



# The Philatelic Communicator

Newsletter of the American Philatelic Society Writers Unit #30 • December 2025 • No. 227

## Whither the Writers Unit?

*By Lloyd A. de Vries, President, WU30*

Or perhaps that should be "Wither the Writers Unit." Welcome to the final issue of TPC for 2025.

Will it be the final issue ever?

You'd think that the philatelic group of writers, editors and publishers could produce a quarterly newsletter on a more frequent, regular basis. For some reason, we can't. There is a great deal of irony in that.

It isn't even just the newsletter. Of the half dozen or so people on the WU30 Council, only three or so show up for our annual meetings. My call last year for candidates must have fallen on deaf ears, because there was no response. (Of course, my call for candidates may have been in one of the columns I wrote for *TPC* that were never published. It's hard to keep track.)

One suggestion has been to turn over the Writers Unit #30 to the American Philatelic Society and let its publications department produce a webpage for us. I personally don't like that option, but, as we used to say in the days of the dial-up online services, "Your mileage may vary."

Perhaps I am not the right person to lead WU30. After all, my professional background was in writing for radio, television and the internet, not print. I can't recall writing a footnote or bibliography in decades. On the other hand, for a few years, I was the chief bad joke writer for the newscasts on "Good Morning America."\* I did offer to resign at our meeting during Great American Stamp Show 2024 but was convinced to stay, probably because none of the other four people attending wanted the post. The offer is still open.

Is there no longer a need for a philatelic writers' organization? I was on the APS Computers in Philately Committee when it was decided that it was no longer needed. Its main purpose had been to help stamp collectors use computers. Most already were, certainly all those who wanted to use computers.

Perhaps in this age of self-publishing, when anyone with a connection to the internet can write whatever he or she wants and have it seen potentially by millions, there is no need to discuss the nuances of philatelic writing and editing. Spelling, copyright, layout, grammar, distribution — who needs it?

Was WU30's only purpose to host breakfasts at the annual APS convention? Those days are gone, my friends: The APS was (perhaps unwittingly)

subsidizing those breakfasts and handling the administration. Meanwhile, hotel and convention center food event costs have skyrocketed — do you really want to pay \$65 for a mediocre buffet breakfast? — and the combination of three shows into one "Great American Stamp Show" has made time slots for events a precious commodity.

Like the Computers committee and the similar Philatelic Computing Study Group, we could dissolve the APS Writers Unit.

I'd hate to see that happen.

So what do *you* suggest? What do *you* want to see happen? Send me your thoughts at [president@wu30.org](mailto:president@wu30.org). Because the status quo cannot continue.

### Secretary/Treasurer's Report

Since the time of the 1st Quarter 2025 issue of TPC, we have signed up four new members:

- 2104 Dr. Bruce A. Wasserman
- 2105 Thomas Lera
- 2106 Cathie Osborne

We began the year with \$4,201.96. One payment was sent to APS for our booth at GASS 2025 and we collected dues and a few donations so our bank balance is now \$4,973.23.

Respectfully,  
Alan Barasch, Secretary-Treasurer  
[Secretary@WU30.org](mailto:Secretary@WU30.org)

## Linn's and Scott Purchased by Collector-Led Group

By Mark A. Kellner and Lloyd A. de Vries

Some of the philatelic world's long-standing reference titles — *Linn's Stamp News* and the Scott Catalogue range, including *Scott Stamp Monthly* — have been sold by Amos Media Co. to a collector-led firm, marking a major shift in ownership for the hobby's foundational publications. The deal arrived amid lingering concerns over payments to writers, shrinking print circulation and changes in format.



Jay Bigalke, left, and David Fritz in the graphic used to announce the sale.

On Oct. 16, 2025, Amos confirmed that the newly formed Scott Stamp LLC — founded by Linn's/Scott editor-in-chief Jay Bigalke and fellow collector David Fritz — "acquired the Scott Catalog, *Scott Stamp Monthly*, and *Linn's Stamp News* from Amos Media Co." The announcement noted that both Scott Stamp LLC and Amos Media "will operate in partnership ... during the transition period."



Mystic Stamp Company president Donald Sundman (left) is among the investors in the new venture. Boston 2026 Commissioner General Chris Lazaroff is the advertising manager, replacing a Chicago-based agency.

