article states (emphasis mine):

“*More than one-quarter of scholarly articles are not being properly*

*archived and preserved, a study of more than seven million digital publications suggests. The findings, published in the Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication on 24 Jan. 2024, indicate that systems to preserve papers online have failed to keep pace with the growth of research output.*

*‘Our entire epistemology of science and research relies on the chain of footnotes,’ explains author Martin Eve, a researcher in literature, technology and publishing at Birkbeck, University of London. ‘If you can’t verify what someone else has said at some other point, you’re just trusting to blind faith for artefacts that you can no longer read yourself.’*

*Eve, who is also involved in research and development at digital infrastructure organization Crossref, checked whether 7,438,037 works labelled with digital object identifiers (DOIs)—which consist of a string of numbers, letters and symbols—are unique ‘fingerprints’ used to identify and link to specific publications, such as scholarly articles and official reports. Crossref is the largest DOI registration agency, allocating the identifiers to about 20,000 members, including publishers, museums and other institutions.”*

While the research did not attempt to find if there was somehow, somewhere still an extant copy of each listed publication, the research determined that a very important aspect of the system was not working... that the information was not easily accessible using the intended systems.

The study has limitations and needs to be carefully considered in context, but the overall point is that *one-quarter of 7.4 million—around 1.85 million—papers are not properly archived*, and that some significant percentage of those 1.85 million are not readily accessible to researchers. And this is even taking into account the assumption of paid access through major academic or commercial institutions.

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To my way of thinking, this type of failure is akin to a library having a card catalog that grows as every new book is added, and no card is ever removed, but at the back of the library nobody is making sure new books are not pushing the older books out the door and into a dumpster.

## The philatelic connection

If such a high level of systemic failure can happen in major, scientific-world systems that are intentionally designed to preserve knowledge, we in philately must begin taking seriously the preservation of our own knowledge.

While there is certainly joy to be had in researching and developing new philatelic information, wouldn't it be better if we did not each have to do it all over again every couple of generations (even assuming the source materials we rely upon to do such research continue to exist)?

My hopes are...

- That the major organizations in philately will recognize the importance of this subject *and* devote the money and resources to creating practical short- and long-term solutions. There are many cases where intervention (to prevent websites from going dark) is urgently needed. In the longer term, such sites need to be migrated from time to time to new software.
- That philatelic authors, researchers, exhibitors, and organizations will start to “build in”, from the outset of their projects, mechanisms to accomplish long-term preservation. That starts with granting rights to preservation organizations *at the outset* of projects. (If this is not done in the initial design phase, it rarely happens later on.)
- That organizations and individuals will develop best practices to share with content creators and support them as they go. Most creators of philatelic content simply don't know what to do or how to design for preservation. I believe most would be receptive to being shown ways to do this that don't increase their workload or cost.
- That, because copyright laws are not “actively friendly” to the concept of long-term digital preservation, semi-organized individuals will take it upon themselves to run “renegade” digital preservation operations. Sometimes this work can't really be done under the auspices of large organizations. I do not suggest violating copyright (or any other) laws, but unless the raw content and presentation platforms (i.e. content management systems, custom software, and so on) are preserved before the content disappears, it eventually becomes too late to save the content. For the public good, it is sometimes necessary to take matters into one's own hands. That may mean capturing content but not republishing it for decades, until the life of the copyright has expired.
- That motivated individuals will step up to do the hard work of “knocking on doors” and actually talking to digital philatelic content creators/owners to convince them to grant preservation rights to appropriate organizations. Most owners would be happy to have their work preserved—but nobody has ever asked them, nor do they know how to accomplish it themselves.
- That as smaller philatelic organizations change or fade away, they make possible the preservation of digital content they control (some of which may have come via the above points).
- That there will be ongoing discussions within organized philately about “the next step beyond preservation.” When do we graduate from preserving content as it is to improving and further developing the resources? For example, probably the best website for a particular popular country (I don't want to embarrass anybody) that will be critically important to future generations has not been actively maintained for nearly a decade. The owner still pays the bills for the website to exist as is, but he is no longer developing or adding to this wonderful resource, even though additional content could be added virtually every day.

- That every philatelic digital content creator could have labels that they can tape onto their computers, binders of writings, digital storage devices, passwords to website hosting accounts, etc., that say “In the event of my death, please call 1-800.... to arrange for the free preservation of my life's work as a philatelic author.” And that there would be somebody at the other end of that phone call who can actually help the family with this transition.

