

The Philatelic Communicator

Quarterly Journal of
Writers Unit 30, American Philatelic Society

Volume 39, Number 4, Whole Number 150

Fourth Quarter 2005

Writing Book Reviews

by Alan Warren

Editor Joe Foley has been urging me to do an article about writing book reviews but I have been reluctant to do so, as I feel I have no special training or expertise in this area. However, I can trace the roots of my interest in the subject to an assignment in my freshman English class in college, when the professor asked that we each write a book review. After turning in the results of my effort, I was surprised the next day to hear the professor read my review in front of the class, citing it as an example of how it should be done.

In addition to writing book reviews for philatelic periodicals I also wrote a few when I was working in a chemical research and development laboratory. These were usually on the subject of chemical health and safety and appeared in several technical journals.

I think the first requirement of a book reviewer is to have a genuine love of books. Although a modest library of one's own is an asset, it need not be an elaborate or extensive one. Being a philatelic literature judge also helps, as that activity develops skills in discerning the good and bad points about a book. The guidelines for philatelic literature judging are on the APS website.

STRUCTURE OF THE REVIEW

My preference is to begin the review with the essentials about the book to give the reader an idea of what the book is about, what it costs, and where it can be purchased. The title, author or editor, place and date of publication, and ISBN (international standard book number) are used by book dealers to locate a copy for sale to customers. I like to cite the physical dimensions of the book including size and number of pages so the reader knows that the item is a reference book for library shelving, or is a checklist that might be carried in your pocket through a show bourse to identify want-list material.

There is nothing as frustrating as seeing a review of a book in which one has a keen interest, but there is nothing about how to obtain a copy of the book. If it is available from the publisher directly (frequently a philatelic society) or the author, indicate that but also include the address, or

at least an email contact.

Binding is of interest to the user. If the book is available in both a perfect binding (an adhesive holds the pages together and also the usual soft covers) or with a spiral or comb binding (indicating it will lie flat when open), the buyer may prefer the latter if he intends to use the book frequently for reference.

A logical approach is to review the content in the order in which it is presented. Is there a key to abbreviations that appears up front or is it buried somewhere that is not obvious? Are appropriate credits given at the beginning? Is there a good table of contents? Is there a good introduction that describes the scope of the work? Do the sections or chapters appear in logical order or does the author jump around, suggesting a lack of organization?

If there are appendices and they seem important for the potential buyer to know about, show what they are. How are footnotes handled—at the bottom of the page? at the end of the chapter? at the end of the book? Is there a good bibliography documenting sources or leading the reader to further references on the topic?

CONTENT OF THE REVIEW

What is the book about? Is it a handbook, catalog, reference text, index, bibliography? Is it devoted largely to checklists or tables as opposed to written text? Sometimes the title does not always reveal the content. If it is a catalog, is it a priced catalog, i.e., showing values or at least giving some idea of scarcity using a scale of some sort? The reviewer should suggest the intended audience—beginner, casual reader interested in the topic, or specialist who is looking for a detailed study.

Is the book a retrospective of a popular topic and if so, does the author bring the information up to date and expand on it? Is there some important new interpretation of the subject or new conclusions? A book should not be a rehash of what went before but should add something new. If it is a translation from another language, has some effort been applied to correct errors in the earlier edition and to expand

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The Philatelic Communicator

ISSN 0147-3646

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The Quill

Joe Foley

Writers Unit 30, APS, publishes *The Philatelic Communicator* four times a year. A subscription to TPC is included with dues paid by members of the Unit.

Manuscripts are solicited on subjects of interest to writers, editors and publishers of all forms of philatelic literature. All submissions for publication, without exception, are subject to being edited. Opinions expressed in *The Philatelic Communicator* are those of their authors, and not necessarily of Writers Unit 30, APS, its officers, editor, publisher or agents. Letters received by the editor may be published unless labeled "Not for Publication." When possible, furnish copy, including letters, electronically (WordPerfect 8, RTF or Word). Include a printed copy as a control. All editorial matters must be handled with the editor.

DEADLINES—For receipt of copy by the editor:

First Quarter Jan. 15
Second Quarter April 15
Third Quarter July 15
Fourth Quarter Oct. 15

EVERY SILVER LINING HAS ITS CLOUD

The Monday following a very enjoyable visit to the APS Headquarters in Bellefonte, I made an appointment to see my doctor regarding a persistent cough. To make a long story short – the diagnosis is lung cancer. At this writing, there are still more tests before a prognosis can be made and the type of treatment decided. It's likely that normal activities will be curtailed. Gene Fricks a long-time member of the WU30 Council and former editor of *The Collectors Club Philatelist* has graciously agreed to step in as interim editor. Contact information for Gene is:

E. E. Fricks
25 Murray Way
Blackwood, NJ 08012
phone: 856 784-9226
email: genefricks@comcast.net

Please support Gene with nothing less than a deluge of outstanding manuscripts.

ACROSS THE EDITOR'S DESK

It seems like more speciality groups are making their journals available on the 'net. One of the latest I've seen is the New Jersey Postal History Society. A color scan of a cover or other item shows up very nicely and is certainly less expensive than color in hard copy. For an introduction, check out the group's Website at: <http://members.aol.com/njpostalhistory/phsindex.htm>

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Usually, about this time we publish a report on the circulation of stamp publications. This year, Council Member Lloyd de Vries promises a new approach. Lloyd advised that some journals will not publish their data until after this issue has gone to the printer—so stay tuned. Lloyd will have the story for us in the next issue. □

The devil himself always seems to get into my inkstand, and I can only exorcise him by pensful at a time.

—Nathaniel Hawthorne

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Writers Unit 30 has as its primary objective the encouragement and improvement of philatelic writing in all of its various forms. Calendar year membership dues, payable in advance in U.S. funds through a U.S. bank or Post Office are:

USPS Zip code address \$15.00

Canada & Mexico \$17.50

All other addresses \$20.00

Please report address changes to the Secretary-Treasurer as soon as known in order to avoid loss of issues.

The Philatelic Communicator is printed and distributed by Wilcox Printing & Publishing, Inc., Madrid, Iowa.

President's Message

by Peter Martin



THE WRITER'S UNIT #30
HALL OF FAME

As I mentioned in my third quarter column, the Writer's Unit is moving forward on many fronts. One of those areas is the preparation of guidelines for the WU#30 Hall of Fame. Our 2005 inductees were Robert Dalton Harris and Beverly S. King (1876-1935). Both are very deserving and have taken their place of honor among the 136

men and women who are now enshrined there.

However, a third nominee submitted by the Hall of Fame committee did not receive the required votes for admission. The reason: while the individual had a strong philatelic resume, his writing and editing credentials were weak. That action highlighted a long-standing problem with the selection process. There were no council-approved guidelines for the chairmen to use when nominating individuals for the HOF. Over time, each chairman used his own unwritten criteria for making HOF nominations.

A review of the HOF list on the back of the August Writer's Breakfast program reveals the names of many of the hobby's top writers and editors. Pick a name from the list and most of you will be able to cite a book, periodical or specialty area that is associated with that individual. Still, like any hall of fame, whether it is sports, entertainment, professional or otherwise, there are included names where you will need to scrutinize the biography to find the reason for their induction.

To rectify the current shortcoming, I will spearhead the effort to establish HOF guidelines and a complete nomination program and submit recommendations to the Council next year. Among the things that will be decided are:

Nomination Criteria

Currently, writing excellence; editing excellence; outstanding publishing contributions; and outstanding long-term contributions to WU#30 are under consideration. Are these appropriate? Should there be others?

Nomination Process

Who can nominate? How should nominations be submitted? What is the time line for the nomination process? Will the Council need a simple majority or two-thirds majority vote for induction?

HOF Committee

How many members? Should all or a majority be HOF members

HOF Recognition

Currently a certificate is issued to inductees. Should a medal or other award be created?

Your participation is invited. Contact me at:

pmartin2020@aol.com or write to POB 4503, Danbury, CT 06813.

WRITER'S UNIT #30 HALL OF FAME
2006 NOMINATIONS

This is a call for nominations for the Writer's Unit #30 Hall of Fame Class of 2006. Anyone may submit a nomination by writing or e-mailing the nominee's name and up to a two-page reason for the nomination, which should focus on the nominees writing and/or editing excellence. Nominations must be received by Feb. 28, 2006. Submit nominations by e-mail to: pmartin2020@aol.com (Subject: WU#30 HOF) or by mail to WU#30 Hall of Fame Nomination, POB 4503, Danbury, CT 06813. □

WRITER'S UNIT #30 COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

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WU 30 CRITIQUE SERVICE

Past president Charles J. Peterson operates the WU30 Critique Service. There is no charge for the service. Details are:

Periodicals—Submit the four most recent issues. Include postage equivalent to four times the first class mailing fee. Any unused amount will be returned. Critiques can be expected in about 30 days.

Books/manuscripts—Inquire before sending, with a brief description of the item. Please include a stamped, addressed envelope for the reply. The time element for a book or manuscript can vary depending on length, other similar requests at hand and other commitments.

All submissions & correspondence should be sent to Charles J. Peterson, Box 5559, Laurel, MD 20726, phone 301 776-9822, e-mail: cjp7777@aol.com. □

►► **Writing Book Reviews** (continued from page 1)
on the knowledge? The reviewer should be familiar with the field and especially with what has appeared in print before to know how much new information is brought out in the new book. Personal knowledge will enable the reviewer to discern errors in facts or conclusions.

