

Stamps, Stamp Collecting, Covers and Postal History

The Quarterly Publication of the National Stamp Dealers Association
August 2019



Don and Pat McElroy at APS StampShow

National Stamp Dealers Association

"Dealers Helping Dealers"



NSDA News

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NSDA News is a quarterly publication of the National Stamp Dealers Association (NSDA). Normal publication months are February, May, August, and November. All submissions for publication must be received no later than the 15th day of the month preceding the publication date to ensure consideration for inclusion.

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News Highlights

Turn to page 11 for news about the NSDA's presence at APS StampShow.

In This Issue

Sheldon Rucken's President's column, on page 4, discusses dealers who are afraid to change with the times and those who hold on to old stock for fear of selling it for a loss rather than turning it over and using the funds to buy new inventory. The Dealer Spotlight, starting on page 7, features NSDA dealer Bob Sazama's experiences at a stamp show in China.

This quarter's article by Sid Morginstin, starting on page 5, includes some interesting extracts from New York City post office reports published by the Collectors Club of Chicago about the 19th century postal system .

National Stamp Dealers Association

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My Two Cents Worth
Richard Pederson

How do we get more people interested in collecting stamps and/or postal history? That is a question that is often asked and if there was a easy answer, the hobby would have solved the problem long ago. I don't have the answers any more than the next person, but I will take a shot at what I think is a contributing factor to why potential new collectors don't get involved or quickly or lose interest.

It seems to me that many individuals have a very distorted view of why people collect stamps and postal history. Based on what they have read in advertisements, newspaper articles, or even the philatelic press, they believe stamps are a good investment vehicle that will eventually yield profits or, at the very least, a significant accumulation of wealth.

All of us have seen the advertisements for supposedly scarce stamps or first day covers, produced in limited quantities, that will some day be valuable. The person who is really interested in collecting is turned off by these approaches and those that get hooked by them eventually discover that there is virtually no demand for their 'limited edition' items which were purchased at inflated prices to pay for the fancy packaging and hyped up advertising. Those same people who were taken in by the come-ons, then bad mouth the hobby they believe bilked them of their funds. It matters little that main-stream philatelic businesses rarely engage in such hyperbole, Those who were suckered in, believe the entire hobby was equally guilty, not the individuals, themselves, who failed to research what

they bought, unlike they would when buying a new car or television.

I would say that even many of us dealers are guilty of discouraging new collectors, without even realizing what we are doing. There is certainly more profit to be made selling a \$100 stamp than a \$10 one and selling a minimum catalog value stamp can result in a miniscule profit or even a loss. Therefore, most dealers push stamps or covers that are in demand by more advanced collectors, because that is where the maximum profit lies. Unfortunately, most new collectors and even many seasoned collectors have limited financial means. They want to collect for the fun of it. Of course they desire challenges, but that does not necessarily involve spending large sums of money.

Maybe, as dealers,, we should focus more on the joy of collecting and ways to do that on a finite budget. After all, many of those who start out small will end up spending big as you (and the hobby) gain their trust and their economic circumstances change. Certainly, serious dealers need to make a profit on what they sell, but maybe more emphasis could be placed on bundling low cost stamps in collections or mixtures that are reasonably priced, yet still sell for enough to allow a profit. Most dealers have large numbers of common stamps and covers that are just taking up space. Why not use them to entice new collectors and produce some cash for items that are just getting in your way.

Recently, Amos Press, the owner of Scott Publications introduced a new line of albums geared to the collection of modern used U.S. stamps. This is a perfect opportunity for dealers to target new collectors interested in U.S. stamps. I am certain that some of the stamp emissions from the last 70 years are quite difficult to find in used condition, so forming such a collection could be a challenge. It would be easy for a dealer to advertise mixtures of several hundred stamps to get a new collector started and then sell individual stamps needed to fill in the many vacant spots. It is likely that the production of those albums by Scott will drive up demand for used U.S. and ultimately the prices for many of the scarcer stamps.

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Once a collector has completed most of the collection contained in the Scott pages, the opportunity is there for the dealer to encourage the person to move into older and (for the dealer) more lucrative issues.

