



The Circuit

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The Official Journal of the International Society of Worldwide Stamp Collectors

HOW I BECAME A GENERAL COLLECTOR — AGAIN

by Joe Foley (# 308)

Like many other collectors, I started as a general collector. There was a slightly older boy next door, and not having an older brother, I looked up to him. Well, Dave was a stamp collector and in short order I followed suit. (Imagine if he had collected bird droppings, today I might be past president of the American Bird _____ Society!!) I bought his old album for the princely sum of fifteen cents and was on my way. Hate to admit it, but that was a loooong time ago.

Again, like many other collectors, I began to narrow my interests. By the time I graduated from college, it was U.S. and British. A little later, I "trimmed off" former members of the British Commonwealth. My rough rule of thumb was that I ended the collection at the point where the Queen no longer appeared on the definitives. By the time I got married I had sold the U.S. to raise cash for a very small down payment on a very small house, and had started to get serious about the stamps and postal history of Ireland. A little later I stopped getting British new issues. In 1976 we moved to Colorado and I had a respectable collection of Ireland that had garnered some awards, and, with the exception of a few colonies, a more or less dormant British collection, as well as a couple of side interests.

There was, and is, a great group of collectors in the greater Denver area. While several had some interest in foreign stamps, collecting U.S. was a real common bond — and I had sold mine fourteen years earlier. About that time I attended a company conference and during lunch with an old acquaintance from New Jersey, the subject of stamps came up. He remembered my interest and remarked that his wife had inherited her father's collection but no one in the family had an

interest in it. A stamp dealer had offered \$100 for it but he wasn't sure if it was a fair offer. I said I'd be happy to take a look and he indicated that sometime after an upcoming family wedding, he'd ship it out to me. I had completely forgotten about it when about 8 months later a box arrived and there was the old collection. It had a bound International album, from the late 1930's and a sorry array of stamps in glassines and some FDC's. Unfortunately, the album had been stored on its side and exposed to enough dampness to cause quite a few of the mint stamps to become stuck down. (Ever notice that cheaper stamps don't seem to get "stuck down" nearly as easily as those worth a few bucks?) Also, as frequently happens with albums printed on both sides of the page that lack interleaving, stamps were damaged by rubbing against each other. The dealer having to value his time had made a fair offer. There were some useful U.S. that could form the basis of a new U.S. collection that I had been considering, and maybe, I could "salvage" enough foreign for sale or trade to get an even better start on the U.S. I called my friend and told him that the dealer had made a fair offer, but I was interested myself and offered \$150. He accepted.

As time permitted, I worked the collection. Found a few pleasant surprises and some unpleasant ones. After getting the U.S. in shape I mounted some of the foreign in a couple APS sales books and sent them off to State College, Pa. The more I looked at the foreign section of this battered old album, the more memories it brought back from my childhood collection, and by association, my childhood. I was really enjoying "messaging around" with this array of inexpensive but interesting stamps. A general collection

— Why not? Before long, I bought another general collection, also in an International album, but this album was newer and in better condition. Then I remembered those sales books I had sent to the APS. Probably the first time anyone wished for lousy sales! With my usual run of luck they sold rather well (remember there are two kinds of luck!)

I'll spare you the album by album growth of my "general collection," and jump several steps. Along the way, I put together a little Cinderella collection. Anytime you buy an old collection, you'll find some "Glass Slipper" material in it and it is interesting. I decided to cap my worldwide collection. I had stopped my British new issues in 1970 and decided to stick with that for the British. Initially I had thought to limit the rest to pre-1940 issues. The first hundred years of stamps, and besides, they "fit" in volume 1 of the International. However, World War II brought about some unusual changes in stamps and stamp issuing countries, so I later extended the collection to 1949 - volume II. Today my general collection is housed in six fat International binders. Still only to 1949, but with interleaving to protect the stamps on facing pages, double and triple pages for the watermark and perforation variations not noted in the Internationals, as well as blank pages for those stamps that just didn't make the "cut," what would be two binders easily triples. In a few cases, I have a set of pages for mint and another for used. Somehow, along the way, there was some spillover into additional albums. Some blank albums and specialty albums for those countries I get a little more interested in. Am I a little bit out of control? Probably, but I'm having fun.