How smoothly does the book read or flow? Is the handling of the language choppy or poorly edited? Do sentence structure and poor grammar get in the way of understanding the text?

Does the bibliography use accepted methods of citation or is there information missing such as place and date of publication, incomplete titles, and obvious errors?

PUBLISHING ASPECTS

Are the typeface and font size reader-friendly or are they obstacles that challenge the reader? Are there myriad typos or has the work been carefully edited? If there are typos in the text, then how carefully was the bibliography done? The reader's confidence level in periodical citations may lead to strong doubts about dates or volume or page numbers.

What about the illustrations? Are they placed in the appropriate area or does the reader have to go looking for figure numbers? Are they of good quality or are the images too light or too dark or too small to discern the markings or varieties?

More and more publications are appearing in electronic format such as on compact disc. The guidelines for evaluating content are the same as for print materials but user aspects should be reviewed such as ease of navigation and search capability.

Is there an index? This is not needed for some books that are catalogs or checklists in which the material is presented in some logical sequence such as chronologically. However, reference books really needing an index but lacking one deprive the reader of a very important tool for using the book.

Some European books have a brief table of contents placed at the end of the book. A table of contents belongs up front, and a table of contents and an index are two distinctly different tools.

Keep in mind that philatelic books are mostly a labor of love and are usually not moneymakers. If they are likely to be reprinted or updated within a few years, the authors need to know what they should do the next time around. However, many books may not be done again soon, if ever. Nonetheless, the author does have access to the critique services of experienced writers and editors such as Charlie Peterson and Barth Healey, whose services are mentioned in each issue of the *Philatelic Communicator*. Another excellent reference for book authors is James Negus' book

Philatelic Literature: Compilation Techniques and Reference Sources, published by James Bendon, Limassol, Cyprus in 1991.

If you like to write and love books, do your specialized society journal editor a favor and offer to review books so that other collectors can learn about what is new in the field. □

Literature Exhibition Calendar

Coordinators of Literature Exhibitions are encouraged to submit full information, including a prospectus, for these listings. Please contact the editor well in advance of the closing date for entries.

March 10-12, 2006

COLOPEX 2006, Veterans Memorial Auditorium, 300 West Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43062. Entry fee \$25, entries close January 27, 2006. Information available from Literature Coordinator, Box 20582, Columbus, Ohio 43220, email: literature@colopex.com, Website: www.colopex.com.

May 27 - June 3, 2006

Washington 2006, Washington Convention Center, Washington, DC. Entry fee \$55, entries have closed. For information consult the Bulletin at: <http://www.washington-2006.org/draob/bulletin.pdf>.

August 4-7, 2005

A.P.S. STAMPSHOW, Chicago, IL. Donald G. Stephens Convention Center, 5555 N. River Road, Rosemont. For information contact Ken Martin, APS, 100 Match Factory Place, Bellfonte, PA 16823, phone 814 933-3803 ext 218, fax 814 933-6128, email: stampshow@stamps.org, Website (which contains prospectus and entry forms): <http://www.stamps.org/StampShow/Intro.htm>.

November 17-19, 2006

CHICAGOPEX 2006. For information contact John Kevin Doyle, 5815 Lenox Road, Lisle, IL 60532-3138, email: doyle-stamps@att.net, Website: www.chicagopex.com. □

WRITING/LAYOUT MENTORING

Barth Healey, a senior staff editor at *The New York Times* and an accredited national and international literature judge, is ready, willing and able to review society journals and other publications and offer some constructive comments. He has also had extensive writing and layout experience. Send two or three recent issues to him at 86 Bar Beach Road, Port Washington, NY 11050-4029. (Supplying return postage would be a nice gesture.) □

Adam was the only man who, when he said a good thing knew that nobody had said it before him.

—Mark Twain

Writers' Forum at STAMPSHOW

WU30 president Peter Martin convened the forum at 11:00 a.m. on Friday of the show. Those in the audience were requested to introduce themselves. Peter then introduced the featured speakers and asked that questions be held until all had finished.

The first was Michael Schreiber, editor of *Linn's Stamp News*. Michael stressed the importance of a writer first identifying his audience and keeping that firmly in mind throughout the preparation of the article. *Linn's* audience is general encompassing the full range of collectors from the very basic to those that are greatly advanced.

The key to having a good release published by *Linn's* is to have the Who, When, Where and What very evident. From time to time, the "when" is missing, creating obvious problems. There should also be something significant in the article—something to create interest and distinguish this item from others that may have preceded it. Schreiber gave an example of a release that was really too bland—nothing to capture the interest of the reader. However a truly new development occurred and was added to it and the item was published.

He also noted that the staff usually handles most news items, but there are exceptions. A notable one was the exposure of fake FDCs that was written by a freelance author.

Next was Michael Baadke, editor of *Scott Stamp Monthly*. Michael reviewed the changes in the journal from tabloid to magazine format with some significant improvement in newsstand distribution. Writers for *SSM* should strive for clarity and if a technical term is to be used, it should be explained. Topical articles as well as a country survey, e.g., the recent one on Sweden, are welcome, as are articles on other philatelic subjects of general interest.

Baadke prefers to receive a printed hard copy draft as opposed to electronic format together with a photocopy of philatelic material that would be used for illustrations. Authors can expect a reply between four and six weeks after submission. Any substantial change will be reviewed with the author and the author will receive one copy of the issue carrying his article.

Charles Peterson, past president of WU30 and the editor of *Chronicle of Classic Issues* followed with remarks about some of the differences that are found in a highly specialized journal. He echoed the early remarks on the basics of a news story and added the importance of How & Why. One of the challenges is to develop a journal that will attract new members without dumbing down the

publication. Routine matters about membership and administration are treated in a separate publication and the society's Website, with the *Chronicle* exclusively treating philatelic subjects.

The most important aspect of a good research article is "to get it right!" The *Chronicle* has section editors and usually requires pre-publication peer review. Source citation is essential and the sources are checked. Peterson prefers to receive drafts in electronic format (generic such as RTF) with an accompanying hard copy. The standard for scans is 300 dpi or better.

QUESTIONS WERE THEN CALLED FOR

Question to Michael Baadke: I thought the previous efforts to sell through Barnes & Noble were not successful.

Answer: The old tabloid format didn't show well and was usually set horizontally on a shelf. The new magazine format is much more visible and is displayed upright with other similar magazines. We are pleased with the results to date.

Question to Michael Schreiber: How much lead time does *Linn's* require?

Answer: Usually about three or four weeks before the event. Make-up is thirteen days prior to cover date.

Question to Charles Peterson: What percent of your journal is advertising?

Answer: Usually about 18-20% in the *Chronicle*. Depending on the type of mailing, there are USPS regulations to deal with.

Question to Charles Peterson: How do you find authors?

Answer: We have been fortunate in having a number of writers submit material. The basic policy of the *Chronicle* is to only publish original research. However, we will work with an author who would like his material published subsequently in another journal and expect the author to reference to the initial appearance in the *Chronicle*. □

In stating as fully as I could how things really were, it was often very difficult and I wrote awkwardly and the awkwardness is what they called my style. All mistakes and awkwardness are easy to see, and they called it style.

—Ernest Hemingway

Producing and Writing a 1,240 Page Stamp Catalog

How Two Guys Did it by Themselves (More or Less)

by Richard Stambaugh

All it takes is time . . . and some motivation. Joel Hawkins and I were motivated. We have been consummate meter stamp collectors for most of our lives (we are both now hovering near age sixty). Joel has been president of the Meter Stamp Society for thirteen years, and I have been the editor of the Society's journal for more than twenty. During most of this time we worked with catalogs that were decades out of date. To solve part of the problem we wrote and published a U.S. specialized meter stamp catalog in 1994. We had never considered replacing the hobby's bible, the half-century old Barfoot & Simon catalog of world postage meter stamps, because it was simply too daunting. Still, our success with the U.S. specialized built up our muscles and led us to consider the possibility. This was in 1995, and that was when the idea of a new world book, the recently published *International Postage Meter Stamp Catalog*, was born.

We were not the first to have this idea. In the early 1970s, Charles Smith, a collector and friend of Werner Simon (of Barfoot & Simon), began work on a new edition. He never completed the task, and I became the owner of the unpublished handwritten manuscript when I bought Mr. Smith's collection in the 1980s. Both the 1953 Barfoot & Simon catalog and Smith's manuscript were quite detailed including all varieties of every stamp type they could find. This worked in the 1950s but by the 1970s there was too much information for a practical worldwide catalog and most likely overwhelmed Smith. The manuscript had developed into a confusion of insertions and pointers that was almost impenetrable. Its greatest impact was to confirm the need to simplify and condense the listings out of the massive amounts of data we had to work with.

How did we do that? Mostly by ignoring minor varieties and by grouping into one type stamps that differed only slightly from each other. Thus, we were able to organize an ocean of information into a relatively compact stream. On the other hand, to make the catalog as easy to use as possible, we decided to illustrate every stamp type we could (and at full size), so the space savings was probably nil.