Using the approach I have laid out could work in other areas as well, including topicals and stamps of many foreign countries. The key is, place the initial emphasis on the enjoyment gained from collecting at a reasonable cost. Don't emphasize investment and plant the possible seeds of disillusionment when the collection is not worth what the collector anticipated. Our hobby is intended to be a fun and learning experience, not an investment.

In his President's column, Sheldon Ruckens mentions that NSDA elections are coming up at the end of the year and asks for volunteers to run for office. If you have ideas on how to improve and grow the NSDA, this is your opportunity to have a direct voice in doing so rather than sitting back and complaining about what others are doing (while you sit there doing nothing). Sheldon also talks about how the hobby has changed during recent decades and indicates that business practices of the past may no longer be valid.

Sid Morginstin's quarterly column (see page 5) talks about the commissions charged by philatelic auction houses. He says that large auction firms must charge higher commissions because their costs are higher. They have staff, advertising, and production costs not incurred by smaller firms. To me, the flip side of that argument is that they reach a broader audience and typically sell higher value (scarcer) items that are not offered by many smaller auction firms. Both large and small firms have their advantages and play an important role in the overall philatelic marketplace.

In his initial report as Treasurer (see page 10), Richard Lehmann provides the current NSDA bank balance following recent expenses, including those incurred for the MILCOPEX show.

Letters to the Editor

There were no letters received for inclusion in this quarter's publication.



President's Corner Sheldon Ruckens

It has been an interesting summer. The APS show in Omaha seemed to have a decent attendance and I think that most, if not all, dealers were happy with their results.

It seems that many dealers decided that Omaha was no place for a stamp show, so did not bother attending. This may have contributed to the success of the dealers who did attend, as there were fewer booths than previous APS summer shows. The APS 2020 show will be held in Hartford, CT on August 20-23.

There is no doubt that the stamp business has evolved. It is certainly quite different than when I started buying and selling over 40 years ago.

There are many dealers today who are doing the same thing that they did 30 to 40 years ago. They buy from private parties for next to nothing and then price everything up at 80% of catalog (or more) and wait for customers to beat a path to their door, which isn't likely to happen.

If these dealers are in a generous mood, they might offer a 20% discount to other dealers, which means they expect to receive 64% of catalog value from another dealer.

I've come across many dozens of dealers like this over the decades. These dealers have no interest in buying stamps or lots that are cataloged, even in the 20% of catalog range. Apparently it doesn't offer them enough of a mark-up.

No dealer is obligated to offer a discount to other dealers, but the business model that many dealers have seems quite flawed to me,

I'm no longer surprised or shocked by dealers who complain to me how bad the stamp business is. This usually comes from dealers who are completely oblivious on how boring, tired, stale, uninteresting and overpriced their inventory is and, in some cases, it's the same inventory they've been taking to the same shows for 10 years or more. What are you doing

differently than you did 5, 10, or 20 years ago? Are you turning over your inventory on a regular basis?

One of the most ridiculous things that I have heard dealers say is that they cannot sell something because they would be losing money if they sold it.

They may have bought it 10 to 20 years ago and are still hanging on to it.

There is so much material on the market available for purchase today; at auctions or from other dealers, at interesting prices. If you are still hanging on to something because you would have to sell it at a loss, you might consider raising some cash to use for purchasing in today's market and not worry about losing money on old stock.

There is far more money to be made buying and selling and turning stock over than there is hanging on to something that is worth less than what you paid for it 20 years ago. Try something different and see what the results are.

NSDA/IFSDA membership provides you with credibility that many other dealers don't have. You should use this to your advantage and benefit. If a customer is shopping by price and comparing your items with those of an online seller or non-member dealer, you have the opportunity to point out that you are a recognized professional and there are benefits to dealing with you over others. If you sell yourself correctly, you do not need to price match. Many customers are not looking for the lowest price.

If you have an idea for an article or would like to write one for a future issue, please contact our professional editor/member Rich Pederson. Rich has done an excellent job with the look and content of *NSDA News* for over 9 years and can help you format and edit your submission. Feel free to share your advice, experiences, memories, and stories. Everyone has something to share! My continued gratitude goes out to Rich.

The position of NSDA president will be up for election for 2020-2022 (2 year term). If you are interested and motivated in running for office, please let me know.