We do have national philatelic organizations, some of which have started to work on this task. However, large organizations almost by definition are not great at urgently preserving that which is on the verge of being lost. Sometimes, individuals have to “go in under the cover of darkness” and quietly capture the data (not presenting or republishing it without permission) so others can later, as appropriate “in the full light of day,” do the work of making it available to future generations.

It is my belief that the majority of philatelic authors and researchers want future generations to have access to what they created. However, the reality is that few have made adequate preparations for this to happen.

This column is read by some of the leading people in “organized philately,” including philatelic librarians. I hope that they will take the issue seriously.

If you, as you read this, feel the subject is important, please share these ideas with fellow collectors and philatelic organizations of which you are a member. And if you have the interest and skills, perhaps you can start doing some of the work yourself by archiving digital philatelic resources and making arrangements for them to be passed on to those who will be able to preserve and maintain them in the future.

Remember, the richness of our philatelic “literature” is the result of preservation of print-on-paper work that our philatelic predecessors accomplished. Now it is up to us to do the next phase of preservation work in new and different ways.

## New editor at the U.S. Specialist

**A**ndrew Kelley, a Denver-based collector, writer and editor, has taken on the editorship of *The United States Specialist*, the monthly journal of the United States Stamp Society. He takes over from Martin Kent Miller, who stepped away to focus his energies on the American Topical Association and its journal.

Kelley has written extensively about the U.S. Washington-Franklin Head issues and related postal history. His article “Authenticating Scott 530c—Triple Impression on the Three Cent Offset” won the society’s 2023 Hopkinson Literature Award.

He co-chairs the USSS’s Washington-Franklin committee and serves on the American Philatelic Society’s expert committee. His exhibit of the offset lithographed Washington-Franklin Heads won the 2023 George Brett Cup and other awards, including two Grand Awards, and has been recognized several times for excellence in exhibit text.

Kelley is also the editor of *Auxiliary*



*Markings*, the journal of the Auxiliary Markings Club.

Outside of philately, Kelley is a business litigation attorney. Throughout his career, his practice has focused on editing other lawyers’ work to ensure that it is clear, concise, and persuasive. He is also a semi-professional outdoor photographer (a stunning portfolio of his work can be browsed at [andrewkelley.net](http://andrewkelley.net)). He has taught many classes about preparing images for publication using Adobe Photoshop and other tools.

He lives in Denver with his wife and children.

## Chung wins RPSC’s Geldert medal

**T**he Royal Philatelic Society of Canada has bestowed its annual prize for the best article published in *The Canadian Philatelist* to **Andrew Chung** for “The Floral Emblems and Coats of Arms of the Provinces and Territories of Canada 1964 to 1966.” The article appeared in Vol. 74, No. 6 (Nov./Dec. 2023).

The article “details of this important Elizabethan series of Canadian stamps with thorough coverage of production and promotional material, presentation items, first day covers, varieties and usages,” according to the citation. The award committee also commended the editor of *The Canadian Philatelist*, **Robin Harris**.

The Geldert Medal was established in 1967 in memory Dr. George M.



“Mac” Geldert, RPSC president (1958-67), by his widow, Phyllis, herself a notable philatelist who served in a number of leadership roles.

The members of the Geldert Committee of the RPSC are Kevin O’Reilly, Ed Kroft and George Pepall.

Information on The RPSC can be had by e-mail at [info@rpsec.org](mailto:info@rpsec.org) or at [rpsec.org](http://rpsec.org)

## Crawford Medal shortlist announced

**T**he Royal Philatelic Society, London has released the shortlist of six candidates for the 2024 Crawford Medal.

The winner will be announced on June 26 at the conclusion of the two-day Crawford Festival, a free symposium on philatelic literature held at the R.P.S.L. headquarters at 15 Abchurch Lane in London. This year’s theme is philatelic auction catalogs.

The six new books are:

- *Portuguese India: Postal History and the First Issues from the ‘Natives’ to 1900* by Luis & Eduardo Barreiros.
- *Tété Béche: Rarities from the Oval Issue of Finland* by Tomas Bjäringer and Mårten Sundberg.
- *The Postal Stationery of Nigeria* by Peter Hørlyck.
- *Internal Mail Routes of Nigeria 1900-1960, Volume 1: by Water, Rail and Air* by R. F. May.
- *The Malayan Postal Administration in the Dutch East Indies during the Japanese Occupation 1942-1945* by J.R. van Nieuwkerk.
- *The Rhodesias and Nyasaland from Colonial Rule to Majority Rule: the Evolution of the Mails* by Brian Trotter, Pat Flanagan and Keith Harrop.