(Continued Page 2)

General Collector (Continued)

Now let me admit that I continue to get tremendous enjoyment from my specialized Irish collection, as well as some of the other parts of the world that I get a bit more involved in. But, this general collection is really a fun collection and I try to keep that way. Where I'm using blank pages, the "write-up" (really more of a notation) is in pencil. With few exceptions I hinge everything. I try to mount it as soon as I buy it. And while I really enjoy buying a job lot at an auction, I try not to buy another until I get the current one sorted and mounted. In general, I try to keep the backlog down. I do a little trading by mail. The postage expense is frequently greater than the commercial value of the stamps, but it's another means of enjoyment and another way to move out your duplicates. I've found that a fringe benefit to this collection is in judging. It gives me a leg up in preparing to judge exhibits that are outside my specialized interests, and certainly enhances my appreciation of the many fields of our hobby. For example, you can get a "feel" for the various print-ings, etc., of the stamps of China through sorting and identifying many of the less expensive stamps. By no means does this make you an expert in the area, but it does establish, I think, empathy with the exhibitor or specialist.

I've gone a little deeper into some parts of my general collection than others. The section on Egypt is getting rather respectable. On the other hand, I really can't get too interested in sorting out the various watermarks on the stamps of Brazil and have done very little with them. (Probably the same feeling a specialist of Brazil would have towards Irish overprints!) In each case I take it only as far as I want to.

A surprising thing, at least to me, was finding out that there is a rather large number of collectors that still pursue a general collection. When you ask another collector what they collect, the response usually centers around areas of specialization. I think this is true even of the APS periodic survey of members' collecting interests. However, there are lots of folks that keep a few of the big blue albums. Even many of the collectors known for their exhibits of highly specialized material are "closet" general collectors and readily admit to enjoying their worldwide collections.

Don't forget to mention ISWSC to any collector you meet. You never know, that collector just might have a worldwide collection hiding in the closet and the mention of ISWSC just might spur the collector to join up and quit hiding that general collection in the closet. ...

Public Relations Has Been Busy

Publicity on the ISWSC is well underway. *Linn's* columnist Steven Rod gave our club a great write-up in June which brought in many responses and members. Additional articles have or will be appearing in *Stamps*, *Stamp Collector*, *Mekeel's*, *Global Stamp News*, *The Philatelic Shopper*, *Canadian Stamp News* and *Stamp News Australia*. If you spot anything about the ISWSC in these or other publications, let me know. No one can subscribe to everything!

Addresses of all new members appear in each *Circuit* unless we are told not to print it. The same goes for the annual roster. If you do not want your address printed in the next roster printing, write to Secy/Treasurer Carol Cervenka (#498) and let her know.

By the way, most members' dues expire on October 31st. Beat the rush to renew and send your payment (\$5.00 per year, made payable to ISWSC) early. This will also save the society postage costs in mailing you a reminder. Don't forget to send your stamp donation to the Youth Program Chariman, Ken Costilow (#142).

I've been pleased with the response to our identification service. Inquiries have come from as far away as China. Through new acquisitions to my philatelic library, I can now help you with numeral cancels found on stamps from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Each number refers to a town, city or other locale where the letter was posted. This is a fascinating sideline to collecting worldwide. Listings are available from the following countries: Baden, Bavaria, Belgium, France, Great Britain, Iceland, Natal, Norway, Prussia, Spain, and Uruguay. The GB and French listings are quite extensive. As with any unidentifiable stamps you have, send me a photo copy of cancels you want locations for and I will be happy to check them out. A SASE would be appreciated. ... Tom Fortunato (#379), Public Relations Officer

Precancels Scarce in Britain

As a boy growing up in the west of Scotland in the 1950's I remember letters arriving from the United States with "Chicago/ILL" printed on the stamps. My childish concern was for poor Mr. Chicago who suffered such poor health! Such was my early introduction to US precancels and at that time I managed haphazardly to collect a number of them. On taking up stamp collecting again a few years ago my interest in precancels was re-awakened.

The problem for me is where to get them! I have scoured auction catalogues, and dealer lists in the UK but none appear to come on the market. Someone told me that many were thrown out since, like perfins, dealers considered them to be

defaced and of little market value. Is this true? Thanks to Tom Fortunato, Public Relations Officer, who sent me a packet to look through I was able to fill a number of spaces. Canada also issued a number of precancels but many had code numbers between the lines rather than the actual town name and 46 code numbers are recorded. I wonder where they are now for in over three years of searching I have only come across three examples all from 1951.

I have only looked within Britain for them and perhaps I should look across the pond to their native territory. They seem to be so scarce and unavailable here that I ask the question, "Do precancels die or are they like old soldiers who just fade away?"

... J. Colin Caskie (#576)

INQUIRY: Harry Bonas (#580), of England, has written to inquire if any USA ISWSC member sent him a packet of misc. stamps earlier this year. There was no return address on the envelope and since the package was damaged in transit, he has no idea who sent it and no one has inquired about it. If you mailed Mr. Bonas stamps and have not received a reply, please contact him: H. Bonas, 28 Washington Grove Norton, Stockton, Cleveland T2S 1BV England. ...

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Major excitement in my mail box this week. My cookbook arrived!

Actually, it's Amy's cookbook since I am barely adept at warming a can of Campbell's beans. Big deal, right?