As I write this, hurricane Dorian has already caused destruction in parts of the Bahamas and is heading for north Florida and the Carolinas. I hope that everyone is safe from these tragic acts of nature at this time of year.

We are still working on the eBay badge program and

our members only forum on our website is available for buying, selling, and trading, as well as the exchange of information or ideas. Those benefits are included with your NSDA/IFSDA membership. If you have an eBay store and have not shared it with me, please send your User ID and store name.

Referring a new member for the coming year will still get your 2020 dues covered. Applications are available on our website.

Feel free to share any ideas, suggestions, comments, or complaints. Best to all,



It's What I (Usually Alone) Think: Auction Commissions Sid Morginstin

Editor's Note: Sid, an avid Star Trek fan, is at the top left in the picture above.]

In the June issue of the *American Stamp Dealer and Collector*, a contributor wrote about auction commissions – both the buyer and vendor commissions. He made a good case for the vendor commissions. Please permit me to relate how I handle these.

The larger auction firms have an office (or building), perhaps a warehouse, a staff, a computer system, and much more. Their operating costs are huge. They need high commissions and fees to cover those costs. Yes, they also handle quite of bit of material.

My basic vendor commission is 20%. I ask that all vendors provide a description of the material and a START PRICE. Who else but the vendor knows the material?

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I do spot check the descriptions provided. If I find an error, I advise the vendor. For one vendor, there was a high level of returns from the buyers. I now check most of his lots. His commission is higher.

If the vendor provides an MS Word table with the required listing information, I will reduce the commission. Over a period of time, if a vendor supplies many lots and the value is high, I may also reduce the commission.

One vendor used to write long detailed descriptions. These would have been better as articles in philatelic publications. Others give me just basic information, forcing me to do some research.

One vendor provides so much information in the MS Word table that I need only copy and paste the table into my database. That vendor gets a big discount.

I edit or revise the descriptions to fit the NEGEV style. This was established by Michael Bale who started NEGEV in the 1950's. I took over in 1999. Since then, I have modified the style a bit.

If I feel that the START PRICE is wrong, I advise the vendor. We then come to an agreement.

The buyer's commission is 16%. If a buyer uses a credit card or PAY PAL, there is a 4% surcharge on the total invoice.

Some auction firms add on a \$2 per lot handling fee and an insurance fee. I do not. When the shipment to a buyer is bulky, I will add on, at most, a \$2 fee for the entire shipment.

One time, I wanted to bid in an auction for a low priced item – under \$35. By the time the buyer's commission, handling, insurance and postage was added, the price did not justify buying the lot. (I bought it anyway.) To counter this, I added a LOW PRICE section in the auction. Though there is no commission, the postage (and surcharge) is added. However, photos are only on the web site and the lots are sold 'AS IS'.

The commissions go to cover my expenses. As I work out of my house, there is no office rental. I use my desktop and laptop computers. (I do need to get a new desktop since Microsoft no longer supports WINDOWS 7 and I need more power.) I do most of the

work on my own. I do not have a staff. My next door neighbor helps with the mailing of the catalogues and other non-technical issues.

My major expenses are insurance, postage, printing, and the web site. I negotiate the insurance rates each year. I purchase insurance to cover my stock, shipping, and the shows I attend.

As to postage, I use discount postage. This works out well, except that my neighbor does not like the LICK AND STICK stamps, preferring the SELF STICK. I end up doing the TSLS.

[TSLS? At INTERPHIL 76, I ran the American First Day Cover Society booth. We made many covers using the souvenir sheets. Separating the stamps was not easy. We coined the term 'TEAR AND SWEAR, LICK AND STICK' or TSLS. If one ripped a stamp, one swore. The stamp was then licked and stuck on the cover.]

My printer is very reasonable. It is fast and very good.

In order to cut mailing and printing expenses, I have a hybrid system. If I have a client's E-mail, they get an E-mail when the web site is up. This is followed by two other E-mails sent about 10 days and three days before the closing. I may also send them a letter in the mail.

To make the catalogs smaller, I only place key photos of each lot in the catalogue. For some lots, additional photos are on the web site. If a bidder wants more photos, I will send a limited number by E-mail at no charge. There will be a modest charge for photos sent by mail or a for large number of photos.