All the investors are themselves stamp collectors, Bigalke told **The Virtual Stamp Club** in a telephone interview, and their ages vary widely.

"This acquisition places these cornerstone publications of the stamp hobby into the hands of passionate collectors," the announcement said.

In a companion article published Oct. 29, 2025, the new owners described it as "a new era" for the titles. "Behind the scenes, we're moving mountains of digital and physical files, databases, and archives." They also said the move remains "technical, logistical, and creative."

In a webinar hosted by the British Empire Study Group (BESG) in mid-November, Bigalke

promised more flexibility and more modernization and that his company would be "more responsive to collectors."

"I've been paying attention to everyone's wishes online for improving the catalogues," he said.

The 43-year-old CEO announced a new edition of the Errors catalogue is on the way and the *Linn's* dealer directory will return next year. Eventually, a checklist function will be added to the Scott catalogs. The Pocket catalogue will be revamped into "something a little different."

ent."

Many *Linn's* news items may end up on the linns.com website first, with the issue a recap of those stories. "You're going to see much more digital content coming out of us," Bigalke said.

"We're not going to abandon the print universe," he said during the BESG webinar, "but we're going to be doing a lot more on the digital front."

The philatelic community had flagged mounting problems at Amos Media in recent years. A November 2024 article in here in *TPC* titled "Major Philatelic Publisher In Trouble?" by de Vries stated that "Amos Media ... appears to be having financial difficulties. ... Columnists for both [SSM] and *Linn's* reported receiving no payments for their articles since June." The article also revealed that "printed editions of the Scott catalogues ... that were due ... on or after September 1 were on back-order, with no date of delivery" by the end of 2024.

Then, last summer, de Vries (right) announced on The Virtual Stamp Club and American First Day Cover Society groups on Facebook, "I have decided to put my *Linn's Stamp News* First Day Cover column on hiatus. I have not been paid for these columns for 12 months." Other columnists also stopped submitting articles.



(continued on next page)

(Linn's/Scott, continued)

The Scott Catalog, established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, remains a key worldwide reference. Its ownership change is noteworthy: "For the first time in decades, the Scott and Linn's brands are back in the hands of collectors," Bigalke wrote in announcing the sale.



He described the purchase agreement and spinoff as collector-driven: "Our mission is simple: to honor the legacy of

Scott and Linn's while investing in new tools and ideas that help the hobby thrive," Bigalke said in the Oct. 16 notice.

Rick Amos, CEO of Amos Media, said: "We're proud to have been stewards of these important brands for decades."

Scott Stamp LLC will move to offices in Troy, Ohio, about 20 miles south of Sidney. All the Linn's and Scott editorial staffers have transferred to the new company. Scott Publishing was acquired by Amos in 1985 and its operations moved from New York City to Sidney.

The new company said it was an amicable parting with Amos. "Our partnership with Amos Media Co. remains strong as we continue to sell products during this transition period through AmosAdvantage.com and maintain subscription access through Linns.com."

Any existing album pages will be updated, Bigalke promised, with new supplements produced with Amos Media.

The statement reiterated that "these publications belong to the collectors who read them, rely on them, and build their collections around them."



The new owners have pledged upfront investment in digital tools and broader outreach. "Imagine being able to search, filter and cross-reference stamps from around the world with greater precision than ever before or having the ability to use Scott data in ways to better manage your collection digitally."

The sale of Linn's Stamp News and the Scott Catalog line to Scott Stamp LLC signals a turning point for philatelic media. While the brands retain strong names within the hobby, the operational stress that preceded the deal — including unpaid writers, delivery delays and shrinking print readership — sets a high bar for the new owner to demonstrate that these venerable publications can adapt and thrive in the digital age.

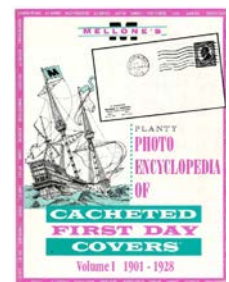
Already, de Vries, veteran philatelic journalist Wayne Youngblood and other writers have reported receiving payment for monies long owed by Amos Media. That has to be viewed as a hopeful sign. However, de Vries began writing a FDC column for *American Stamp Dealer & Collector* last summer and does not plan to return to Linn's as a columnist.

If the transition can stabilize contributors and restore both print and digital value for collectors, the acquisition may represent a renaissance for stamp publishing. If not, the move could simply signal a partial retreat from the print-centric model that once defined the hobby.

