

The Circuit

AFFILIATE OF: APS & COPO

The Official Journal of the International Society of Worldwide Stamp Collectors

Horizons Broadened by Philately

by Chad Nelghor (# 510)

For good reason, stamp collectors like to say that philately widens your horizons. I'd like to tell you a little about how my horizons have been widened - quite literally - thanks to the ISWSC.

One of the main advantages of membership is corresponding with like-minded collectors, and for the better part of two years I've been trading stamps and information with Jan Szpyrka, an active member in Gliwice, Poland. During this time I also started working out the details of a long-planned trip to continental Europe to visit friends and see Prague, about which I'd heard so much, from my home in Scotland.

Jan wrote that I should come and visit him and his family one day if I could. I looked at the map, saw that Gliwice was just six hours by train from Prague and advised Jan that the chance might come sooner than he expected.

To cut a long story short, in January of this year I enjoyed four days in beautiful and historic Prague, making up covers using Czechoslovakian stamps and the new Czech Republic stamps which, by sheer chance, had come out just before my arrival.

And then, equipped with a European rail pass, I made my way to Gliwice. The only problem was that Jan and I didn't

know what the other person looked like. I'd told him I'd carry an old blue rucksack,

but, it turns out, every other traveler in Poland carries an old blue rucksack. Anyway, with the help of a conscientious taxi driver and half of the people in Jan's apartment building, we finally met - only to discover that we'd passed each other in the station. Already having been made to feel at home in the apartment of one of Jan's neighbors while the taxi driver went back for him, I was received like a long-lost member of the family by Jan, his wife Janina and the daughter Marta, 10.

They were disappointed to hear I only planned to stay for the weekend - Jan said that local stamp meetings were Mondays and Tuesdays - and so I gladly extended my visit. I say gladly because, in addition to having long talks about stamps and other important matters, the Szpyrkas have a beautiful apartment (Jan did the wood floors and ceilings) and made sure I sampled all kinds of delicious and beautifully prepared Polish food.

The Poles are going through a difficult time economically because of the transition to a free-market economy, and the Szprkas, though he teaches mineral processing at the local technical university and Janina is a pediatrician - were not immune to the problems.

As state employees, they earn the equivalent of only about \$50 a week each. With prices in the stores being fairly close to those in Scotland, it's easy to see that money would be tight. (Poles spend about 50 percent of their income on food, and I'm afraid that when I was there the figure must have been more like 70 percent for the Szprkas.) Still, they have a Korean-made car and are gradually building their own large house, which is largely possible because Janina also has a private practice and Jan works on his own over summers and is doing most of the work on the house as well. It's a wonder he ever finds time for stamps.

Yet find time he does, for he has a highly specialized collection on the Olympics, which must be one of the best



ISWSC MEETING

to be held at

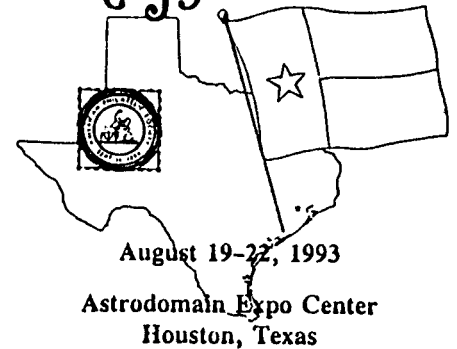
APS STaMpsHOW '93
on **SATURDAY**
AUGUST 21, 1993
4:00 - 5:50pm

Astro Arena Expo Hall
Houston, Texas

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STaMpsHOW '93



of its kind in the world, and he collects used stamps from virtually the whole English-speaking world plus several other countries.

Before the stamp society meetings rolled around, I was busy learning about life in Poland:

Poles have a much different daily routine than people in Britain or North America. They have a hearty breakfast and start work at 7 a.m. They work until 3 p.m. or so with only a 10-15 minute break for a "second breakfast." They go home to a

(Continued Page 2)

Horizons (Continued from Page 1)

dinner of soup, hearty main dish such as chicken or pork prepared in various ways and a variety of vegetables, salad and bread. In the evening they have a light supper of mainly bread, cold cuts and cheese.

