

Remembering Bill Bomar

By Stephen Patrick

The Central Florida Stamp Club established the Bill Bomar Award after his death in 1998. It was inspired by John Hotchner's column in *Linn's* about honoring the "sparkplugs" who work tirelessly on the local club level. The first recipient was longtime member Wade Berry.

For the many new members have joined in the last decade that never knew Bill Bomar Sr., here is a life sketch that will help you get to know him.

Bill was born in Mexico, Missouri, and attended the University of Missouri at Columbia. After graduation he served as a clerk typist in the army in occupied Germany. His life's occupation was as an insurance underwriter that took him to Seattle, WA, Atlanta, GA, and eventually Orlando, FL.

Bill was a lifetime collector, a credited philatelic judge, a jazz enthusiast, and a raconteur. He knew all stamps, but in the last decades of his life, he collected "strictly U. S." Every place he went, he joined the local club and became a strong supporter. When he moved to Central Florida in the late 60's, he found the Central Florida Stamp Club and joined a club that was not growing. There were divisive personalities in the club, and he soon took leadership and organized a club with a constitution and had it chartered with the state. He served as president and board member for more than two decades.

Not only did he promote the local club, he was a leader in the Florida Federation of Stamp Clubs and served as president and board member. Perhaps if he hadn't died, the organization would still be going today. At one time he belonged to more than a dozen societies, but perhaps the one he excelled at was the Machine Cancellation Society.

The reason that prompted this article was a discovery in a recently acquired stamp collection with a copy of *Linn's Weekly Stamp News* from February 28, 1966. The front page headline was "Invitation To Try Flag Cancels" and was full of articles from the Machine Cancellation Society, and three of them were written by Bill Bomar. Also included was a picture of a much younger man than any of us remember. Two of his articles were "San Francisco's Street Railway System" and "The Flags of Texas." I include the photo from the paper.

Bill's passion for cancels led him to write a book *Postal Markings of United States Expositions* that had a second printing in 1996. His collection of World's Fair materials was one of the best in the country. Every year in November, he would present a talk at the club on "Something U.S." and out of his collection would come the tin foils that were revenue stamps for plug tobacco, or his collection of automobile advertising. His pre-cancel collection included many 19th century forerunners. He owned inverts from the 1901 bicolor Pan Americans. His cinderellas included the earliest seals and charity labels from places I never heard of.

Perhaps his best story was of a find he got in college. He was called to a Missouri farm chicken house to find boxes and boxes full of envelopes, stamps, and cut squares covered with "chicken excrement." The story was that the owner had a simple minded son whose father got him a job as a janitor in a local mail order catalogue business. The father asked not for money but just to give his son something to do, and his only pay was the empty envelopes from the business. This was a 30 year accumulation from the late 1910's to the 1940's.

It took Bill many months to sort the stamps trying to ignore the smell. Our jaws dropped that stamp club night as he told of the rarities that he found in the 1000's of stamps: rare Washington Franklin heads, hundreds of two cent reds, airmails, a five cent Washington red error, etc. This was the basis of many trades that helped build his collections.

Bill was divorced from his first wife when he moved from Seattle. In 1988 he returned to his high school reunion in Mexico, MO, and met an old girlfriend from 40 years before. He and Ruth were soon married, and she was brought into his stamp world with travel to national shows, often by rail, as Bill apprenticed to be a judge. I remember how he would study at the exhibits at FLOREX the first day and show me his scores for the exhibits. Once the judge's results were announced, Bill was never less than one medal away on just a couple exhibits as he usually predicted the winners.

In his 60's Bill's heart began to give out, but he was too sick to be eligible for a transplant. In 1998, he and Ruth returned to Missouri for their 50th high school reunion. Bill enjoyed all the festivities that Saturday and died the next day. Ruth said it was a good 10 years. Our club honored him by starting the Bomar Award, and I am proud to be one of the recipients. Bill was the one in the 1980's to get me involved in club leadership. He was part of the foundation that we have today.



William J. Bomar

Reminiscences



By Michael Rogers

Come May 1966, I sure was a happy camper. Somehow my older brother Toby volunteered to chaperone me to the biggest stamp show I'd ever been to, SIPEX in Washington D.C., the Sixth International Philatelic Exhibition. As a 17 year old growing up in New York City, there was no way that I could have imagined that just a few years later, I'd be a stamp dealer, every collector's fantasy!