Well, as Paul Harvey likes to say..."here's the rest of the story". I sent for this book by mail with a check for \$12.00 dated Christmas eve, 1988. That was \$10 for the book and \$2 for airmail delivery.

Makes you wonder how long surface mail would have taken, eh? The check was deposited in Auckland NZ on July 10, 1989 and cleared my bank shortly thereafter. I had long ago given up when....exactly 3 years after the check cleared, it arrived! The envelope in which the cookbook was mailed was postmarked June 24, 1992, so I guess in truth this was not a 3 1/2 year postal transit, the books must have been out of print for awhile.. It may not be real easy to get new supplies in Adamstown. The book was certainly worth waiting for.

Amy says I better not wait for her to actually produce anything from it since even here in California it is hard to find breadfruit, taro and candle nut. But the Pitcairn Island Cookbook by Irma Christian is very nicely printed and is a gem of a source about living in that tiny, remote Pacific island. I read about this mail order item in the local newspaper all those years ago and couldn't resist. I have always been fascinated by the story of this fantasy island founded over 200 years ago by "Mr. Christian" and the rest of the mutineers from The Bounty. Pitcairn was the first British Colony I completed philatelically, and it has arguably some of the prettiest sets of stamps ever produced.

My cookbook is autographed by Irma Christian who operates the Pitcairn shortwave radio channel and is descended from....you guessed it, Clark Gable himself! If you want to try your luck at getting a nice cookbook, and a wonderful postally used Pitcairn cover in the bargain, send her \$10 or \$12 and be patient. No guarantees, but if you love Pitcairn as much as I do you will not be able to resist the gamble. Tell her Dave sent you. (She also promised to try to find me a stamp collecting correspondent on the island...I just can't wait to see the mail come summer of '96). Oh, the address? Just Mrs. Ben Christian, Box 2, Pitcairn

Island, South Pacific Ocean. My original mail was just to "Irma Christian, Publisher, Pitcairn Island".

The cover wants describing, but is not terribly exciting all considered. The return address corner has two self adhesive stickers on it with a long number and "KAMO Dawn Margaret" which one assumes is a person's name, maybe the postal forwarding agent in N.Z. (?). There is a small green French/English customs sticker with inked notations "1 cook printed matters", "gift" and "ncv" (no cash value), 2 of the 3 statements being false but having the effect, one gathers, of speeding delivery by avoiding import duties. The brown paper wrapper is franked with Scott's 299 and 307, the 10c and \$1.20 sailing ships stamps from 1988 again. Why is a publisher with international mail order business using 4 year old stamps? These beautiful stamps, with the understated value of \$1.65 (for oh so rare postally used Pitcairn material) are tied with a clean circular date cancellation labelled "Pitcairn Island Post Office 24 June 1992. Incredibly to me there are no other postal markings to indicate ships or interim stops. One other item....Irma enclosed a copy of the national newspaper, a 2 sheet typed and photo-copied gem titled "The Pitcairn Miscellany". I am going to have to share some of the goodies from this newsletter with you, but will do so in separate copy before Rita cuts me off entirely for excessive columnization. Stay tuned for such items as the November shipping report in Pitcairn, the seasons wishes from Tony and Chris Washington and the cliff-hanger election results on developing an airport on Pitcairn.

"5 - 4 Fun" is an idea I am hoping to establish as the "signature" practice of ISWSC members. For some little time I have been enclosing 5 stamps, nothing high catalog, but not wallpaper either, in my mail when I write to other collectors about some other business. I have made it clear I don't expect any in return and it wouldn't make economic sense to be trading in 5 stamp increments with a 29c (shudder) 1st class postal rate. Some correspondents have started to return the favor when writing back to me, but that is not the point. To me the message to be sent is "this is a gift of small value, but

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hopefully of use to you or, if not, something you can pass along to another collector, and I send it with no desire for repayment but in commemoration of this great hobby of ours." Will you join me to make "5 - 4 Fun", the ISWSC "secret handshake"?

I had several more responses to my query about a good stamp finder after my last column had to go to press. Jim Miller and a number of others recommended *The White Ace Postage Stamp Identifier* and I have already mailed off for mine (\$6.35 to The Washington Press, Florham Park, NJ, 07932). Thanks again for all the replies.

We have experienced a rash of turnovers in some of our key manager posts. Willie Dow has opened a dealership in Germany and has given notice as manager of the Sales Circuit. I had a personal trade going with Willie for a couple of years and wish him well in the new venture. We are taking this occasion to re-organize the circuit so please don't prepare any new booklets for sales until you hear further. We also have notice from Dr. Johnson who has done such a great job with our Mail Auctions. His medical practice has increased to the extent that he can't give up that much time anymore. He will stick it out through the finalization of sale #7 which will probably be about the end of the year and has kindly offered to help train the new Mail Sale manager. In both cases, we will miss

(Continued Page 5)

IS IT A "FIRST" ?