Four of the nominated works are published by the RPSL. The Crawford Medal was first awarded in 1920. It is named for James Ludovic Lindsay, 26th Earl of Crawford, a passionate collector who bequeathed his monumental philatelic library to the nation. Nominations for the annual prize are open to all worldwide.

Further details are at: [rpsl.org.uk/language/en-US/Home/Library/Events/Crawford-Festival](http://rpsl.org.uk/language/en-US/Home/Library/Events/Crawford-Festival) or by email at [events@rpsec.org](mailto:events@rpsec.org)

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## OBITUARIES

### *Randy Neil, lifelong author, editor and cheerleader for philately, 82*

**P**hilately has lost a highly esteemed editor, author, and publisher. Randy Neil died March 6 at age 82.

He was elected to the Writers Unit Hall of Fame in 2000. He began collecting stamps at age 10, and as a teenager wrote “Juniors” columns for both *First Days* and *Weekly Philatelic Gossip*.

Neil expanded his writing and editing skills as evidenced by scores of articles that have appeared in *The American Philatelist*, *Linn’s Stamp News*, *Stamp Collector*, *S.P.A. Journal*, *Confederate Philatelist*, the American Philatelic Congress book and this newsletter, among others. He also wrote columns and editorials for journals he helped establish, including *U.S. Stamps and Postal History*, *The Philatelic Exhibitor*, *American Stamp Collector & Dealer*, and *Kelleher’s Stamp Collector’s Quarterly*.

An enthusiastic and accomplished exhibitor, Neil wrote a column on exhibiting for *The American Philatelist* and co-founded the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors, serving as its president and editor. His treatise, *The Philatelic Exhibitors Handbook*, has enjoyed several editions. He also



co-authored *The Trans-Mississippi Issue of 1898* with Jack Rosenthal.

He was past president of the American Philatelic Society, serving on the APS board for many years, and created the Tiffany Endowment Fund. He was also a former philatelic judge.

From 2008 to 2013, Neil edited *The Confederate Philatelist*, and completely revised its design and format. He published numerous books including the first (1994) edition of *U.S. Domestic Postal Rates 1872-1993* by Henry W. Beecher and Anthony S. Wawrukiewicz.

Over the years Neil was honored with many philatelic awards including the Distinguished Philatelist Award of the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society (1999), the Luff award for outstanding service to

the APS (2000), the AAPE’s Herdenberg Award (2005) and the Charles J. Peterson Philatelic Literature Life Achievement award (2017). He was a 2021 signatory of the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists and was a 2023 winner of the Alfred F. Lichtenstein Memorial Award of the Collectors Club in New York.

He established his own business, Neil Print Media, providing graphics, layout, web design and advertising services. He demonstrated these skills with the philatelic publications he was involved with for many years.

In addition to his life in philately, Randy founded and was first president of the National Film Society. He also established the International Cheerleading Foundation in 1965 and served as its CEO for thirty years. He authored *The Official Cheerleading Handbook* (1979), which reached the New York Times bestseller list.

Randolph Laning Neil was born Dec. 16, 1941 in Kansas City, Mo. and lived his entire life in Kansas. He is survived by his wife, Denise Fouquet-Neil, daughter Merritt Neil, and two grandchildren. —Alan Warren

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### *Harlan Stone, expert on Swiss philately and his grandfather’s FDC, 89*

**A** genial eminence in philately as well as a prolific writer, Harlan Stone passed away Jan. 31 at the age of 89.

Stone distinguished himself as a writer, editor, and promoter of philatelic literature, and he held leadership positions in several philatelic organizations, most notably the Philatelic Foundation, the Postal History Society and the American Helvetia Philatelic Society. He served on the Smithsonian National Postal Museum’s Council of Philatelists.

Stone published articles in a dozen different U.S., Swiss and British philatelic periodicals and served as editor of the *Helvetia Alhorn* (1969-74) and the



*Postal History Journal* (1989-99), receiving the American Philatelic Congress’s Diane D. Boehret Award four times.

As Director of Education at the P.F., Stone edited several books and booklets as well as *The P.F. Quarterly*.