Public toilets do not bear the Polish equivalent of "men" and "women" on them, nor generally even signs of men and women. Instead, they are identified by a circle for women and a triangle for men. Also, you're expected to pay for the privilege - though it's usually less than 10 cents.

For most Poles eating in a restaurant is exorbitantly expensive (and a slightly long taxi ride can cost a day's pay), but when we were visiting the marvelous city of Krakow one day Jan treated me to one of his favorite snacks from a stall - delicious hot corn on the cob!

Poles and some other eastern Europeans celebrate what is known as a "name day," which is a lot like a birthday but is celebrated on the day set aside for your name. During my stay I was fortunate enough to be present at the name day celebration of Jan's sister. A (large) roomful of friends and relatives gathered for a feast of Polish specialties such as several kinds of herring, cold meats, deviled eggs and even caviar - crowned by the most delicious torte (a rich kind of cake) I have ever had, made my Jan's sister. The gathering had special significance for me as Jan's mother showed us pictures of her husband and Scottish scenes he had taken when he was stationed there during World War II.

I began my philatelic forays in local stamp stores, which perhaps are struggling some to stay in business. Good selections of Polish material and smatterings of mainly mint and CTO stamps for the thematic collector were often accompanied by anything the shop owner could sell, even household goods. The first time I reached for my wallet, however, Jan quietly noted that the stamps would cost roughly a third less at a stamp society meeting. We visited three shops, but only for window shopping so Jan could note what I found interesting.

There was no need to exercise caution at the philatelic counter of the post office, however, as I purchased several dollars worth of attractive miniature sheets and se-tenant issues for sending previous purchases home. One of these envelopes apparently came apart soon after posting. The stamps and an Olympics mini-sheet, my address and the registry label were carefully cut from the envelope and pasted

on to a new envelope. Red Warsaw numeral hand stamps tied my old piece to the new envelope, which was sealed with Polish post office tape. A sticker on the back states that my envelope was "Reemballe a W-wa: (repackaged at Warsaw) and received a large Warsaw circular date stamp and the signature of the postal employee. And - just for the record - all contents were present and accounted for, and in good condition.

Before long it was time for the regular Monday meeting of the Gliwice branch of the Polish Philatelic Society. About 15 collectors were present, virtually all with material for selling or trading. Three had used se-tenants (my main area of interest) and/or emerging republics material of interest, and I left five dollars "poorer".

Polish philatelists live by the catalogues, with prices for everything determined by formulas. Polish material is generally 100 percent of the price in the *Katalog Znaczkow*, surely a testament to the diligence of its editors. For European stamps, collectors pay so much per Deutschmark of catalogue value and so much per French franc in Yvert catalogues for other stamps. Good thematic sets command a premium.

Next was the meeting of nearby Katowice's two branches of the Polish society. Before my unbelieving eyes were nearly 200 collectors - buying, selling and discussing the philatelic issues of the day - so you can see that stamp collecting is alive and well in Poland.

Jan knew many of the faces and the contents of their briefcases, and soon located a collector who had postally used stamps and covers for sale. I quickly realized I was in se-tenant heaven. My first man had several aging stockbooks full of covers and clippings from his post, a goodly number of strips, blocks and miniature sheets used by thoughtful correspondents. Virtually all of the stamps were a standard three cents apiece in Polish money, though some were more.

My total expenditure at the first chair for 13 covers and a like number of clippings from post cost about as much as one somewhat better cover in Britain. While relatively expensive items were on offer, the profusion of cheap covers and stamps meant I rarely felt the need to pay more than about 70 cents for an item. One USSR mini-sheet I brought I later saw on sale in Paris for 50 times as much.

As stamp fatigue set in, Jan reminded me that we had a train to catch, and we set off through the snow for the rail station. My Polish philatelic foray and five

fascinating days of tourism and meeting local people had been capped in grand style.

When we visited Krakow Jan told me about the Polish tradition of touching the largest bell in the tower of Krakow cathedral with your left hand and making a wish. I don't know if you're supposed to tell anyone about your wish, but maybe you can guess what I hoped for. Dziękuję (thanks) Jan, Janina and Marta! ...