The Caddo Mills (Texas) Ben Franklin Stamp Club amazed residents when the children decided to enter not one, but two vehicles in the annual Rodeo Days Parade, June 13, 1992. Seen waiting in line at the High School parking lot where entrants gathered for the parade to begin, club members piled into the bed of ISWSC member (#707) Carole Walker's pickup or the air conditioned comfort of the Jeep Cherokee, with ISWSC Secy/Treasurer Carol Cervenka (#498). Following the Ben Franklin Club cars was the US Postal Service float with the Caddo Mills Postmaster, Margee Christopher (ISWSC member # 706).

It may be an unusual activity for a Ben Franklin Stamp Club, but the youngsters were thrilled with the opportunity to promote their club and hobby. ...



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(3/5)

SALES CIRCUIT MANAGER RESIGNS AND UNIT BEING REORGANIZED

Willy Dow has recently resigned as manager of the Sales Circuit to devote more time to his business. A complete reorganization of the sales circuit is underway, with circuit books being audited and operational procedures being reviewed. All sales circuit books in the system are being returned to their owners along with payment for sold items. Any member interested in managing the new sales circuit or with ideas for improving the sales system is requested to contact Tom Fortunato. Look for further details in an upcoming issue of The Circuit. ... Tom Fortunato (#379)

ADVERTISING WORKS !!!

Where did all the new members come from? Since the first of 1992, new members have joined as a result of articles in various stamp publications or as a result of ISWSC member's efforts. The following list includes members enrolled through July 11, 1992.

Linns Stamp News (45) • *APS mailing* (13) • *Global Stamp News* (11) • *APS Handbook* (9) • *APS Affiliates article* (2) • *International Ad Magazine* (4) • *Stamp Collector* (3) • *Stamps* (1) • *The Texas Philatelist* (1) • *Regional Sec'y - Canada* (4) • *Regional Sec'ys - Australia* (1) • *WCSE* (2) • *TEPEX* (1) • *American Consulate - PRChina* (1) • *Members: #498* (10) • #379 (5) • #25 (4) and members # 2, 15, 31, 109, 142, 359, 361, 371, 421, 476, 484, 639, 644, and 751 (1 each).

... Carol Cervenka (#498)

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Vice President: Ken Costilow (#142), 621 Virginius Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23452 USA
(Send Required Stamps for Dues for Youth Stamp Program to the Vice President)

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ISWSC Archivist: Hal Erickson (#173), 217 Redstone, Las Vegas, NV 89128 USA

Editor/Publisher: Rita Kallal (#26), PO Box 1513, West Monroe, LA 71294-1513 USA

Youth Stamp Program: Ken Costilow (#142)

Public Relations Chairman: Tom Fortunato (#379), 42 Maynard St., Rochester, NY 14615-2022 USA

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Co-Managers: Dave Paul (#59), Dr. Isaac Tannenbaum (#163), & Jerry Gross (#429)

Board of Directors: Ken Jenkins, Past President (#15); Herb Holland (#31), Tom Fortunato (#379), Rima Carver (#493), and the Elected Officers.

President (continued)

their services, but at least we are losing them due to increased success in their primary occupations. We have also lost our Australian membership secretaries. In all of these cases we are confident of finding someone to take over but have not finalized a selection so please let us know if you can volunteer for any of these that might interest you.

... Dave Nelson (# 25), President

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Make all checks payable to ISWSC. Send payment along with copy to the Editor.

AUCTION MANAGER REPORTS ON SALES 6 & 7

Mail Sale # 6 is now history. Forty-seven of the 58 lots sold for 78%. The smaller number of lots meant less chances of a "no-bid" situation. Forty-three bidders participated and twenty won at least one lot. Total of sale prices was \$384.60. Average lot sold for \$ 8.18. The lot with the most bids was # 57, a full pound of stamps, approximately 5,000 stamps, receiving 17 bids. In several instances, high bids were significantly reduced, there being a considerable distance between the high bid and the second bid. Especially noteworthy were lots # 23, 39, 43, 46 and 50 in this regard. Thirty-two of 47 high bids were reduced.

Failing to attract any bids were the highest priced lots, an early Swiss stamp with a catalogue value of \$900 and a minimum bid of \$120, and the USA C1-3, though all three stamps were in mediocre condition. In general, items doing well are packets and large mixtures. Doing less well are a high-priced stamps, USA and Canada.

Several bidders were concerned at the low number of lots. Fear not, Mail Sale # 7 in this issue has 178 lots. So get busy bidding!

... Wallace D. Johnson, MD (# 212)

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