Where did we find our data? We started by documenting our own considerable collections and

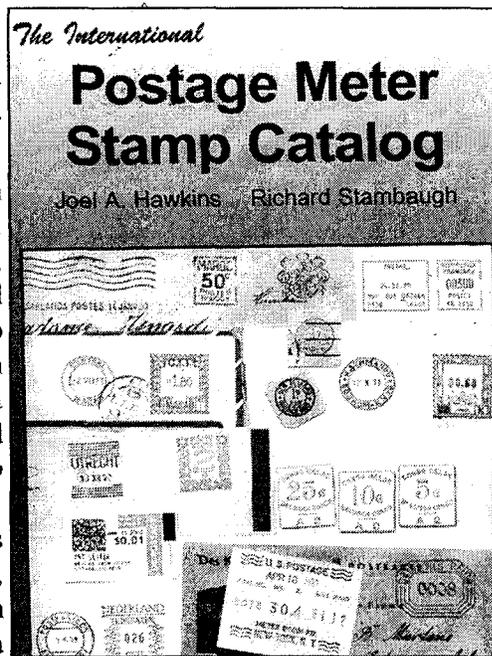
extending Smith's draft with our finds. We then contacted several collectors who also had large worldwide collections for their input. We were able to visit many these people and do much of the cataloging ourselves. In one case we ended up buying the man's complete holdings.

We bought or borrowed every single-country meter stamp specialized catalog we could find plus several other catalogs and books that contained meter stamp information. We merged it all into our draft. Once we had what felt like a fairly comprehensive product we contacted advanced single country and regional collectors around the world known to us and solicited help through meter stamp collecting societies in other countries. We sent portions of the draft to the specialists we found. They corrected our mistakes, added types and varieties new to us, gave us photos of stamps and in some cases the actual stamps if we lacked illustrations, and otherwise improved the draft through their expertise.

Despite all this help, we were on our own for most of the world's countries. Meter stamp collecting groups exist in only a half dozen nations. We found literature or specialists for fewer than one hundred countries. European and North American meter stamps are well documented, but the countries of Africa and Latin America, with some exceptions, have no advanced collectors that we could find and only the skimpiest of published meter stamp documentation. Our catalog is probably weakest in these countries, and over the next couple of years we expect readers to report plenty of new items and corrections — or as we like to call them, "gotcha's."

Philatelic agencies were no help at all. In more than one case agencies denied their countries ever had postage meters despite the several items in my collection. The meter manufacturers were also of no help. We found that if it did not involve a sale, they did not want to be bothered with requests for information or cooperation. We were able to find unofficial help from a small number of meter company employees who also happened to be stamp collectors.

Once it seemed that searching out more data became an exercise of diminishing returns, we began the organizing and polishing process. Most of you know how this is; it just



A.L. McCready Award for Philatelic Literature

J.E. (Ted) Nixon, president of The R.P.S.C. Philatelic Research Foundation has announced the establishment of a new philatelic literature award to be administered by the Foundation.

Nixon said "the A.L. (Mae) McCready Award will be made annually for the best philatelic research published during a given calendar year." Eligible publications will be handbooks, special studies, or annuals. The work must be a Canadian publication, a publication by a Canadian in another country, or a publication on a subject relating to what is now Canada published by any writer anywhere in the world.

Articles in magazines, auction catalogues, dealers' price lists and exhibition catalogues will not be eligible for this award.

Only publications in English and French will be considered. Evaluation will be conducted using criteria that will examine treatment of contents; originality, significance, and depth of research; technical matters; and presentation. The award will be selected by a panel of three members who will be appointed by the R.P.S.C. Philatelic Research Foundation.

Arthur L. McCready was one of Canada's foremost pioneers in philatelic literature. A newspaperman in eastern Ontario, he was editor of the *Cobden Sun* for thirty years. His major philatelic undertaking was the purchase of *Popular Stamps* in 1939. He turned what was little more than a stamp dealer's trade and price list into one of the country's most successful journals.

Between 1942 and 1947 when *The Canadian Philatelist* was born, *Popular Stamps* served as the R.P.S.C. journal. McCready also published several well known philatelic catalogues and handbooks. Charles J.G. Verge, President of The R.P.S.C. and a fan and promoter of Mr. McCready said "Mac McCready gave "unflagging service to philatelic literature, and to his worldwide list of subscribers which continues as a legacy for Canadian philatelists today."

A.L. McCready was inducted into the American Philatelic Society's Writers' Unit 30 Hall of Fame at a special breakfast held during CAPEX '96 in Toronto.

The award will consist of a specially prepared sculpture mounted on a plaque. The first award will be made next year for material published during 2005. Prospective award nominees will need to send one copy of their publication to the McCready Award Committee, c/o R.P.S.C., P.O. Box 2788, Station 'DI, Ottawa, ON K1P 5W8. □

took us years because of the huge volume of data. We ran into some problems that would not be an issue with a smaller project. For example, we wanted to include the country name on each page in the header or footer. Perhaps with different software this would not have been a problem, but in Microsoft Word it seemed to require a separate file for each country, and the prospect of assembling and paginating error free more than 250 separate files killed the idea. During this extended period we still found new items that had to be worked into the draft. In many cases we were able to adjust the listings so an insertion did not affect more than one page, but often a new item forced the recasting of page after page of listings with text from the bottom of one page being bumped to the top of the next.

When we started the writing phase, affordable computer memory and speed did not allow us to scan in all the stamp images. This changed before we were done, but by then it was too late. We spent hours, days, weeks, verily months cutting out and gluing in each image by hand and then photocopying all the pages. Care was needed to position each image evenly and then we had to white out the shadows from the cutouts that would appear in the photocopy. Although numbingly tedious, I don't know if scanning more than six thousand images and fitting them electronically into a digital document would have been any less torturous, perhaps less messy.

The images themselves also required much work. I purchased a digital laser printer with superior lighting control to aid in this process. When necessary we made further adjustments using correction fluid, razor blade and erasers to remove over-cancels, handstamps and other extraneous markings. I found this faster than using Photoshop that I tried. Perhaps someone more adept with the software would have had a different experience. It was still enormously time-consuming but also surprisingly satisfying to see messy stamp images emerge clear and clean.

Finally, ten years after we began the project we found a printer and sent them tons of money plus the finished draft. A month later we had a garage-full of books that we now hope will shrink rapidly over the next few years. Don't try this if you are more than eighty.

Ed.: The *International Postage Meter Stamp Catalog* was reviewed in the Second Quarter issue of *The Philatelic Communicator*. □

There is probably no hell for authors in the next world—they suffer so much from critics and publishers in this one.

—C. N. Bovee

Writing, Writing and More Writing

I recently invited several prominent writers who keep very active commitments to share their thoughts and experiences. The responses follow and provide some very fine guidance and ideas.

JEF

The Wrong Way to Write Right

by Janet Klug

I'm flattered to be invited by editor Joe Foley to participate in a new series of articles about how philatelic writers write, and specifically for this column I was delegated to write, how I write about philately.

This got me to thinking about something I had never actually thought about before. What processes do I use? How do I write an article? What useful advice could I give others who want to write about our great hobby?

After a lot of angst-filled soul searching, I have come to the conclusion that I have been doing it all wrong, and yet somehow I manage to crank out something to make my deadlines, usually with some breathing room to spare. Occasionally I get a nice letter from someone who tells me they enjoyed something I wrote. Go figure.

WRITING METHOD

As an example of how I approach writing in an oddly convoluted manner, let me explain my present surroundings. I am not sitting at my computer. Yes, I know it would save time if I was. I have tried composing an article directly using word processing software and any one of my three trusty computers, but I don't find this to be satisfactory. For me, it hampers creativity. I actually like drawing the words out on a page. I like editing on the fly by crossing out words or beginning a new thought where I please and then drawing an arrow to where it belongs in the finished text. I enjoy doodling in the margins and fiddling with phrases until I like the way it sits on the page.

So I use a yellow legal pad. I sit in my favorite recliner and scribble away. My recliner is certainly more comfortable than my desk chair even if I occasionally have to share it with one or more cats. Oh yeah, and I occasionally also nod off.

In an average year I scribble my way through eight yellow legal pads and I never rip out a page to start over. Every phrase, sentence, and paragraph is worth saving. Sometimes the unused prose will be needed elsewhere, but most of the time it will be saved as examples of what not to do.

I work best in a quiet house, but most of the time the house is not especially quiet. Many of my articles – indeed

all of the ones of which I am most proud – are written in the middle of the night when the house is still.

Before I start writing an article, I will outline it. If it is an especially complicated subject, I will do a very thorough outline. Most of the time I will just jot down the main subjects I want to cover in more or less the order I expect to present. The finished article may end up in a different order, but by having my outline, I know I won't leave out something important.

I get my ideas from everywhere. Sometimes a letter or e-mail from a reader will spark an idea for a column. Occasionally current events will prompt a philatelic idea. Recently I was listening to a radio interview on the local National Public Radio station while I was doing my daily four-mile walk. The guest was a rapper whose life story was surprisingly compelling and he was very articulate. I listened to this man explain how he learned to rap by emulating the oratory of speakers he admired. All while I was walking, I thought about emulating others' successful styles, so when I got home I wrote an article about stamp twins – stamps that borrow design elements from other stamps, as differentiated from joint issues that are deliberate. So I guess a rap artist was my muse that day.

Most often, however, my ideas for articles come from my own curiosity about something in my collection. I figure if I am puzzled about something, maybe somebody else is as well. And if not, at least I have satisfied my own curiosity. Sometimes I do draw a blank and can't think of anything I want to write about. If I am not real close to my deadline, I just wait it out. If I am close to the deadline I fetch a worldwide album and blindly open it to a page and then take something on the page and write about it. This has had some surprising results, because I sometimes find myself writing about subjects of which I have absolutely no knowledge. But that's OK, too. I can take the readers step by step through the process of how I found out about the stamps from North Ingermanland or what the Gurkhas were doing in Malaya in the 1950s.