RSA Member's Illness Reported

I am writing on behalf of my husband, Peter Wood (#639), to let all his correspondents know that he has not forgotten them. He has been very ill for the last 4 months and has to undergo major surgery during June to remove half of his stomach and part of his intestines. He will convalesce for about 3 months, so you will hear from him about the end of the year.

His school projects have been handed over to others but our postal address is still the drop for all donations. He says to thank everybody for their indulgence especially Francis Giles #637 and James Osborne #471. For without their initial help the project would not have been possible. Thank you.

... Margaret Wood

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Be among the first to own these beautiful four color pins featuring our club logo.
ONLY \$ 2.50 (US) each plus postage (75¢ to US, \$1.00 to Canada, \$1.75 elsewhere)

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* Mint US Stamps with full gum or IRCs (at 50¢ each) also accepted.

THE PRESIDENTS COLUMN *by Dave Nelson (#25)*

From my recent mail, a few items worth sharing. Some months ago I asked when U.S. mail resumed out of Hawaii after the December 7th, 1941 bombing. I had written a letter to *The American Philatelist* after they had an excellent article on Hawaiian war time mail since I have a Christmas card posted from Honolulu on Dec. 15th. AP sent me a reply from one other collector who had an even earlier cover, but somehow I missed the published reply of one of our own ISWSC members, Gladys Bosler, # 133 who has sent me a photocopy of her unbelievable cover postmarked out at 3:30 on the Monday afternoon after the bombing. This was sent by a soldier at Schofield Barracks and was probably allowed out so fast by the sensors because he was in the U.S. military and believed to be a low security risk. Gladys speculates that the military postal service was "already poised for action" before the bombing. As an armchair WW II historian, I know the government was not totally asleep at this time, but we know that there was zero preparedness in Oahu for "the date which will live in infamy". So how did they manage to have a cover postmarked on Dec. 8 and already back-stamped "Released by I.C.B."? This is efficiency beyond belief in normal times let alone 30 hours after such a devastating attack! Do we have any historians of WW II postal and censorship practices that can further a dialogue on this puzzle?

I recently purchased the U.S.P.S. 1992 commemorative year set. As many of you know, it comes complete now days with a hardbound, full color, 36 page book describing the issues. I have mixed emotions about this book. On the positive side, it creates a quality image for the U.S. and for philately unless you happen to get a look at some of the competition. Recently some business visitors from Australia tried blatantly to curry favor by bringing a gift consisting of the 1992 Aussie gift set, even though I am pretty sure they had no idea I was a collector. What an accidental hit! And what a gift set! Theirs has no fewer than 56 pages, with not only full color, but spot varnished photographs that stand out beautifully, a gold embossed cover of much better quality than the U.S. book, not to mention a nice slip case and plastic envelope to protect that. Boy I hope they keep on currying every year! Another positive is that our book offers us needed education about these issues. As a case in point, the U.S. commemorated four famous Americans last year, but in my school days

they didn't take much notice of any of them. I need all the help I can get to recognize who these people were. But, on the downside, I see something of an economic issue for the financially distressed postal system. Personally, I buy the year set, flip thru the book for 3 minutes and throw it away. I've tried giving it to child and grandchild, but they seem unimpressed. I'm sure there are at least a few other "clods" like me that don't have the time to read, or space to store, this impressive book. So, wouldn't it save a tree, and save a buck, if the USPS sold the stamps at face, sans book, and charged a modest extra fee for those who do want the whole set up, mounts and all?