However, Bigalke is optimistic. "I really do believe that stamp collecting is thriving," he told the BESG webinar.

### AFDCS Republishes Mellone Catalogues

All 18 volumes of the *Mellone's Planty Photo Encyclopedia of Cacheted First Day Covers*, encompassing issues from 1901 through 1939, are now available from the American First Day Cover Society, either as digital downloads or computer-printed unbound copies punched for looseleaf notebooks.



The AFDCS obtained permission from Michael A. Mellone's estate to reprint his important books on first day covers. Eventually, the society hopes to expand and update the listings. Already, Volumes 1 through 6 include updates that were published in *First Days*, the official journal of the society. The catalogues may be ordered from the AFDCS website, [www.afdcs.org/catalogs](http://www.afdcs.org/catalogs).



## Bard Moves from One Philatelist To Another

Anthony Bard has left the helm of *The London Philatelist*, the journal of the Royal Philatelic Society London, to become editor of *The Collectors Club Philatelist*, beginning with the first issue of 2026.



"Tony brings an outstanding reputation as a philatelic editor and a long record of excellence," the Club said in a press release. He succeeds Wayne Youngblood, who had been the U.S. journal's editor for the past eight years.

The Royal chose Nina Jääskeläinen to be its new editor, whom it describes as a "cultural journalist and a digital specialist." She was previously the Editor-in-Chief of *The Filatelisti Magazine*, the leading philatelic magazine in Finland. "One of the challenges that the Royal Philatelic Society London faces is a world in which communication technology is changing rapidly," the Royal said in its press release. "Nina brings a modern and European perspective to *The London Philatelist*."



*The Collectors Club Philatelist* is one of three U.S.-based publications that Bard is now editing: The American First Day Cover Society's *First Days* and the Scandinavian Collectors Club's *The Posthorn* are the other two. "I hope that the fact that I will be editing three U.S.-based journals might help my application for political asylum in the Land of the Free-ish!" he quipped in email. He also edits *Korean Philately* and *The Mayflower* for the American Stamp Club of Great Britain.

### Chief Bad Joke Writer?

Here's the footnote from page 1:

\* My "high-water mark" for GMA was about how the City of Chicago no longer puts as much green dye in the Chicago River for Saint Patrick's Day, because of health concerns. "They've decided to 'Erin' the side of safety." And you no longer need to wonder why I don't enter philatelic literature contests.

## Goodbye, and Thanks

Mark A. Kellner, outgoing editor

Just about a year ago, I kinda blew my stack. I wrote to Lloyd de Vries and Alan Barasch: "Where is *The Philatelic Communicator*? Why were issues slow or non-appearing?"

It might have been foolish, but I also offered to jump back into an editorial chair I'd occupied some 30 years earlier, or thereabouts.

My offer was accepted and I worked with Matthew Healey — an editor and designer of unparalleled talent — to produce two issues. The summer turned to fall and things got busy.

That's not an excuse on my part, just an explanation. With Lloyd's help, this will be the final issue in which I have editorial participation.

Quite honestly, I succumbed to the same "crisis of confidence and some kind of editor's block" that hit brother Healey. Unlike 30 years ago, there was no continual stream of incoming material, no back-and-forth of letters and emails that could fill pages with discussion of this or that issue in philatelic journalism.

I've written about the overall state of the hobby, and also about the very real challenge of artificial intelligence, or AI, in publishing. Each time I asked for response and each time ... crickets.

I get it: we're all busy and we're all getting older. Many other things demand our time and attention. But someone or some ones will have to step up and contribute, or else a genuine "30" may have to be called.

That's my opinion, at least. Yours may vary.

In the meanwhile, as the earth-departing dolphins of the Douglas Adams novel said, "So long, and thanks for all the fish."



## Hal Vogel, 1943-2025

Polar postal history collector, author, and exhibitor Hal Vogel died November 13, 2025, at age 82.



He was elected to the Writers Hall of Fame in 2023. Hal authored many articles but was best known for his column in *Ice Cap News*, journal of the American Society of Polar Philatelists. It was entitled “B.U.T. Back Up

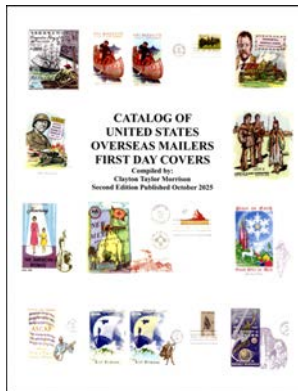
Tidbits” and was a very serious profile of an explorer or a detailed aspect of one of the many expeditions to the North and South Pole areas.