I don't worry too much about spelling, grammar, and style. I do reread my writing before submitting it to my editors, but I trust they will do their job and make me look good in print. I find most editors to have been gentle to my prose. My voice and style still come through. I am a fairly casual writer and I go off on odd tangents sometimes because that's the way I think. My editors let me do this, but I try not to overuse the privilege. Once a year I read Strunk & White's *The Elements of Style*. Sooner or later it will sink in. The best thing in the whole book is this one piece of advice: Omit unnecessary words. I try to do that. Honest.

These days all of the articles I write are delivered electronically to the editor. I use MS Word, as cumbersome a piece of software that has ever been created. It is nowhere near as intuitive as my preferred but no longer supported Ami Pro software. I use Word because it is ubiquitous, and not because I like it.

Once I have completed the scribbles in my yellow legal pad, I usually let an article rest for a day or two. Then I sit at the computer and type away. I type quickly and accurately, but I do have my word processing software set to correct typos and misspellings on the fly. Once it is saved on the computer, I will go back and revise and polish the piece until I am satisfied with it.

Unless otherwise instructed, I send scans of the illustrations that I make on my Cannon scanner. The editor will tell me his preference, but usually 300 dots per inch jpg or bmp files are requested. I might be able to accommodate something fancier, but if not, I can send the illustrative materials for the editorial staff to scan.

HANDY REFERENCES

My personal library contains several good general philatelic references. Those I use most often are:

Fundamentals of Philately by L.N. Williams

Stamp Collectors Encyclopedia by R.J. Sutton

The Stamp Atlas by Wellstead, Rossiter & Flowers

Stamps: Facts & Feats by James Mackay

I also have the complete run of *Billings Philatelic Handbooks*, which are dated but useful, and a thirty-year run of the *American Philatelic Congress Books*. I have about thirty shelf feet of other philatelic works for my own collections that prove useful for writing from time to time. What I don't have I can usually borrow from the American Philatelic Research Library.

I have some general reference works that are useful. These include *The Encyclopedia of World History* edited by Peter Stearns, *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, *Oxford's Companion to Military History*, several atlases, *Webster's Geographical Dictionary*, and *Webster's Third Dictionary*. These added with the multitude of data you can Google up on the World Wide Web satisfy most of my needs for facts and fact checking.

The librarians at my local public library have become trusted and helpful friends. I have found museums all over the world to be both courteous and helpful when I explain my projects to them and share any research I do that is useful to them. People are universally generous with their help when treated with respect.

Editor Joe Foley asked me if I keep articles in reserve. I wish I could! Life would be simpler. I write two articles each month for *Linn's Stamp News* (Refresher Course), quarterly articles for *Scott Stamp Monthly* (Down Under),

a monthly president's column for *American Philatelist*, and assorted odds and ends as the spirit moves me for a multitude of philatelic societies I belong to. It would be a great comfort to have a few spare columns lying in wait for those odd occasions when I can't think of a thing I want to write about....and it's due tomorrow, damn it! God bless those editors who come to me and say, "Janet, will you write about the cause and effect of the Peloponnesian War as illustrated on postage stamps and it is due by February 4!" I not only have a preordained subject, but a date when I can stop thinking about it and move on to something else.

SUGGESTIONS FOR NOVICE WRITERS

Do I have any suggestions for novice writers? Sure. Two, in fact.

Suggestion Number One: Read voraciously. Read fiction, nonfiction, philatelic works, periodicals, the backs of cereal boxes and ads on busses. Read everything everywhere. Become a sponge. Be critical about what you read and figure out why you like or dislike certain styles. Ponder why some of the stuff you are reading is interesting, even if the subject is not. Emulate the good, just as the rapper did.

Suggestion Number Two: Write. Go ahead....just do it! Stop procrastinating. Write about your favorite stamp or cover. Submit it to the editor of your local stamp club newsletter or the specialist society you belong to. The editor will most likely keel over in a dead faint from the surprise of receiving an article from someone that did not require a plethora of demeaning begging, pleading and bribery.

When you have finished writing your first piece, write again. And again. Write letters to the editor of philatelic publications. Write about the first postmarks or post office of your hometown for the local historical society. Write about a first day of issue ceremony you attended for your local newspaper. Some of these won't get published, but write them anyway for the practice and joy of writing. Writing is fun.

Trust me....

The Challenge of Writing Frequently-For The Philatelic Press

by John M. Hotchner

"Mere mortals work from nine to five. A writer works while he's alive." While I don't know the author of this gem, I do know the feeling described. It makes it easier that I enjoy writing, rarely fall into the angst pit where the frightened writer stares at the blank page waiting for inspiration and hoping, praying that his muse will wake

before the arrival of the next deadline. If anything, I'm blessed with more ideas than I have time to translate to paper.

FREQUENCY

So what does "Frequently" mean for me: Since 1976 I have written for *Linn's Stamp News*; first monthly, then twice a month, and since 1986, weekly, with a focus on 20th Century U.S. philately and the dynamics of collecting. From 1977 through 1995, I wrote a twice-a-month column on the dynamics of running stamp clubs for the late lamented *Stamp Collector*. From 1983 to 1992, when it was "de-funded," I wrote and edited *Stamp Fun* and *Leader Feature*, the newsletters for kids and teachers involved in the USPS Ben Franklin Stamp Clubs nationwide.

Currently besides *Linn's*, I edit and write for *U.S. Stamp News* published monthly by John Dunn; edit and write for *The Philatelic Exhibitor*; do a monthly column on U.S. philately for Michael Rogers' monthly newsletter, do a column for the Errors, Freaks and Oddities Collectors Club quarterly journal, do a column for the sporadically issued Virginia Philatelic Federation's *VPPF Forum* and contribute pieces to other magazines and newspapers as requested or I'm moved. For occasional fun, I edit book manuscripts for friends.

The point is that philatelic writing is not a sometime thing for me. As a constant presence in my life it is something like a garden that requires attention of some sort each day to keep things neat, to prevent the mind from being overgrown with weeds, and to be constantly harvesting fully formed new ideas, and planting new ones to germinate.

For purposes of prompting content for this piece, Editor Foley has asked several questions, and to keep things neat, I will answer them primarily with regard to my *Linn's* weekly column "U.S. Notes," though other thoughts may creep in.

GETTING STARTED

First let me say that I am a second generation philatelic writer. My dad, Howard Hotchner, was a senior staffer for the Office of War Information during the Second World War, and when it morphed into the Voice of America, he made that a career, retiring with twenty-eight years of service. Always one to show initiative, he and a friend, Bill Miller, created the Voice of America Stamp Club, which ultimately numbered many hundreds of thousands around the world as registered members, with untold additional millions of listeners who could not, or dared not write to VOA. If you never heard of him, it is because by law, VOA did not and does not broadcast within the United States, but he was well known abroad as the writer and announcer of the VOA Stamp Club's weekly program, which focused on

the stories behind U. S. stamps; especially new issues and how they reflected the best of American history and society.

From Dad, I learned the mechanics of writing, the lore of the hobby, and saw his joy in the product. I began my writing career by editing a local club journal. After three years of that I was possessed of lots of opinions and saw no reason why I should not seek to share them with *Linn's* readers, since it was the biggest and best of the philatelic periodicals. Looking back, that was clearly ambition run amok. However, Ed Neuce, then *Linn's* Editor, looked at my samples and said "yes" to a monthly column on the philosophy of collecting.

From the start I determined that I wanted to involve the readers in the project. Even today you will find that I often ask readers for their opinions, information on obscure material that has surfaced, and of course my monthly cartoon caption contests. It didn't take long to build up a loyal readership, and they are the source of about half the content of columns. They continually write with answers to previous questions and new questions about odd things they have found.

The other half of the content comes from diligent searching of three sources: dealer stocks at shows, the content of a dozen or so second level auctions where one is likely to find the weird but inexpensive and from working on my own collections. Suffice it to say that I have enough material for several years into the future. Yet I keep looking; and I jealously guard my shopping time at shows because of the need to find things to give context to subjects in process, as well as to find interesting stories to add to the stockpile of pending material.

PROCESS

Material on its way into "U.S. Notes" is stored in folders labeled with a subject. No folder is ever closed until its subject is written up and becomes part of a "U.S. Notes" column.

For instance there is a developing folder on Free Postage for the Blind, and another on newly discovered plate varieties. There are perhaps 150 of those folders in which I gather examples, literature references, Internet and other research, reader correspondence, etc. Additional examples, different examples, more information, associated material - all are eagerly sought. When a folder achieves critical mass, I will turn it into a "chunk."

What, you may ask, is a "chunk?" Reading "U.S. Notes" you will see that each week's column is made up of between two and four subjects. Each subject is drafted as a separate item, or chunk. My editor at *Linn's* until recently Rob Haeseler, and now Jay Bigalke, selects from among the available chunks using criteria such as relatedness, variety

of material, and length. I try to have between ten and twenty-five chunks sitting with Jay at all times.

The process for drafting a chunk starts when I think I have enough in a folder. Then, it is a matter of finding time. Most of my drafting is with pen and paper; which allows me to draft on airplanes, waiting for a haircut, sitting outside enjoying a weekend day at home, or wherever else I may happen to be. A summer week at the beach last July was worth forty-three drafted chunks, an average of about five and a half a day – perhaps a total of about six hours work a day. Usually these will be incomplete drafts, requiring some filling in of blanks when I can access books in my library, the Internet, or my own collection to be certain I m provide needed illustrations.