He was just the second American given life membership by the Consilium Philateliae Helveticae, in 2002. He won the APS Luff Award for distinguished philatelic research (2006) and the Collectors Club’s Alfred F. Lichtenstein Award (2009).

Harlan Fiske Stone 2d was born Jan. 13, 1935 in New York. His namesake grandfather served as Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court from 1941-46. In later years, Stone developed an exhibit of first-day covers for the 1948 3¢ stamp honoring his grandfather.

He is survived by his wife, Helen Galatan-Stone, and four children.

## Some useful questions to assist with writing a strong article

Through my spouse, a manager of medical libraries, I recently came across the following list of questions (lightly edited here) that the *Journal of the Medical Library Association (JMLA)*

**Gordon Smith**

provides to peer reviewers of articles that have been submitted to the journal. I find it to be an excellent reference that could assist all of us as authors with writing more complete, clear and organized articles. While some questions are relevant to all articles that we would write as philatelic researchers, others, such as the discussion of statistical analyses, would be more appropriate to specialized situations.

They can also apply to exhibits.

### Introduction and background

- Does the introduction/background introduce the topic of the work described in the manuscript by placing it in context in a concise manner? Are you making any incorrect assumptions about what your readers may know?
- Do you provide a compelling rationale for why you produced this work?
- Do you describe the purpose of your work, with clearly stated objectives?

### Methods and case presentation

- Are your methods fully and clearly described? Is sufficient detail provided to allow others to replicate the work?

- Are the measures valid (i.e., do they accurately measure what they are intended to) and reliable (i.e., consistent across time, items, and/or researchers)?
- Are there potential sources of bias (e.g. recall, selection, observer, or confirmation bias) or conflicts of interest that could influence the way the facts are reported?

### Results and case presentation

- Do the results speak directly to the objectives described in the introduction/background section?
- Do the facts or research results described in the text match the information shown in the figures and tables?
- Are the data interpreted in a meaningful manner?
- Are statistical analyses performed and presented appropriately?

### Figures, tables, diagrams, maps

- Do the figures and/or tables effectively and efficiently visualize the facts?
- If diagrams/maps are included, are they clear? Do they show just what is needed to understand the text, without being cluttered by extraneous detail?

### Discussion

- Do you draw conclusions from the results instead of simply restating them?
- Are your conclusions justified by the

facts, or do they overstate them?

- Do you reflect upon previous literature and explain how your new findings advance the field's knowledgebase and/or practice?
- Do you describe the limitations of your work and areas for future research?

### Writing

- Is the writing clear, direct, and succinct?
- Are there any areas of the text that you could clarify, elaborate upon, or omit?

### References

- Are your references relevant and reasonably recent? Are they authoritative?
- Are you missing any pertinent references or body of literature?

### Data sharing

- Do you include a data availability statement describing where and how the data can be accessed (note that placeholders for digital object identifiers [DOIs], uniform resource locators [URLs], etc. are acceptable at this stage)?

### Overall

- What are the major strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript?
- Can you make clear connections between your work's context, objectives, methods and results, and its conclusions?

## Secretary-Treasurer's Quarterly Report

Since the time of the Winter 2023 issue of TPC, we have signed up four new members and lost two members who passed away.

### Closed Albums

Joann Lenz  
Harlan F. Stone, III

### New Members

2089 Thomas Luly  
2090 Stephen B. Pacetti  
2091 Andrew S. Kelley  
2092 Scott L. Ney

We extend a warm welcome to our new members.

Our society began the year with \$9,004.39. The WU30 board voted to give \$5,000 to the APS to sponsor a Young Philatelic Scholar (YPLF) when

a suitable candidate is found. The funds will be held by the APS until that happens.

This scholar will be on the writer/editor track. We hope that our members will volunteer as mentors when the need arises.

We have collected dues and a few donations, so our bank balance is now \$5,007.05.

Respectfully,  
Alan Barasch, Secretary-Treasurer  
Secretary@WU30.org



# Ben Franklin clubs

*Continued from page 2*

never used), they claimed that almost 50,000 clubs had been formed.

The USPS produced newsletters, filmstrips, *Treasury of Stamps* albums, postmaster presentation cards (stamp and cancel from a local post office), and more. The chain of command went from Project Leaders to Management Sectional Center (MSC) Coordinator to MSC Manager of Retail Sales to MSC Director of Customer Services to MSC Managers (228 of them!) to Regional Program Coordinator (five) to National Program Manager (one, at L'Enfant Plaza in Washington, D.C.) Phew!

