

The Cover Story

A Tale of Three Collections, Part II of III by Phil Fetting

Please keep in mind the recurring theme of this three part series is two-fold. First and foremost; don't try to figure the right or wrong way to collect, but instead do it the way that gives you satisfaction. The second is the hope that by sharing some of my experiences in purchasing a collection you can better prepare for that day that you or your representative disposes of yours.

This collection was formed by a retired successful businessman who was the classic “collect the whole world” type of individual. The main portion of the collection was 31 Scott Internationals. Additional items were a 5 volume MNH UN collection complete to 1994, a large amount of face U.S. postage in albums, glassines, zippy bags and loose, approximately 30 – 35 albums ranging from 1 that was packed full of w/w and the remaining ranging from empty to mostly empty. To top it off, like whipped cream on pie, were piles of loose w/w stamps off paper (**figure 1, on front cover**). I had been told that one dealer came to the house, took a look and left, saying it was too much to deal with. One further difficult consideration was that the transaction had to include removing everything philatelic in the room including empty albums, binders or envelopes.

The family was going to use the room for other purposes. The interesting part of this requirement was wading through the coin collections, piles of sea shells, Indian arrowheads and baseball memorabilia. I have to admit Bob & I stopped to enjoy the autographed photos of Willy Mays, Sandy Koufax and other greats of that time.

The room, maybe 10' x 10' was the former back patio enclosed in. It was jammed full with a desk, bookcases & chairs full of stuff, philatelic and otherwise. What little floor space leftover had piles of boxes and albums. The first task we had was to clear some working space and try to consolidate similar material. Trying to do this was like playing Chinese Checkers - to move one item you were left holding something else. It was impossible to complete this job, but at least we ended with a small space for each of us to work. I was trying to put some order to the miscellaneous albums and binders, making piles of U.S., W/W and empties. Bob tried to consolidate the postage and I had him check the internationals for overall condition as well as take a good look at Australia and Canada, two of his “special” countries. I also checked some of the internationals, the UN and took general note of all the piles and boxes that did not seem to fit anywhere else. For years every time I check an album with Great Britain included, I always check for GB 1, the Penny Black. Very few collections have one and neither did this one. It had TWO as shown in **figure (2) on the front cover!** While I identified this collector's interest as worldwide, it is also apparent that he had a great interest in Great Britain. **Figure (3) on the front cover**, shows some examples of his efforts to plate early GB definitive, which can be a challenge. The collection also had a large run of mint GB commemoratives, more so than for any other country in the collection.

This philatelist obtained his material from many sources. It was clear from the labels in stripped albums he was a frequent customer of a large national level dealer in Florida. Stamporama proved a major source from the multiple invoice pages showing thousands of purchases, mostly for very small sums. **Figure (4) on the front cover**, shows parts of invoices from Australia and the US purchases. I suspect his favorite method was trading with other collectors from around the world. The letters and notes dealing with trades indicated long trading relationships with other collectors all over the philatelic world. One of the neat things about being a dealer is to realize we are going to hopefully put all of this material back in the hands of new owners and let the magic continue! You might say “yes but you are going to make a lot of money from this collection”. Well, hopefully that is true to a point. Before you get dollar signs dancing in your mind, don't try to figure how much an hour you make on a deal like this. The time required to break down a collection of this type for resale makes it a labor of love, not profit. (Hint: if you want to become a successful collector or especially a dealer, marry another collector!)

What was the lesson to share from this purchase? You should let some responsible person, family or good friend, know what your collection is all about, including a realistic idea of its value. From talking to his widow and several adult children it is clear he was loved and everybody knew he was a collector of many things. However, my impression was that his coin collection was the only one that they had a real understanding of. Knowledge helps decide on how to dispose of it and ensure the dealer is honest. Finally, a comment about how this was collected. It was truly a remarkable collection as hopefully you could tell by my description. Now, what did we not find? Other than a bountiful supply of hinges and a set of Scott Catalogs so old they have been recycled, we did not find any tongs, watermark fluid or tray, color guide, magnifier, only a few glassines or any sign of reference books or philatelic publications such as Linn's. I cannot say that is wrong, I just don't understand the lack of those tools. In any event I wish I had met this gentleman, a man of many interests.

There was one other lesson but since it also pertains to the next collection I will share it then. Next – A 35 volume U.S. Collection that was not headed to a major auction house!

[Editor's Note: Part I appeared in the November/December 2015 issue and Part III will follow in February 2016.]

SORTING STAMPS???

I wonder if the last time you were sorting stamps you discovered, that with a little help, the task can have a different outcome.

As the container is emptied it looks like Prince is on a roll. (1) The stamps are spread out so that they can be "sorted". However it soon becomes clear that the stamps removed from the container are not the prime interest, but rather the container is. (2) The "sorting" task has been interrupted by his interest in the container. The next task is to find a way to get into the container. If his head will fit, maybe the rest will follow? Now as Prince works at finding a way to get as much of his body into the container it looks like the task will not be done. (3) So now it is back to the job of "sorting". (4) After checking out some to the stamps for "sorting" Prince then walks off. Remember sorting can be a job that can become tiring.

Next time you sit down to do some sorting, you could have the help of Prince!



Editor's note: We have three cats who thankfully allow us to live with them. Unlike Prince, none of our three Persians have shown even the slightest interest in helping me with my projects. However, recently when I was in the middle of being a collector and mounting some new material on pages, I had spread out on the work table about \$1,000 worth of material – and here comes one of my cats. J.J. was not even remotely interested in the stamps, he just wanted to say 'hi' to me -- so sitting in the middle of what I was working on was okay by him. I gently moved his hairy being off my treasures. I tried to talk to him, but that was pointless.....