Drafts go in a box next to the computer, and as time permits, I type finals, which will go to *Linn's*, along with the material to be illustrated, and cutlines for the illustrations. Though I propose headlines, usually my editor comes up with that. It is always a surprise to open an issue and see the headline. Truth to tell, it is sometimes a surprise to read the article. There is a two-month minimum tag time between writing and publication, and once written I “disremember” what I’ve done. Reading the chunks as they reach publication I am sometimes struck by a feeling that something has come through me rather than from me.

Back to Joe’s questions. I could send the copy to *Linn's* electronically, and sometimes do, but for the most part it goes in with attachments by Express Mail. I provide nearly all my illustrations, and *Linn's* does the photography. I am pleased to say that in nearly thirty years, nothing has ever been lost in the mail.

OBJECTIVES

Another of Joe’s questions is “what writing style references” I use. The answer is none. *Linn's* has certain style rules that I try to keep in mind; but I know if I forget, my editor will remember. Rather I try to keep my eye on what I want the column to accomplish:

- Provide enough variety and depth to interest the many types of *Linn's* readers from young to old, newcomer to experienced, and collector of classic stamps to modern postal history.
- Encourage readers to delve more deeply into U.S. philately.
- Use *Linn's* reader base to solve U.S. philatelic puzzles such as the origin of some Cinderella, how such-and-such a variety could have come about, or the meaning of a specific but obscure postal marking. In this way, I hope to be adding to the permanent body of philatelic knowledge.
- Encourage *Linn's* readers to buy and utilize the wide range of philatelic literature.

- Encourage *Linn's* readers to join and enjoy local stamp clubs and the wide range of national specialist societies.
- Where I have specialized knowledge or experience, try to help readers understand how, for instance, the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee process works, and its considerations; or what it is like to be on the dealer’s side of the bourse table.
- Advocate positions and try to sway philatelic public opinion.

To do all this requires converting the complicated into easy-to-understand text; this despite the fact that most of the items discussed are not items that the average collector will be familiar with or have seen.

To be able to identify and explain the complicated, I have a philatelic library including both books and runs of society journals, some runs of auction catalogs and an extensive clipping file. If I can’t find what I need in the library, I usually turn to the American Philatelic Research Library, But this is not enough. Since I also deal with the subjects of stamps, an encyclopedia set is supplemented by a decent sized American history shelf, and specialized volumes on things like the history of sports records, a tome containing the biographies of every member of Congress since the founding of the Republic, and much more. Increasingly, I am finding that I can find about 80% of the facts I need if I can find the right Internet site.

So, that’s the package. If I have not answered a question you wonder about, let me know and I’ll do so.

ADVICE FOR NEW WRITERS

Joe asked one last question: “Suggestions for novice writers?” How much more space can I have? That is probably an article by itself. As a generality, I would pass along a few lessons I’ve learned:

- The more philatelic writing you do, the easier it gets.
- Getting started is the hardest part, but if you find a good mentor, or editor, and don’t have too thin a skin, it gets much easier, rapidly.
- To start with, choose things to write about that you know about or have informed opinions about before you start to write. When you can do that you can start to delve into the use of writing as a means of thinking through your theories and opinions.
- Finally, write responsibly: Check your facts; Make sure you understand the issues and other opinions when you write about your own opinions; Don’t guess; Don’t editorialize without labeling what you are doing as such.

Master these tenets, and you are well on the way to a productive and informative career as a philatelic writer. It will be fun. And you will learn more than you teach. You

will also learn humility, because there is far more to learn than any one person can. There are thousands of readers out there who are willing to teach you! On the whole I have found *Linn's* readers to be gracious, helpful and possessed of a vast storehouse of knowledge. It is only the odd attitude problem that crops up. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to have the space that *Linn's* gives me each week. It is a marvel to me that they actually pay me to fill it!

Columns

by Les Winick

I decided to check on my writing habits for the past years. My first weekly column, "The Insider," appeared in *Linn's* in the issue of June 6, 1983, and I haven't missed a deadline. That adds up to approximately 1,190 columns. Please check that out, math is not my strong suite. [not bad though, Ed.]

That includes my year-long stint with Ameripex '86 and a two-week stay in the hospital when I had a heart attack. Here is an interesting side bar on my hospital visit. The doctor told my wife to call our children and make arrangements with a funeral home for that night. The nurses wrote "Lazarus" on the top of my chart. I make it a point to see that doctor whenever I am near that hospital; just to let him know I'm still around. I couldn't take the time to die, I had too much writing to do. (Tip for novice writers: always try to get a tidbit of interesting related information in your article. It gives it a "personal" touch.)

SOURCES

Basically my information comes from readers and my philatelic reading. I currently have a four-inch stack of mail, with ideas and comments. Incidentally, I've met a great many friends through my columns.

As far as philatelic references, I maintain my own library, but also use the Collectors Club of Chicago and the APRL facilities. However, I mainly contact my network of friends for information. A collector of a specialized subject has an unbelievable amount of information. Dealers have also been very helpful, and I think that I bless Google every day. My editor at *Linn's* is a huge help in verifying my material. They do it very well.

Currently, I use a computer exclusively. The columns are sent via the Internet and I am in the habit of insisting on a confirmation of receipt from my editor. I find that I must print my column, and read the printed page, before sending it to the publication. It's amazing how many mistakes I make that simply do not get caught via the computer screen.

There is a wide-open field for novice writers. Write about the subject that you are most familiar with. Check the Internet. The Lloyd de Vries website is a constant source of material. Take your collecting specialty and write about it for the non-philatelic journals. Sure, you will get turned down a lot, but eventually you will break through.

Dave Kent's World

by David A. Kent

Joe Foley asked me to write a few words (as if any writer could keep to a few words) on what it's like to write about philately "on a very frequent basis." An article I recently read about World War II correspondent Ernie Pyle said that he wrote five 1,000-word columns a week, a stint of endurance that I can't match. Nevertheless, my writing career has thus far lasted a decade longer (his was cut short by a Japanese bullet during the battle for Iwo Jima), and I suppose two or three articles a week can be considered "frequent" in the world of philatelic writing.

GETTING STARTED

Although I don't have the journalism degree that other members of my family earned, I've been involved with newspapers and journals since grade school, on through college and into philately as an adult. I began writing articles for specialty philatelic journals in the late 1960s, and in 1972 assumed the editorship of the newsletter of the ATA's Americana Unit. Although I eventually passed that torch to other editors, I still write a regular column in that journal, a series that now must top 200 in number. In 1980 I took over the weekly stamp column in *The Hartford Courant*, and through careful effort have managed to keep that "job" as well. The column was changed to biweekly in 1999, and simple arithmetic says that this series must number some 1,150 columns by now. I am proud of the fact that in twenty-five years I have never missed a deadline, despite the personal and family crises that everyone faces. From discussions with others, I suspect that I may be the last of the big city stamp columnists.

John Dunn is a longtime friend who was aware of my experience in philatelic writing. When he purchased *Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News* in 1989 he asked me to write columns for him on topical collecting, which we call "Topical Highlights." That series (the latest was number 112) was inspired by the fact that I am a longtime member (gosh, fifty years now!) and a past president of the American Topical Association. This series soon evolved primarily into reviews of new issues from around the world,

organized by topic. In 1993 we agreed to expand my responsibilities to covering general world new issues in a weekly column titled "Dave Kent's World" (few, I suspect, have realized that the title is a pun). These new issue reports have progressed through various formats, and in 2000 (after John acquired *Stamps* magazine and merged it with *Mekeel's* under the name *Mekeel's & Stamps*) we added the "New Issue of the Week" feature, highlighting one special issue each week (some have not been particularly "new"). I write occasional other articles for John as well. I am faithful about clipping my articles and filing them away (as photocopies on acid-free paper), but I resist the temptation to count them all. However, I suspect that I have published more than a thousand articles and columns in *Mekeel's* over the past decade and a half.

WRITING IN THE GENERAL PRESS

The column in *The Hartford Courant* is now published on Tuesdays, after at least a half century as a Sunday feature (a blow, as the Sunday circulation is higher). I submit the column six days in advance. The format of the page on which it appears is tightly fixed, and what I send must fit into the space allotted. Allowing room for the headline (which is written by the staff) and picture (each column must have one), there is only space for about 450 words. Needless to say, it can be a challenge to provide much of a view of philately in that space. I consider newly issued stamps appropriate for a newspaper column, U.S. stamps first, followed by Canadian and United Nations. Given the prolific issuing schedules of those countries, I seldom have room for foreign new issues in the *Courant* except at Christmas time. I did make an exception last year when Poland released a stamp picturing Father Lucjan Bojnowski, the Polish priest who emigrated to America and founded Sacred Heart Church in New Britain, Conn. As president of the Hardware City Stamp Club of New Britain, I knew I could not ignore this stamp! (An article with local interest such as this is also a strong argument that I can't be replaced by a syndicated column.)

I believe that local stamp club meetings and shows in my circulation area are important, and make considerable effort to gather information on meeting schedules and show plans. Every column includes a section on local philatelic events for the next two weeks. I also highlight any first day ceremonies and other events of philatelic interest that may take place within reach of central Connecticut.