With apologies to all those who contributed time and effort to these clubs, they were clearly a total failure, both in their assumption that stamp collecting would be of interest to everyone and in their execution.

The oldest Americans who participated, in sixth grade in 1974, are 60 or 61 years old today, and the youngest about 40. If the hobby were going to receive an influx of active middle-aged collectors, that would happen now. It clearly is not.

Other than the occasional school group, the only people under 50 I see at stamp shows or clubs are first- or second-generation Indian-Americans and Chinese-Americans—who are unlikely to have been in a Benjamin Franklin Stamp Club. Anecdotally, I can say that I have never met a fellow collector who was introduced to the hobby only through one of the clubs. The clubs just were not an effective way to promote interest in stamp collecting.

The project could not even happen today: teachers are under enough

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*Dr. Claussen, Writers Unit #30 president from 1999 to 2003 and a WU30 Hall of Fame inductee, is a recovering college professor, former Junior Philatelists of America (JPA) president and former youth philately columnist for Stamp Collector newspaper who took up the hobby at age 6.*

pressure without a Postal Service volunteer dropping by to take up valuable social-studies class time playing with stamps. Volunteer mentors would be less available and subject to background checks. Principals and postmasters would be less cooperative. No wonder that 30 years after killing the clubs, the USPS has never looked back.

Let's look at some specifics of how the clubs tried to interest young beginners.

The club materials asserted that stamps are an "educational tool." Those of us who learned about geography, history, culture, printing and so on from collecting stamps take this for granted, but I imagine most teachers and principals would ask, "Where is your evidence



of that?" and "Compared to what?"

Keep in mind that in 1974, the world wide web—meaning Wikipedia, Google and all other online resources—did not yet exist. Today, teachers have many choices of educational tools. The Benjamin Franklin Stamp Clubs' main proposition was that it was all being served up on a platter by the USPS—not that the stamps *per se* were ideal teaching aids.

Club materials told volunteers they merely needed to "become familiar with your subject" and did not need to be experts. But I would venture that the kids most interested in stamps are precisely the kids who would expect an adult mentor to be an expert.

Moreover, the materials referred to stamp collecting as "exciting," bringing "joys," "invaluable pleasure" and, repeatedly, "fun." In fact, the 1982 *Guidebook* instructs advisors to rhetorically ask, "Is collecting stamps fun?" (underlined in the original). "Attention: Emphasize the fun part of stamp collecting," it went on. "Try to bring out the exciting part of collecting with each question. Give

the student who obviously enjoys the pursuit and expresses the fun of it more time to talk. Stamp collecting is fun."

Of course stamp collecting is fun for me, but this feels like protesting too much. Better would have been to choose words that appeal to the intellect, such as "intriguing," "fulfilling," "educational," "challenging," "absorbing," with "endless possibilities," rather than trying to make philately sound like skydiving.

Club members were certainly engaged in activities such as starting collections, soaking stamps, putting up a display, listening to guest speakers, going on post office tours or attending a stamp show. Other initiatives, though, seemed peripheral: the pen pal program, Letter Writing Week activities, or coloring in outlines of stamps designs. (I never in my life had an interest in using crayons to color in a stamp design—however, I do have a soft spot for a design-a-stamp contest, with an opportunity to research topics and decide what to include.)

Finally, on page 43, the 1982 *Guidebook* got around to a key topic.

*"Gifted children—Studies have shown that 60% of all gifted children are interested in philately. Not only is this a phenomenal percentage but it's a great opportunity for philatelic sales, as these gifted children can be most knowledgeable and committed collectors. So you may want to either (1) concentrate your attention on getting gifted children organized into special clubs or (2) developing an advanced curriculum and seminar for bright youngsters. Either way, you're in a unique position to add to their education."*

But that's all the *Guidebook* says about the students who are significantly more likely to be prime prospects for the hobby. One wonders if anyone even noticed that passing mention on page 43, let alone did anything about it.

I don't think stamp collecting should be introduced only to the top students, but I do think we must cast our lines at the fish most likely to bite.

I'm quite sure Benjamin Franklin had something to say about that.

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## A life in the P.O.

Continued from page 1

part of the building there lived a whole bevy of clerks.