Long time readers of this space (i.e. members more than a year) will recall my search for the perfect, or even an adequate, edition of a stamp finder to help find all those world-wide issues that you just can't locate if you have memory cells like mine. Most of my member mail recommended finders that were 20 years old or more, my own was printed in 1954. Last fall the APS issued a new version but it is very small. Finally, Linn's comes to the rescue with their new "Stamp Identifier". At \$9.95 it seemed too good to be true. I haven't had time to get fully familiar with my copy, but it has helped me find album homes for several stamps that had me stumped before. To give you a brief but impartial book review I studied the entries under one letter in detail. I randomly chose "H". My 1954 finder had 26 entries under this heading, four of those were not in Linn's. Two of the missing entries turned up in later Linn's sections on Greek and Cyrillic words but "half-penny" on St. Christopher bi-sects and especially "Habilitado Para" seem like useful entries that are missing from the new edition. At that rate there are certainly still a few overlooked entries that keep this from being the perfect finder. But, the good news is that Linn's has fully 21 additional entries under "H" that the older finder is missing, meaning close to double the total useful entries. The \$2 APS Stamp Finder has 28 "H" entries including "Habilitado Para". By way of confirmation, Linn's offers us 17 "J"s to 12 and zero, 9 "Q"s to 4 and 5. "No 'J' s in the APS finder?" I hear you exclaim. Nary a Jhind or a Jugoslavija...turns out the 1992 APS issuance has no I, J or K entries which is clearly a major typesetting gaff that has probably been discovered and fixed months ago. So the "Linn's Stamp Identifier" is easily the best such book I am aware of and a true bargain if you are

one of those that needs occasional look-up assistance. You can order via phone on 1-800-448-7293. Tell 'em Dave sent ya'.

Another budding interest of mine is the combination of philately and autographs or material related to famous people. I am sure this is a well established branch of collecting, but I know virtually nothing about it. Over the years I have managed to save aside the following items. A 5 Sept 1942 cover addressed to Earl Warren when he was the Attorney General of Calif. before becoming Chief Justice; a package shipping label to Luther Burbank, Esq. with no visible date, franked with Chilean stamps of 1911 issue; an official White House envelope posted 2 Jan. 1934 thanking a dealer for sending President Roosevelt some covers for his collection, signed by M. A. LeHand, Private Secretary, obviously the famous "Missy" LeHand. Of course, like most worldwidlers, I have picked up a couple of stamps formally from FDR's collection with the little stamp on the back. I would like to hear from any of you who have picked up interesting covers or other items associated with famous people. If someone out there has some solid info on this, how about an article for *The Circuit*? Have a great summer! ...

Vice President's Report

by Ken Costlow (# 142)

Since January, packages of stamps, accessories, and philatelist's booklets have been mailed to Ben Franklin Clubs and other youth programs in Massachusetts, South Carolina, New York (2), Florida, Ohio, Georgia, Virginia, Tennessee, California and Missouri. These were in response to letters in *Stamp Collector*, *Linn's Stamp News*, and individual group leader requests. Two exceptionally nice thank you notes were received for the boxes sent, signed by each of the young collectors who benefitted from the contents. A steady flow of donations from new as well as renewing members has kept up with the demand, and I still have an adequate supply on hand.

NAPEX '93 held in Arlington, Virginia on June 4 - 6, had an exceptionally nice youth program. There was a separate room set aside with exhibits, games, literature and stamps available for young visitors, and was well attended.

Thanks to the efforts of members Carol Cervenka and Tom Fortunato, ISWSC continues to grow at a good rate!

Happy collecting! ...

Beginner's Column by Al and Mildred Feinberg (#361)

To hinge or not to hinge, that is the question.

Many, many years ago when I started to collect stamps at age 10, I bought packets of stamps at the Five and Dime store. For a quarter you got a whole envelope full of worldwide stamps. Most were off paper, some were mint, most used. I never thought about "never hinged" (NH) stamps. I hinged everything. It didn't make much difference to me because I knew I didn't have anything of value. I would collect stamps for perhaps a couple years and then lay them away because of other interests. When I was about sixteen years old, I found an old stamp album and again got interested. It was the years of the great depression and I had very little money to spend on stamps. I used to buy approvals from dealers like H.E. Harris and a few others that were popular at that time. I never read any stamp newspapers nor was I in a stamp club so I didn't know anything about the NH craze. When I was about twenty-five years old I started to buy

several weekly stamp newspapers. I soon discovered that NH stamps cost about twice as much as hinged but it never mattered to me. If I had a choice I would always buy used or mint hinged, preferring used stamps. I try to avoid cancelled-to-order stamps.

Getting back to whether to hinge or not to hinge, since I collect worldwide up to 1960, if I acquire any stamps that managed not to be hinged over a period of about 30 - 40 years then I will mount with Showgard mounts. I don't do this necessarily for the value. I guess I do it just to keep the stamps from having any hinge marks.