WRITING FOR THE PHILATELIC PRESS

My working arrangement with John Dunn provides for a Monday deadline, although he doesn't actually put each issue to bed until Friday, giving some leeway if we discover something that needs revision. The New Issue of the Week is always planned for that specific issue. We are most

pleased when we can tie it to something that's in the news at the same time. This Fall, for example, I selected for a late September issue new stamps from Spain picturing children's television puppets named Los Lunnis, which we ran at the time that the U.S. Muppets stamps were released. Not every column can be a gem, of course, and there are weeks when we are obviously scratching for something to highlight.

I also submit three or four short pieces for "Dave Kent's World" each week, which John uses as space permits. It is in these brief articles that my interest in topical collecting becomes most obvious, for I seldom feature ordinary definitives, and prefer releases with greater human interest, whether it be the background story of the subject, a current event connection, or simply a compelling design. I don't dwell on technical details, but I do often mention the stamp designer, for I admire their skills in creating meaningful pieces of art in such small spaces. On the other hand, I'm not afraid to point out when a designer's efforts simply didn't work.

We gave up years ago trying to chronicle all world new issues in the limited space available in *Mekeel's & Stamps*. We do try to provide wide coverage in terms of geography, subjects and designs. I make certain assumptions about our audience: they are predominantly middle-aged or older men, well educated, with broad interests and knowledge about the world. They also know quite a bit about philately, so I can mention the "Prexies" or the French "Sower" stamps in passing without explaining what they are.

We try to keep a sense of fun in what we publish, believing that people take up hobbies for pleasure, a private refuge from the cares of the world. We don't avoid controversies, and criticism is certainly offered when justified, but for general articles we prefer a lighter touch and even a bit of humor when the subject offers the opportunity. My goal is the reader who puts the magazine down thinking "I never knew that," and perhaps even with a slight smile on his face.

SOURCES

Gathering the material for these columns has become a major problem in recent years. There was a time when postal administrations showered stamp columnists with press releases, photographs, magazines and newsletters, even free stamps and covers in the hopes that the writers would use the material in their journals. Those days are long gone, as more and more postal administrations cut public relations budgets to the bone and skimp (foolishly, in my opinion) on publicity. The United Nations Postal Administration announced last year, for example, that it would no longer provide any publicity material to writers, who are now expected to remember to look at the UNPA

website for news of new stamps. It doesn't work, of course — "out of sight, out of mind" is really true. The Dutch post office finally replied to my repeated requests for new issue information with a rude one-line letter saying "look at our website." (I did — the TPG Post site is entirely in Dutch, which I cannot read, and the graphics are poor). Similar letters to the German postal administration were eventually answered with a reply that "times have changed" and they no longer provide English translations of their press releases. I can download the announcements from the Deutsche Post website, but German is a notoriously difficult language to translate, and the translation program I bought for my word processor doesn't do a very good job. Austria now expects me to use their website as well, where the announcements are at least in English and the graphics are decent. The lovely color photographs from Sweden have been replaced by a website for journalists with high-resolution graphics of the stamps, which are at least suitable for a newspaper. Graphics posted on most commercial websites only have a resolution of seventy-two dpi, while we consider 200 to 300 dpi the minimum suitable for newsprint. The list of "problem" countries goes on and on.

I remind myself, however, that I am writing for my readers, not postal administrations. It is ironic that the Internet, which poses very serious competition to postal systems, has become the primary source of material about new stamps. All the press releases I receive from the U.S. Postal Service now arrive by email, both text and graphics. The same is true of communications from the postal services of Greece, Israel, San Marino and Spain. Because of the lack of information from the issuing authorities, I spend hours on the Internet searching the websites of foreign post offices and other sources looking for intriguing new issues on which I can report, usable images of them, and background information.

The Internet has become a giant encyclopedia where you can research just about any subject you can imagine, even the truly obscure topics on some foreign stamps. It's much bigger and better than my *Encyclopedia Britannica* (purchased, annoyingly, in 1989 just before the old Soviet Union broke up). However, one must use care in believing what's posted on the Internet, where there are no experts to make sure that what is published is actually true. Over the years I've become skilled in using the Internet search engine Google, and have also developed a sixth sense on which websites can be trusted.

I do maintain a dead-tree-based reference library. In addition to several shelves of philatelic references and the *Britannica*, it includes a modern college dictionary along with several foreign language dictionaries, a thesaurus, *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, a world almanac, art, literature and music references, and some sports record

books. I've given up on investing in atlases, and rely on the Internet for current geographic and political data. A book on movies allowed me to expand Greta Garbo's filmography beyond what the U.S. and Swedish post offices mention in their press releases, and I actually reread parts of *Ulysses* (untouched since college days) so I could write a meaningful discussion of new Irish stamps picturing James Joyce.

I have a copy of Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*, but seldom refer to it after all these years. Typographical style elements such as italics, boldface and underlining are not a concern since I cannot transmit them to my clients. They are moot for *The Hartford Courant*, anyway, since the paper's rule for all three is simply "never."

COMPUTERS

I rely heavily on computers for my writing and publishing. I spent my professional career as a programmer for one of those big insurance companies in Hartford, and purchased my first home computer back in 1984 (a Tandy Model 2000, with MultiMate as a word processor). I have upgraded regularly since then, and today use WordPerfect for writing. People praise Microsoft Word for its text formatting abilities, but the clients to whom I submit my writing do not use Microsoft software, and formatting is exactly what I *don't* want — it embeds hidden codes in the text that interfere with the functioning of their publishing software. I'm not entirely pleased with WordPerfect, however. The latest version has confused the thesaurus with a dictionary, and any writer will tell you that they are not the same thing. I still struggle with finding new ways of saying "issued" and "released," and envy sports writers for all the various techniques they have found for saying won or lost.

In modern word processors Spell Check is always on, and I appreciate the "Quick Correct" function as my typing skills decline. The grammar checker is of less use. It can't grasp complex sentence structure, part of the dumbing down of American writing, gets hopelessly confused about plurals, and wants to add a superfluous "a" or "the" all the time, both of which are overused today. Worst of all, it always assumes that "stamp" is a verb, which it never is in my writing.

I submit articles for both journals electronically, stripped down to generic ASCII format. I transmit the column for *The Hartford Courant* directly into their mainframe computer using communications software and identification codes they provided. I send the graphic of the stamp to the office by email (I haven't actually been to the *Courant* office in years). The articles for *Mekeel's* are also sent as an email attachment, once again in ASCII format because John Dunn uses Macintosh equipment. I have a scanner to make graphics of stamps or other philatelic

A Visit to Bellefonte

by Joe Foley

I've had the best of intentions of visiting the American Philatelic Center, home of the APS and APRL. I haven't been there since before the renovation. It seemed like one activity or another kept getting in the way. Finally, I decided to definitely make plans to attend the dedication of the seminar and conference rooms on November 11-12. With two friends, Duke Day who is chairman of the APS Stamp Theft Committee and Rod McGlothlin, we left Annapolis early Friday morning.

When planning a visit, be sure to check the APS Website for directions and accommodations. There are some in Bellefonte and a much wider selection in nearby State College. The range of prices is such that something can be found for every pocketbook. A phone call to APS headquarters is also a good idea. A home football game or a major arts and crafts event are a couple of things to avoid.

Arriving at the facility, the unimproved portion of the old match factory is on the right and the renovated "cinder block" building on the left. Quite a contrast! If anything, a couple of the old buildings look even more depressing with some roof giving way. However, the "cinder block" building has been very nicely renovated—can't hardly see the blocks. Most of this building has been rented as commercial office space.

Walking around this building, we arrive at the front of the American Philatelic Center (not visible from the main entrance to the facility.) The old loading dock has been remarkably converted and the Center "joined" with the commercial building. (Hope I have that right.) Connie Swartz was just about to get a tour underway when we arrived and it was a great way to get oriented. General observation—from an architectural standpoint, functionality and esthetics an exceptionally fine job has been done in a relatively short time.

There was a full range of seminars during the two days. I also wanted to spend some time in the library, sales division and internet sales. Compromises had to be made. The staff continues to be very helpful. These folks really know what they are doing and seem to go out of their way to help. I was having a little trouble finding a somewhat obscure British journal. Ellen Peachey found it in no time. I noticed that as is customary in most well-run libraries, books taken out of the stacks are to be left in designated area for the staff to re-shelve. A book in the wrong place is as good as a book lost. By the end of the afternoon, there was a good size stack of books. Next morning—all had been shelved. The library now has a bit of elbow room and more is planned. The computer system is user friendly and a great aid in narrowing your search.

Next stop was Internet Sales aka Stampstore. Renee

Gardner was presenting a seminar, but her staff took care of the items I dropped off without a hitch.

There was more than one stop at the Sales Division. Tom Horn and his group seem to know exactly where everything is. Without exception, the entire staff continues to be as helpful and friendly in Bellefonte as they were in State College.

Saturday I did manage to attend some seminars. Ken Sanford, who frequently contributes to this journal, gave an excellent presentation on aviation crash mail. I decided to attend Dick Winter's seminar on Transatlantic Covers, based on my interest in mail to, from or through Ireland. However, the key to his presentation was his approach

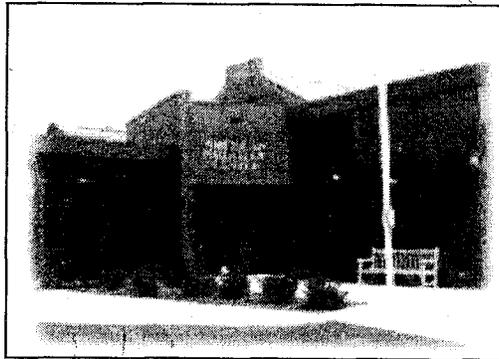
to analyzing covers. This will be covered in a forthcoming book Dick is preparing.