These were gentlemen whose duty it then was to make up and receive the foreign mails. I do not remember that they worked later or earlier than the other sorting-clerks; but there was supposed to be something special in foreign letters, which required that the men who handled them should have minds undistracted by the outer world. Their salaries, too, were higher than those of their more homely brethren; and they paid nothing for their lodgings. Consequently there was a somewhat fast set in those apartments, given to cards and to tobacco, who drank spirits and water in preference to tea. I was not one of them, but was a good deal with them.

I do not know that I should interest my readers by saying much of my Post Office experiences in those days. I was always on the eve of being dismissed, and yet was always striving to show how good a public servant I could become, if only a chance were given me. But the chance went the wrong way. On one occasion, in the performance of my duty, I had to put a private letter containing bank-notes on the secretary's table—which letter I had duly opened, as it was not marked 'private.' The letter was seen by the Colonel, but had not been moved by him when he left the room. On his return it was gone. In the meantime I had returned to the room, again in the performance of some duty. When the letter was missed I was sent for, and there I found the Colonel much moved about his letter, and a certain chief clerk, who, with a long face, was making suggestions as to the probable fate of the money. 'The letter has been taken,' said the Colonel, turning to me angrily, 'and, by G—! there has been nobody in the room but you and I.' As he spoke, he thundered his fist down upon the table. 'Then,' said I, 'by G—! you have taken it.' And I also thundered my fist down; but, accidentally, not upon the table. There was there a standing mov-

able desk, at which, I presume, it was the Colonel's habit to write, and on this movable desk was a large bottle full of ink. My fist unfortunately came on the desk, and the ink at once flew up, covering the Colonel's face and shirt-front. Then it was a sight to see that senior clerk, as he seized a quire of blotting-paper, and rushed to the aid of his superior officer, striving to mop up the ink; and a sight also to see the Colonel, in his agony, hit right out through the blotting-paper at that senior clerk's unoffending stomach. At that moment there came in the Colonel's private secretary, with the letter and the money, and I was desired to go back to my own room. This was an incident not much in my favour, though I do not know that it did me special harm.

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**"...There was supposed to be something special in foreign letters, which required that the men who handled them should have minds undistracted by the outer world."**

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I was always in trouble. A young woman down in the country had taken it into her head that she would like to marry me—and a very foolish young woman she must have been to entertain such a wish. I need not tell that part of the story more at length, otherwise than by protesting that no young man in such a position was ever much less to blame than I had been in this. The invitation had come from her, and I had lacked the pluck to give it a decided negative; but I had left the house within half an hour, going away without my dinner, and had never returned to it. Then there was a correspondence—if that can be called a correspondence in which all the letters came from one side. At last the mother appeared at the Post Office. My hair almost stands on my head now as I remember the figure of the woman walking into the big room in which I sat with six or seven other clerks, having a

large basket on her arm and an immense bonnet on her head. The messenger had vainly endeavoured to persuade her to remain in the ante-room. She followed the man in, and walking up the centre of the room, addressed me in a loud voice: 'Anthony Trollope, when are you going to marry my daughter?' We have all had our worst moments, and that was one of my worst. I lived through it, however, and did not marry the young lady...

Of one other misfortune which happened to me in those days I must tell the tale. A junior clerk in the Secretary's office was always told off to sleep upon the premises, and he was supposed to be the presiding genius of the establishment when the other members of the Secretary's department had left the building. On an occasion when I was still little more than a lad—perhaps one-and-twenty years old—I was filling this responsible position. At about seven in the evening word was brought to me that the Queen of—I think Saxony, but I am sure it was a Queen—wanted to see the night mails sent out. At this time, when there were many mail-coaches, this was a show, and august visitors would sometimes come to see it. But preparation was generally made beforehand, and some pundit of the office would be at hand to do the honours. On this occasion we were taken by surprise, and there was no pundit. I therefore gave the orders, and accompanied her Majesty around the building, walking backwards, as I conceived to be proper, and often in great peril as I did so, up and down the stairs. I was, however, quite satisfied with my own manner of performing an unaccustomed and most important duty. There were two old gentlemen with her Majesty, who, no doubt, were German barons, and an ancient baroness also. They had come and, when they had seen the sights, took their departure in two glass coaches. As they were preparing to go, I saw the two barons consulting together in deep whispers, and then as the result of that conversation one of them handed me a half-a-crown! That also was a bad moment."