I would suggest using mounts such as Scott or Showgard to cover any stamps that have never been hinged with a value of about a dollar or more. I don't see any benefit to cover used or mint hinged. If one tries to mount all stamps in a collection, it can run into a lot of money.

Still entering our collection in the computer, hope to be finished in a few weeks. ...

Public Relations: Get Involved! by Tom Fortunato (#379)

As I write this, the RÓPEX stamp show in Rochester was just a month ago. Besides having an ISWSC meeting, the American Philatelic Society held their spring meeting during the weekend.

I was struck by comments from F. Barton Sellers, president of the 57,000 strong APS, and how they related to a smaller society such as ours. Every group needs input from its membership!

No one person can or should run an organization. Volunteers are the lifeblood of any group. Help from you is always needed. There are several society volunteers who wish to remain "behind the scenes" while helping the officers and managers. Others are better known to you. What can you help with?

Everyone can play a role. Consider writing an article for the Circuit; tell your friends or local stamp club about the ISWSC, writing to other members with similar interest, take part in a society program you've never tried before. You can make a difference.

If you're in the area, plan to attend the ISWSC's biggest meeting of the year. It will be held on Saturday, August 21 in Houston, Texas during STampsHow '93. Secretary/Treasurer Carol Cerverka will be hosting the meeting. Presently we know that Vice President Ken Costilov and *Circuit* editor Rita Kallal also plan to attend the show and meeting. I regret that I won't be able to attend, but we hope many other members are planning to attend -- Carol and others want to "See ya"

CTO Cost Info Sought

I have often wondered what percentage of face value the various Communist governments sold cancelled-to-order stamps for. I have never seen anything in the philatelic press on this. For example, what percentage of face did the East German government sell cancelled stamps for? Did they sell only in quantity and only to dealers or were collectors permitted to buy directly from the postal service? Does anyone have information on this? If so, how about an article for *The Circuit*? ... Harold J. Humm (#678)

OMNI Exchange

by Tom Allison (#42)

The OMNI Exchange is the official stamp exchange of the International Society of Worldwide Stamp Collectors. It is now in its ninth year of operation, and currently has over 115 active participants.

In 1992, these exchangers added stamps to their collections to the tune of over \$20,000.00 in catalog value, at a very minimum cost outlay. The only out-of-pocket expense is for postage and for blank books (which cost 3 for \$1.00).

There is no cash fee; only a 10% commission in catalog value which is assessed on stamps actually taken by other exchangers.

At the suggestion of several ISWSC members, and with approval of the editor Rita Kallal, we plan to run this column on a regular basis. It will bring news of the exchange to all ISWSC member, and will replace the OMNI NEWSLETTER which we have sent, off and on, to just the exchanger.

Presently, we have over 1100 books in inventory in our two divisions. The PINK Division is for stamps cataloging 20¢ and up, while the BLUE Division is for stamps cataloging 50¢ each and up.

In the last few months, we have welcomed a number of new exchangers including: Marian Poole #44, Rudy Paltauf #704, Ray Arnett #725, Norman Young #739, Randi Selehdar #741, Terry Collins #744, Sally Tunnicliff #764, John Vickers #821, Sylvia Edlebeck #874, and Scott Sadger #882.

Some of the areas which seem to be most in demand are Scandinavia, British Commonwealth, Western Europe, Japan, Thailand and South America. Less popular are early Great Britain, recent Germany and former Iron Curtain countries.

Find out how easy and economical it is to trade your duplicates for stamps you need. Send a SASE to manager Tom Allison, Box 252, Wilmette, IL 60091 for complete details. ...

New Dues Brings A Few Changes

The recent increase in dues from \$5 to \$8 has ISWSC offering an 8 month membership for new members who send in the \$5 amount. We hope the new brochure stating \$8 dues will be widely distributed, but until word gets around, applications received with the old payment will be honored for 8 months.

If you have sent out the old brochure to

friends, please advise them of the new rate if they plan on joining. While we wish we could extend the old rate to new members, it isn't feasible economically. If you have flyers on hand at the old rate, please destroy them and request new ones from Tom Fortunato, 42 Maynard Street, Rochester, NY 14615 USA, or make copies of the new one enclosed. ...