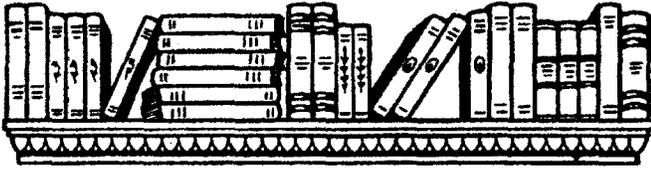
Had lunch with Council Member Lloyd de Vries. It included a bit more of a tour of Bellefonte than either Lloyd or I expected, but it is an interesting town. Lloyd mentioned that many years ago Bellefonte turned down the proposal to locate the university there—regrets—I wonder? In any event, the town retains much of its Victorian charm if little of its industry.

There were a few more visits to the Sales Division and settling up. The last seminar was Mercer Bristow's "The Doctoring of Postage Stamps—Philatelists Beware!" As an added attraction Mercer showed several "before and after" shots of the renovation project. And then there was his surprise ending.

At the dedication ceremony there was standing room only. The speeches were appropriate, but thankfully brief. The APS Directors and APRL Trustees were there for board meetings. During the visit I discussed the new library fees with some of the Trustees. It's quite an increase. The cost of borrowing a book, including the cost to return it will run the better part of \$20. Fees for copies and searches are also up considerably. The attitude toward the increase seemed to vary a bit among the trustees, from a shrug to rather adamant defense. When I mentioned that a person would be better off to borrow through his local library through inter library loan, one trustee hinted that there were ways to block that approach. I think he was stating personal opinion, not APRL policy.

Many years ago we recognized that the APRL could not be self-sustaining and, except for the janitor, the library staff was placed on the APS payroll. I don't question that some have "abused" [term used by a trustee] library resources and not done a little more homework with the catalog and journal subject index. I do question whether these increases are in keeping with the spirit and objectives of the library. □





REVIEWS

NOTE: Material for review may be sent to the editor at the address noted on the inside front cover. Reviews are also welcomed from others. Reviews from those having an interest in the item such as publishers, distributors, etc., must include a copy of the publication with the review [which, on request, we will return]. *Philatelic Communicator* reviews should be concise and stress those aspects that are helpful examples (positive or negative) for other authors, editors and publishers.

***Danmarks Avispostmærker (Denmark's Newspaper Stamps)* by Lars Jørgensen, self-published, 2004, 196 pages, 8¼ x 11½", perfect bound, soft covers, in Danish and English, Overijse, Belgium \$55 postpaid from the author, Dahlialaan 6, Jezus-Eik, 3090 Overijse, Belgium. ISBN 87-990227-0-2.**

Rates for delivering newspapers in Denmark often exceeded the subscription cost in the 18th century and also varied due to political reasons. In 1848 harmonized rates were established and rate tables for various time periods are presented in this book.

The newspaper stamps of Denmark were introduced in 1907 and were discontinued in 1916. The design was adopted from one originally submitted for a definitive series but not selected for that purpose. The printing method is described including use of a mother die and the assembly of plates.

Proofs and color trials are known and described. Other traditional stamp features are discussed including paper, watermarks, gum, perforations and marginal markings. The author presents a detailed description of the cancellations used on the newspaper stamps. The bulk of the text is devoted to details of the stamp varieties by denomination with illustrations of plate flaws tied to the printings and settings.

A pricing guide assigns values to unstamped newspapers, stamped ones, stamps on piece, examples with plate numbers, and those with different cancel types. These are followed by a more detailed listing for each stamp denomination, indicating values for mint, used, shades, blocks, and major varieties. The black and white illustrations are supplemented with several nice color plates.

The English translation appears near the end of the book rather than opposite the Danish text. A glossary, bibliography, and several appendices complete this book, which is now the significant resource for collectors of the newspaper stamps of Denmark.

Alan Warren

***Discovering Seahorses, King George V High values* by Bryan Kearsley, The Great Britain Philatelic Society, GB Philatelic Publications, Ltd., 2005, 278 + vi pages & 8 color plates, 8¾ x 11", hard cover, illustrations, bibliography, errata & corrigenda sheet, £60 + £8 postage & packing to U.S. (£12 by air), credit cards accepted, from Ian Harvey, GBPS, 27 Landford Rd., Putney, London SW15 1AQ, UK, ISBN: 0-907630-20-0.**

Long considered one of Great Britain's most attractive series of stamps, the Seahorses have inspired numerous collections and some very fine exhibits. First issued in 1913, they lasted until the onset of the King George VI high value definitives, a little more than twenty-five years later. During this time there were differences in printers, printing process, papers, shades and varieties. Oddly enough, the literature is less extensive than would be expected for this series. It's been almost fifty years since the RPSL published Beaumont and Stanton's work, *The Postage Stamps of Great Britain, Part Four, The Issues of King George V*.

The author has treated the subject in considerable depth. He begins with the genesis of the design, and goes on to describe the various essays and proofs. This is followed by contemporary chronicles of the printers. Next, the production of the stamps and their usages are covered, the latter containing some particularly fascinating information.

Perhaps the most useful sections deal with varieties, re-entries and the like. Truly outstanding black and white illustrations together with tables and charts greatly enhance the understanding of these intriguing aspects of the issues. Each printing is taken in turn chronologically. Some have become used to such terms as "inverted T" on the 5/ frame line or the "Runnals" re-entry on the 10/. The author has perhaps wisely abandoned this terminology in favor of more specific descriptors.

The Seahorses were overprinted for use in Bechuanaland, Ireland, Levant, Morocco and Nauru. The chapters in these sections deal with the stamps and printings used for the overprinted issues, but not the variations of the actual overprints. The book concludes with very useful appendices and an extensive bibliography. An index would have improved the ease of using the book. While the black and white illustrations are excellent, the quality of the color plates is somewhat inconsistent. Any collector having the slightest interest in any aspect of the Seahorses will welcome this book and find it an indispensable reference.

JEF

German/English Philatelic Dictionary, 4th edition, Leonard L. Layton, ed., Germany Philatelic Society, 2005, 304 pages, 5½ x 8½", spiral bound, \$20 to GPS members, \$25 to non-members, postpaid from Germany Philatelic Society, PO Box 6547, Chesterfield MO

63006-6547.

Each new edition of this important tool for collectors of German area material has been a quantum leap with new terms, corrections, and improvements. This 4th edition, prepared by members of the Herman L. Halle Chapter 16 of the Germany Philatelic Society, continues in this tradition and takes advantage of the latest technology to prepare the database for the entries.

Over 10,000 terms and abbreviations can now be found here along with their English equivalents. The bulk of the dictionary is devoted to terms that collectors will come across in analyzing stamps and covers and referring to the philatelic literature. They are presented alphabetically in German and include many place names that may not be evident to the reader.

Philatelic terms describing paper, gum, fluorescence, perfins, etc. are obviously here as well as military terms that are important to understanding military mail. Units of currency, communications terms, units of measure, and other general terms are found here. Where a word may have more than one meaning, those that relate to philately are given. The book is a great help in understanding those catalog or auction descriptions that are furnished in German only.

A separate section appears at the end of the dictionary that is devoted to abbreviations commonly used in reference to the German postal system, auction catalogs, and the German military. The beauty of such a dictionary as this is that specialized terms of interest to collectors are often not found in the standard German language desk dictionaries.

The printing is excellent and the book is well-edited. The binding allows one to lay the book flat for frequent use. This philatelic dictionary stands as a model that should be followed by compilers of similar foreign language dictionaries that are intended for the collecting community. In other words, *das Buch ist auzgezeichnet!*

Alan Warren

***Madame Joseph Revisited* by Brian Cartwright FRPSL, Royal Philatelic Society London, 2005, two volume boxed set, 95 pages, A4 size, hardbound and 40 pages of transparencies, A4 size, loose leaf, illustrations, tables, checklists, £44 pounds for RPSL members £49 pounds for others plus in both cases £16 pounds postage, 2½% surcharge for credit cards, also available from Leonard Hartmann, Box 36006, Louisville, KY 40233 at \$120 delivered to a US mailing address, ISBN 0-900631-38-4.**

Fine used examples of relatively modern British Commonwealth stamps present perhaps more of a challenge than their catalog values might indicate. A situation "made to order" for mint stamps to be "converted." In 1993 a

horde of fake cancelling devices was purchased by a group of dealers, taken off the market and placed in the museum of the Royal Philatelic Society London. The following year *Madame Joseph Forged Postmarks* by Derek Worboys and Roger West was published jointly by the British Philatelic Trust and the Royal Philatelic Society London. Long out of print, Brian Cartwright, a specialist in this material, was invited to prepare this revised version. He has produced an exceptional reference work.

The introductory pages, including extracts from the 1994 edition, provide an intriguing account of the origin of this material and some suggestions regarding Madame Joseph herself (possibly a *nom-de-plume*). The major portion of this book treats each fake device in considerable detail. The hardbound volume has illustrations of the cancelling devices and in many cases illustrations of stamps with Madame Joseph cancels and, for comparison, stamps with similar but genuine postmarks. The quality of the illustrations is excellent. The material that the fake devices are made from (wood, zinc alloy or copper plated zinc alloy) are noted for each device. The loose-leaf volume repeats the illustrations of the fake postmarks, but on transparencies, easily facilitating overlaying the transparency on a suspect stamp.