# India congress hosts literature exhibiting seminar

The Philatelic Congress of India, the country's national federation, held a series of online master classes in exhibiting techniques during February and March.

The second round of talks, on Mar. 9, included an hour-long presentation by **Ari Muhonen** of Finland on the nuts and bolts of literature exhibiting.

Muhonen is an accredited international literature judge with broad experience in the field.

After beginning with a definition of what is—and isn't—philatelic literature, Muhonen discussed the characteristics of good philatelic literature from a judge's perspective. He then pivoted to a discussion of the Fédération Internationale de Philatélie (FIP) regulations for exhibiting, returning to a theme he has spoken out on frequently: the regulations' shortcomings and lack of updating, and the specific ways they could be improved, such as modifying the existing guidelines to take into account the differences between types of literature, and incorporating rules on newer forms of digital media.

A recording of Muhonen's presentation—along with other talks on exhibiting by Cheryl Ganz (aerophilately), Jamie Gough (postal history), Sandeep Jaiswal (postal stationery) and several more can be watched online on the PCI YouTube channel at:

[philateliccongressofindia.com/pci-youtube-channel/](https://philateliccongressofindia.com/pci-youtube-channel/)

**Help readers to understand the message**

- Think about what readers want to see
- State the purpose of the work in the introduction
- What kind of structure will help them understand the work
- Explain what you have found in the sources, don't leave the readers alone with source data
- When you quote, always give the source

Portuguese India  
Postal History and the First Issues  
From the "natives" to 1900  
Luis and Eduardo Barreiros

**Originality, significance, depth of research – Philatelic aspects 40 p**

Printed monographs and periodicals	Digital monographs and periodicals	Websites
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overall significance = global importance to philately</li><li>• Degree of original discoveries, research, analysis</li><li>• Comprehensive = depth &amp; scope</li><li>• Understanding of subject</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overall significance = global importance to philately</li><li>• Degree of original discoveries, research, analysis (new or revised research)</li><li>• Comprehensive = depth &amp; scope (depth of coverage of subject)</li><li>• Understanding of subject</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creativity</li><li>• Breadth of scope covered</li></ul>

Screen grabs of two slides from Muhonen's Mar. 9 talk on philatelic literature exhibiting, outlining some of his key points.

## Calendar of philatelic literature exhibitions in 2024

**Apr. 16-19: EFIRO World Stamp Exhibition**, Bucharest, Romania. *This FIP show includes a literature class. Results will appear in TPC No. 224.*

**July 26-28: Mare Balticum 2024**, Tartu, Estonia. *The latest incarnation of this traveling show has FEPA/FIP recognition and includes a literature exhibition. The application deadline for this show has passed. More info: [marebalticum.ee](https://marebalticum.ee)*

**Aug. 15-18: Great American Stamp Show**, Hartford, Conn. *The deadline for literature entries is May 3rd. Entry fee is \$60, or \$40 for APS, ATA and AFDCS members. Exhibit prospectus and entry forms at: [stamps.org/great-american-stamp-show/exhibitor-information](https://stamps.org/great-american-stamp-show/exhibitor-information)*

**Nov. 22-24: Chicagopex**, Chicago. *Deadline for entries is Sept. 1. Keep an eye on [chicagopex.org](https://chicagopex.org) for the forthcom-*

*ing literature exhibiting prospectus. Ken Trettin is the contact; you can send an email to: [chicagopexliterature@gmail.com](mailto:chicagopexliterature@gmail.com)*

**Nov. 29-Dec. 3: Asian International Stamp Exhibition**, Shanghai. *It appears there will be a literature exhibition and the deadline for entries is Apr. 29. Because this is an FIAP show, however, no U.S. commissioner has been named.*

## Sarasota: Grand award to Nafziger for Banknote article

The annual philatelic literature competition of the Sarasota National Stamp Exhibition, which was limited to articles—no books, monographs, catalogs or digital works—took place Jan. 17-19, 2024. The Writers Unit #30 co-sponsored the contest.



The winner of the Grand Award was **Ralph H. Nafziger** for his article “The Earliest Documented

Uses of the Large Banknote Stamps,” which appeared in the United States Philatelic Classics Society’s journal, *The Chronicle*.

The Reserve Grand went to **Bryant Korn** for “Chronology of Liberia’s Registration Envelopes from 1882-1889,” published in the *Liberian Philatelic Society Journal*. The Postal History Society Award was bestowed on **Michael Wing** for “Georgia Postmaster Free Frank Letters” in *Georgia Post Roads*.