Hard copies of the catalog are only sent to clients for whom I do not have E-mails, those who requested one, and vendors. I have some very good clients who do not have computers. If a client does not buy anything over a three year period, I ask them to pay a small fee if they want to continue getting the catalogues.

My webmaster charges a yearly hosting fee and posting fee for each sale. Earlier in 2018, I had my web site (NEGEV.STAMPCIRCUIT.COM) modernized. I can now upload special items and change information as needed. The webmaster, Yoav Kremener, and his staff (of STAMP CIRCUIT) do a great job.

I try to keep my costs as low as possible. These savings are then passed on to the vendors and buyers.



Dealer Spotlight—Marching Bands, Dancers, Native Music, Martial Arts Bob Sazama

[Editor's Note: Instead of providing background on a dealer, this Dealer's Spotlight discusses the experiences of NSDA dealer and ex-Vice President, Bob Sazama, at a show in which he participated in Wuhan, China.]

Come one, come all, free prizes, free admission, Moms, Dads, sisters, brothers let's head on over to the big top for a day of fun activities!!! What is this, where is this, what's this all about? It's a stamp show – not a

U.S. stamp show, but a foreign stamp show, and it took place in Wuhan, China this past June 11 – 17, 2019. International shows like this are subsidized by the government. You might have missed the show, but over 100,000 people from China did not miss out and attended one of the largest stamp exhibitions in the world.

There were two U.S. booth holders at the Wuhan Show, Castlerock Stamps and Rising Sun Stamps. I worked at the Rising Sun booth. The first thing obvious about the size of a booth at an Asian show is that it is sold by size in square meters and the big difference is that



waist high counters are used rather than tables. Customers must stand to view stamps under glass enclosed counters or ask for different display book items. There are no aisles filled with chairs for customers. Almost all booths display pictured signs indicating the types of stamps they are selling. Naturally, this is fairly easy for the foreign postal agencies.

Foreign postal agencies will usually send staff mem-



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bers to operate their booth. Over 20 foreign postal agencies had booths at the show. Having a postal agency at the show is viewed as an opportunity to promote the collecting of the stamps of that country and also helps promote tourism and good will. In doing so, many postal agencies will issue a stamp or special commemorative cancellation just for the show, as was the case in Wuhan.

The word "chop" refers to the cancellation. To get the "chop" on your philatelic passport, one must usually buy an inexpensive stamp from the issuing country.

The price of the stamp and the "chop" is almost always

under one U.S. dollar. Some postal agencies will apply the "chop" without the stamp, free of charge. Can you imagine the U.S. post office applying a free cancellation at a U.S. stamp show? Can you imagine thousands of people going from booth to booth to get the "chop" on their philatelic passport? It does happen and thousands go home with a treasured souvenir of their visit to the "big stamp show."

At the Wuhan show, almost all of the major auction houses from around the world (Germany, England, Hong Kong, etc.) took booths. Approximately 35 booths were allocated to Chinese stamp dealers and another 30 booths were occupied by a variety of ven-

dors. One could buy rocks and minerals, inexpensive jewelry, stuffed animals (Panda bears), postcards, etc. Some booths promoted products or services such as airlines, trains, food products (including wine), electronics, and information processing services. Yep....at a stamp show!! Imagine that.

Entertainment was constant on a huge stage erected for award presentations, but most often given over to marching bands, choral groups, dance groups, martial arts demonstrations, etc. Young people in folk costumes were constantly strolling the floor, representing the various regions within China. The stamp show is best described as a three ring circus. A place to go for



fun, entertainment, and to buy stamps. And also to view the thousands of square feet given over to exhibits.

The exhibit area was huge. Aisle after aisle of world class exhibits for those collectors/exhibitors competing at this level. Rare stamp after rare stamp. Rare cover after rare cover. The Chinese government brought out its archival stamps and documents. The exhibit area was the least visited area of the show. The lighting in the exhibit area was not very good and this may have detracted somewhat from the number of visitors.