Making sure I wouldn't miss a thing, I purchased the show program. I walked the floor, gaining my bearings, planning where to spend hard earned money from mowing lawns. Buying Japan's 1934 airmail souvenir sheet was my goal. That several were offered meant scrutinizing prices and quality.

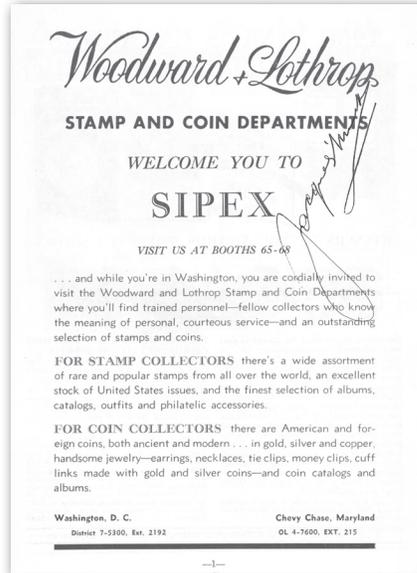
About mid day, I happened upon an icon—Jacques Minkus. There he was, tending the “Woodward & Lothrop” booth, one of his franchises. Greeting collectors, affable, European style charm, a kind smile. A self made man who immigrated to the U.S. and created a line of albums and catalogues using a whole new numbering system. He placed stamp and coin shops on a franchise basis in department stores across the U.S., creating tens of thousands of collectors. Small build and the same generation, just like my grandpa.

Thus I felt drawn to Minkus.

When I asked him for his autograph, he was genuinely perplexed: “You're asking a stamp dealer for his autograph?” We exchanged pleasantries as I explained. I said anyone who came into this country and excelled was a role-model, like he and my grandfather. I felt a rush that I could come to the show and meet one of philately's giants.

These days I look forward to attending the stamp shows in which my company, Michael Rogers Inc. holds booths. Before the doors open for collectors, dealers are setting up, making sure everything is just perfect. Think of us as teenagers, getting ready for the prom. First impressions.

No dealer will tell you that sales alone



are the only reason for participation at a stamp show. Show the flag. Buy, sell, trade. Meet budding collectors.

I'm effusive, a hugger, easy to know. I relish shows for they give me the chance to see colleagues in person. “Kiss, hug, schmooze”. Say hello, commiserate, catch up on family goings-on. Being able to touch base with friends is a blessing. Greeting collectors at my booth. Making friends.

I think of a stamp show as a village square: there's the butcher, the baker, the cabinet-maker. Along those lines, each booth has its own character: exceptionally fine U.S., revenues, first day covers, or U.S. plate blocks organized by plate number. Collect foreign? Depends on the dealer: new issues to rarities.

A couple of my favorite shows take place in New York City at the New Yorker Hotel, in April and October, in conjunction with the ASDA. Centrally located, near train and bus lines in Manhattan, and in a first class hotel, the show is most comfortable for collectors and dealers.

My company has a double booth in each as we handle China and Asia, and that's red hot right now.

Great dealers hold booths at this show

An autograph from famed stamp dealing, cachetmaking, catalogue publishing and department store entrepreneur Jacques Minkus still holds fond memories for the author—from his trip to the Sixth International Philatelic Exhibition in Washington, D.C., in 1966.

who have formidable inventories. Tops in the Revenue field are Eric Jackson and Richard Friedberg. I'm amazed at Al Tohn's “Coverman” enormous postal history stock. Recently, I purchased a nifty China railroad advertising cover from Stanley Piller. James Lee showed me some U.S. airmail small die proofs. Mark Eastzer of Markest always has a great smile—and a fast check. I think of Marilyn Nowak (hand colored FDCs) as “golden” because that's her personality: warm, sweet, caring. My Katie (and I!) think the world of James McCusker!

If you're thinking of adding to a worldwide collection, I fill wantlists at Bill & Ann Leavengood's Lebanon Stamps, Ross Wiessmann and The Excelsior Collection. For Israel and Vatican, I go to George at Garel.

Even if you don't intend to buy, you can view. If you know you're not going to buy, be polite and don't take up a seat (dealers pay for their booths by selling inventory. Folks who sit for hours who obviously have no intention of buying are called “sightseers”). Don't hesitate to ask a question.

Who knows? Maybe you'll chat with an icon? ☒