Additional special awards included the A.P.S. Research Award, given to **Thomas Lera** for “Mail Carried by Indians in East and West Florida to Panton, Leslie & Co. Mercantile Stores,” published in the *Collectors Club Philatelist*; the Collectors Club of Sarasota Award for Treatment, to **Paul Holland** for “Printed on Both Sides: 1919-1921 Latvian Stamps on Banknote Paper,” in *The American Philatelist*; and the American Topical Association Award to **Norman Jacobs** and **Jean-Pierre Picquot** for “Daguin Tennis Postmarks and the Tennis Clubs They Promoted,” in the *Journal of Sports Philately*.

Bill DiPaolo was the literature exhibition chairman and the jury consisted of Ken Trettin (chief judge), Cheryl Ganz, Alan Warren and Robert Conley (apprenticing).

The full Palmares are online at [www.sarasotastampclub.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Palmares-2024.pdf](http://www.sarasotastampclub.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Palmares-2024.pdf)

[sarasotastampclub.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Palmares-2024.pdf](http://www.sarasotastampclub.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Palmares-2024.pdf)

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### LARGE GOLD

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**Ralph H. Nafziger**, “The Earliest Documented Uses of the Large Banknote Stamps” (93 points)

**Paul Holland**, “Printed on Both Sides: 1919-1921 Latvian Stamps on Banknote Paper” (92)

**Bryant Korn**, “Chronology of Liberia’s Registration Envelopes from 1882-1889” (92)

**Hugh Lawrence**, “The Non-denominated Air Letter Sheets of China (1948-1956)” (91)

**Thomas Lera**, “Mail Carried by Indians in East and West Florida to Panton, Leslie & Co. Mercantile Stores” (90)

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### GOLD

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**Bill DiPaolo**, “On-Cover Scott 849: The Underappreciated, Undervalued Prexie Coil” (89)

**Bruno Bonnet**, “The Great Plague of Manchuria: Its Consequences on the Transport of European Mail for China by the Trans-Siberian Railroad” (88)

**Michael Wing**, “Georgia Postmaster Free Frank Letters” (88)

**Matthew Healey**, “Several Things You Probably Didn’t Know About Queen Victoria 3d Stamps” (87)

**Albert Briggs**, “Uses of the U.S.A. Presidential Series on Mail to Great Britain, 1939-1945” (86)

**Louis Fiset**, “Air Dispatch Letter Service/Bomber Pouch Mail Service in WWII” (86)

**James Mazepa**, “Poland: Postal Communications to Ukraine and Russia, 1918-1920” (85)

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### LARGE VERMEIL

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**Claudio R. Incerti**, “Cesare Sabelli and

the Forgotten 1934 Transatlantic Flight from New York to Rome” (84)

**Norman Jacobs, Jean-Pierre Picquot**, “Daguin Tennis Postmarks and the Tennis Clubs They Promoted” (84)

**Juan Farah**, “Republic of Cuba 1905-1907, The American Banknote Co. Re-engraved Issue” (83)

**Richard T. Hall**, “A Guided Philatelic Tour of Castles in Switzerland” (83)

**Dickson Preston**, “Pre-UPU Mail to Afghanistan During the Third Anglo-Afghan War” (82)

**Jean R. Walton**, “Brigadier General Henry Knox and the Pluckermin Artillery Cantonment, 1771-1779” (81)

**Jerry H. Miller**, “German Crisis Years 1918-1923- Background to the German Inflation Period” (81)

**Michael Bloom**, “Bringing Philatelic Handbooks Back from the Dead” (80)

**Don Chafetz**, “Revolutionary War Veteran” (80)

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### VERMEIL

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**James Weigant**, “French, New Mexico: From Hype to Dust” (78, with Felicitations)

**Ira Cotton**, “View from the Blind” (78)

**Ron Breznay**, “Greenland Ghost Stories” (76)

**Robert Rose**, “Special Delivery Mail in New Jersey” (76)

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### LARGE SILVER

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**Juan Riera**, “The Barefoot Mailman” (71)

**Carl Scheriani**, “The Jewish Brigade Groups’ Place in the A.M.G. Story” (71)

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### SILVER

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**Juan Riera**, “Aviation Rivalry Spurred on by Air Mail” (67)