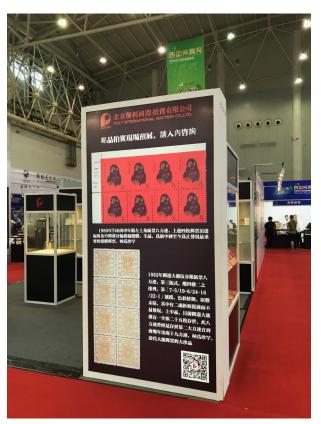
By now the "monkey stamp" has de-



fined the Chinese stamp market for most U.S. collectors. Five million "monkey stamps" were printed for the Chinese New Year. In U.S. stamp publications, offers to buy and sell this stamp have ranged from \$900 to \$1,800 in the last several years. Is this stamp rare with a print run of five million? At the Wuhan show, entire sheets were on display and for sale! Also for sale were singles and blocks of four. You can be the judge as to what is a rare stamp.

learn something more about their country not often available via the organized tour route! And 99% of the time, the perceived language barrier is solved for you by another customer at your booth.

If you've never been to a foreign stamp show....GO. It will be an adventure and take others (your spouse) that are not collectors......they will have fun experiencing something entirely different from the standard U.S. show.





Many times I'm asked, do you speak Chinese or Japanese (I did shows in Japan and other Asian countries for 7 years) and the answer is no. At the Wuhan show, this problem is solved for you by the show committee. The booth comes with an interpreter. The interpreters are almost always university students studying the language of the booth holder. Each day, a different student showed up, not only to assist with customers, but to practice their language skills. Naturally, most students prefer to study English, but German, French, and Spanish speaking booth assistants were also plentiful. To me, this is an added benefit because you get to



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Executive Director's Report Dawn Goss

The Executive Director's Report will appear in the next edition of *NSDA News*.

Treasurer's Report Richard Lehmann

Opening Balance – May 31, 2019	\$13,883.11
Reimbursement to Sheldon Ruckens for Telephone and refund of membership to Peter DeJung	238.00
Milwaukee Phil. Soc. for Milcopex show	850.00
Bank fees for June and July	31.00
Balance – August 31, 2019	\$12,764.11

News & Announcements

APS StampShow. Numerous NSDA dealers had booths at the annual APS StampShow that was held on August 1st-4th at the CHI Health Center in Omaha, Nebraska. StampShow was cohosted by the U.S. Postal Service, APS, American Topical Association (ATA), and the American First Day Cover Society (AFDCS). The annual World Series of Philately Champion of Champions competition was won by Yamil H. Kouri Jr. for his exhibit on *The First Postal Issues of Spanish Antilles*.

This year, the United States Postal Service (USPS) hosted a first day of issue ceremony for the Military Dogs stamps. The figure at the right pictures the four different designs of the military dogs forever stamps.



Below, on this page and on the following page, are NSDA dealers that had booths at the show. NSDA dealers Don and Pat McElroy, who also had a booth at the show, are pictured on the front cover.



Bill Bean



Brian and Lori Hunt



Doug and Miriam Weisz



Ed Dimmick



Jim and Jackie Tauf



Patricia Kaufmann



Sergio and Lianne Sismondo



Kurt Harding



Scott Murphy



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Show Schedule

If you wish to have us consider listing your show, please send the show name, dates, location and other relevant information, such as table cost for dealers and special hotel rates, to Richard Pederson at rich@pedersonstamps.com. Priority is always given to shows with participating NSDA members. Any show taking out a separate advertisement will always be listed in the show schedule.

1. APS StampShow in Hartford, Connecticut

August 20-23, 2020 Connecticut Convention Center 100 Columbus Blvd. Hartford, CT 06103

Club News & Meetings

- The Warrenton Stamp & Coin Club meets the first Thursday of every month at 7:00 PM at the Our Savior Lutheran Church on Route 605 (Dumfries Road) in Warrenton, Virginia.
- 2. The Greer Stamp Club meets monthly in the Taylor's library located at 316 Main Street in Taylor's, South Carolina. Meetings are normally held on the second Saturday of the month. Contact Susan Whitehead via e-mail at stampahlic@aol.com for further information.
- 3. The Asheville Stamp Club meets at 1:30 PM on the third Sunday of each month in the Blue Ridge Room at the Deerfield Episcopal Retirement Community Center, 1617 Hendersonville Road, Asheville, North Carolina.

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