Information are also provided for some miscellaneous markings, cork devices, surcharges and overprints. Tables at the end include a listing of devices used on the 1935 Silver Jubilee omnibus, Leeward Islands and a detailed index by town and country.

JEF

***The Postal History of World War II Mail between New Zealand and Switzerland* by Robin M. Startup and Charles J. LaBlonde, published simultaneously by the Postal History Society of New Zealand, New Market NZ and the American Helvetia Philatelic Society, Asheville NC, 2005, 136 pages, 8½ x 11", spiral bound, soft covers, NZ\$ 25 plus postage from Postal History Society of New Zealand, PO Box 2121, Stoke, Nelson, New Zealand, or US\$ 20 postpaid to US and Canada addresses, £15 or €25 elsewhere from Charles J. LaBlonde, 15091 Ridgefield Lane, Colorado Springs CO 80921-3554.**

Following a list of acronyms and abbreviations used in the book, the authors set the stage by briefly describing the situations in Switzerland and New Zealand immediately preceding World War II, followed by a discussion of the role of the International Red Cross in treating mail during the war. This includes POW mail and the message scheme letters for civilians.

Separate chapters describe the handling of mail between the two countries (from – to) for both surface mail

and air mail. Other chapters detail the means of censorship in both countries covering the various devices such as handstamps, resealing labels, and advice slips. One area that requires additional research is the use of capital letter handstamps in New Zealand, called Alpha Control marks in the book, that were placed on foreign language letters that were believed to be sent to translators before being censored.

The concluding chapter records significant events during the war, from 1938 to 1945, that are reflected in many postal history items. A generous group of cover illustrations of quite good quality are used throughout the book to show examples of the markings and devices described as well as explanations of rates. Two appendices tabulate the postage rates during this period from one country to the other. A third appendix reproduces two British post office pamphlets pertaining to the subject.

Ten pages of bibliography are grouped for New Zealand, Switzerland, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and WW II references for general background material. The inside front cover has a nice world map showing eastbound routes via the United States, and westbound routes via India. This is a very useful reference for the study of wartime mail between these two countries.

Alan Warren □

Washington 2006 Needs You!

by Thomas M. Fortunato

Hundreds of volunteers are needed to ensure all goes smoothly before, during and after Washington 2006, America's FIP sanctioned philatelic exhibition taking place from May 27 to June 3 at the Washington, DC Convention Center. "We're closing in on the six-month mark," says Don Jones, W2006 Volunteers Committee Chairman, "and we want to raise awareness of our manpower needs in the philatelic community. Volunteers will be welcome all 8 days of the show, as well as a few days before and after this great event."

One of the most critical duties will be in the mounting, inventorying, controlling, dismantling and returning over 3,800 frames of competitive exhibits from around the world. That totals more than 60,000 individual pages. Some will contain the most priceless treasures of the hobby. This may be a once in a lifetime opportunity to get an "up-close and personal" view of tens of millions of dollars of philately's finest material.

Mounting is scheduled to begin by mid-day, Wednesday, May 24, and run around the clock if necessary to ensure all is ready by the 10:30 AM show opening on

Saturday. Dismounting begins at the exhibition's closing on Saturday, June 3, and will go non-stop.

National commissioners first sign in with the show's Bin Room on their arrival to the Convention Center. Each exhibit will be screened by the commissioner and show representatives who view the items on every page and make sure all items are present. Once checked, the intact exhibit awaits mounting by a team of people. The process reverses at the show's conclusion. All this takes place under very tight security throughout the facility.

Representatives from two regional clubs have come forward to help out. The Springfield Stamp Club has offered to help in the Bin Room, and the Washington Stamp Collectors Club is assisting with mounting. However, much more help will be needed.

Numerous other tasks will depend on volunteers as well. These include helping in the youth area, registration, administration, the library and reading room, with awards, working with computers, hospitality, general "gophering" and more. Translators are also needed. In total, over 300 people will make Washington 2006 a reality beyond the 100 or so already working on various aspects of the show right now.

As an added incentive, bright red polo shirts with embroidered Washington 2006 logos will be given free to volunteers at W2006 (while supplies last) when they report for duty.

Register as a volunteer online at the Washington 2006 web site, <http://www.washington-2006.org>, or by writing for a volunteer form to: PO Box 2006, Ashburn, VA 20146.

Various chairmen and managers have begun to contact volunteers who had signed up over the past year to line up help in their respective areas and reconfirm availability. If you are in this group and have not been contacted yet, feel free to resubmit the volunteer form and someone will reach you shortly. □

All writers are vain, selfish, and lazy, and at the very bottom of their motives there lies a mystery. Writing a book is a horrible, exhausting struggle, like a long bout of some painful illness. One would never undertake such a thing if one were not driven on by some demon whom one can neither resist nor understand. For all one knows that demon is simply the same instinct that makes a baby squall for attention.

—George Orwell

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

As of October 31, 2005

New Members We welcome the following new members:

1906 George McGowan, P.O. Box 482, East Schodack, NY 12063-0482. Columnist: *The Insider* (Federation of New York Stamp Clubs). Sponsor: Joseph E. Foley.

1907 William T. Godfrey, 7550 Buckingham Place, #16, Fairview, PA 16415. Co-Editor: *Stampede* (Erie [Pennsylvania] Stamp Club). Sponsor: Jane King Fohn.

1908 Nancy G. Godfrey, 7550 Buckingham Place, #16, Fairview, PA 16415. Co-Editor: *Stampede* (Erie [Pennsylvania] Stamp Club). Sponsor: Jane King Fohn.

1909 Arthur J. Cole, 11004 Louis Drive, S.E., Huntsville, AL 35803-1008. Editor: *Newsletter* (Huntsville, Alabama, Philatelic Club). Sponsor: Jane King Fohn.

1910 Douglas Moss, 305 Saint Lukes Drive, Richardson, TX 75080-4830. Editor: *Texas Philatelist* (Texas Philatelic Association). Sponsor: Jane King Fohn.

1911 Frank Braithwaite, 56 Morewood Drive, Smithtown, NY 11787-2304. Regular Contributor to the *Empire State Postal History Society Journal*. Sponsor: Albert Starkweather.

1912 Judy Routson, P.O. Box 313, Boonville, NY 13309-0313. Columnist: *Boonville* (New York) *Herald*; Publicity Chairperson: Boonville Historical Club. Sponsor: Albert Starkweather.

Reinstated Membership:

0353 Otto Hornung, 39 Kings Drive, Wembley Park MX, HA9 9HN Great Britain

0717 Nonie Green, 2401 Colorado Avenue, San Angelos, TX 76901-3713.

1590 Charles J. G. Verge, P.O. Box 2788, Station "D," Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1P 5W8.

Change of Address:

1042 Niles F. Schuh, 6 Willow Road, Asheville, NC 28804-2336.

1577 Michael Rogers, 336 Grove Avenue, Suite B. Winter Park, FL 32789-3602

1709 Katrina Louise Everhart, 493 Highway 151, Clark, MO 65243-2129.

1718 Ben Floyd, Jr., RR 2, Box 5671, Roland, OK 74954-9643

1816 June E. Berwald, 15005 18th Avenue, North, Plymouth, MN 55447-4618

1830 James McDevitt, 7643 Sequoia Drive North, Mobile, AL 36695-2809

Contributions: We are pleased to acknowledge the receipt of \$25.00 from Robert E. Taylor.

Don L. Evans

1923-2005

A recent issue of *Linn's* reported the death of Don Evans. Don started collecting stamps in 1932 at age nine. Like many of us, he later he put his collecting on hold. After college and near the end of a successful thirty-three year career in the United States Air Force, he again took up the hobby.

He began to specialize in the 1¢ Franklin issue of 1861-7, and earned high awards for his exhibits of this material. After much original study, he wrote *The United States 1¢ Franklin 1861-67*, published by *Linn's* in 1997. I received a copy for review. It was an impressive book (see Second Quarter 1997, *TPC*). Noted at the time "If we had a 'book of the year award,' this would be a top contender." Perhaps one of the best accolades a reviewer can come up with is to buy another copy of the book. I did just that.

Don received many awards for this outstanding work. When requested to share his thoughts and approach to philatelic writing, he responded with a delightful and useful article "Confessions of a First Time Book-Writer," (see Fourth Quarter 1997, *TPC*). Although a few years have passed, the suggestions and guidance in his article are as meaningful today as they were eight years ago.

He was a very gracious and helpful person. We need more like him.

JEF □

Clip Art

by Lloyd de Vries

I did the story on the Jenny Invert plate block sale in October for CBSNews.com, my "day job," and asked our best designer (artist) to make a "story image" out of it for my story. There are several sizes, but all have a certain "aspect ratio" of 370 pixels wide by 278 high.

I sent the story (and the image's number) to our overnight producer, and the story went up on the site Wednesday morning. I glanced at it after it went "live," and it seemed all right, just a few editorial changes that make all writers grouse.

The next morning, I updated the story with the results of the sale, and realized that the designer had trimmed off the plate number to make the image fit our dimensions! He did a really nice job of it: You couldn't tell, which is why I hadn't realized sooner what he'd done.

I explained to him that those numbers and the selvedge were what made the plate block so special and valuable, and he revised the picture. □

I have tried simply to write the best I can; sometimes I have good luck and write better than I can.

—Ernest Hemingway

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May 27-June 3, 2006
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