He began the column in 1974 and never missed a deadline. Hal was an accredited APS philatelic and literature judge. He was the longest-serving philatelic judge having been accredited in 1978. In addition to the columns and other articles, he authored or co-authored the books *Ahead of the Pack*, *Essence of Polar Philately*, *From Palm Trees to Antarctic Ice*, and *Postal History of the International Trans-Antarctic Expedition 1989-90*.

Hal also compiled and edited the *American Air Mail Catalogue*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, Volume 2 devoted to Polar Aerophilately. In 2022 he was honored with the American Philatelic Society’s Luff award for distinguished philatelic research.

—Alan Warren

**Book Review:** *Catalog of United States Overseas Mailers First Day Covers*, second edition, by Clayton Taylor Morrison. 136 pages, 8½ by 11 inches, card covers, perfect bound, privately published, Cleveland OH, 2025. ISBN 9798283721064, \$19.99 plus shipping from Amazon.



Author Clayton Morrison and a team of fellow collectors of this material have drawn on the existing literature plus personal information based on their

collections to compile this definitive listing of the Overseas Mailers (OM) first day covers and cachets. The firm of Overseas Mailers Ltd. was established by Jay Leach in 1950. In 1953 he expanded his business to include first day covers, and continued production until 1977.

In addition to his own cachet designs, Leach also embellished existing cacheted covers like those of Artmaster, Fleetwood and others by adding his own artwork as an auxiliary design. This catalog is a detailed compilation of nearly 350 such covers of both types. A unique feature of OM covers is an insert with historical information and other details about each cover. This catalog not only illustrates each cover, but also its insert.

The "index" at the beginning of the catalog is really a table of contents. The listing has two basic types: those covers designed and sent by Leach to his customers, and those bearing the auxiliary design. This second category is broken into subgroups with varieties of the insert, and whether the auxiliary designs were hand painted and other related aspects.

The criteria for identifying OM cachets are spelled out and a few covers without known inserts are discussed. The first and last examples of the types and subtypes are identified with timeframes. The main cover listing begins with chronological scans of the covers and inserts of those not bearing auxiliary designs. These are followed by illustrations of the add-on subtypes.

A handy appendix lists the covers by Scott catalog number along with the page number on which it is found, the type of cachet, date of issue, brand (Fluegel, Artmaster, OM, Jackson, etc.), and the subject of the stamp. The author and his team are to be congratulated on this detailed catalog which will serve those who collect the covers either casually or as a specialty.

— Alan Warren



# I Confess – I’m a Font-aholic!

By Alan Barasch

Many years ago, I trained as a calligrapher. We had a man in my hometown that did certificates and proclamations professionally. Once a year he did a class in the Art Department at UAB (University of Alabama at Birmingham) and my brother signed me up.

I honed my skills and tacked on a few more styles that Mr. Jones did not teach. In the process I got the reputation that I was the person to call for addressing wedding and Bar Mitzvah invitations.

And then computers happened, and people began building font sets and the home printers got better and nobody wanted hand-lettered invitations. They could just print tacky labels at home and stick them on their envelopes. I was so disappointed when my niece said she was going to email all her friends about her impending wedding (at first, she was just going to announce the nuptials on Facebook, until her mother found out).

Some years later I changed my career path and left the calligraphy behind. I never lost my love of beautiful scripts. So, in my quest for just the right font; I fell in love with ampersands.

Ampersands are the “&” symbol on your keyboard.



Figure 1: Chart of Ampersands

Along the way, there was a radical career change from retail management to technical writing and finally to database design. The chart {above} is from fonts on my computer. I wrote an Excel macro to grab a specific letter from every font into a matrix.

## Thank You

... for your patience both with the timing of this issue as well as my rudimentary newsletter layout skills. I used Microsoft Word for this issue; I don't know Publisher or InDesign or OutOfCompton or any such software. My professional technical experience was in audio. In fact, the only time I have ever been paid for my written work was in philately – and there, someone else had to take care of layout. – Lloyd