

CFSC HOLIDAY PARTY 2012



A good time was had by all –December 20th at the Marks Street Senior Recreation Center.



This well attended holiday party was filled with good food and good company. Below are the Glue winners for 2012, Sarah Priest standing in for Ann Dowrick and Dave Zambon standing in for Robert Dowrick.



Reminiscences

By Michael Rogers



My grandparents were simple people who emigrated to the United States in the 1920's with little more than determination and knowing the difference between right and wrong.

I was a loner growing up—a high school guidance counselor called me “morbidly quiet”—not into sports like my friends, preferring to hang out at my grandparents' clothing store in Brooklyn, N.Y. Family lore would have it that grandpa never spoke up, but he mentored me, and as the years passed, I learned how to merchandise and how to turn a customer into a friend. In grade school, I'd sit on the living room floor by his knees, as he'd watch opera, telling me stories which quietly taught me how to behave. Grandpa said I didn't have a father. Dad was there, tho absent in any way that mattered.

Grandma -- hearty and sensible -- was the center of our family life as no one was a stranger and Sundays were filled with extended family, her cooking up and serving savory food. My sister Elaine and I would chat with Grandma on weekdays after she'd return home from work.

So curious as to what makes a store tick, I learned that retail was long, arduous hours, though rewarding through a certain lens. I was always thinking up creative ways to sell the product, no matter what it was.

As I reflected upon their world, I knew religion determined my grandparents' boundaries, but beyond that, a core of decency ruled. An intuitive, reflexive understanding. I thought about the schoolyard bullies I'd come across, the takers. What a difference between the two.

We don't come from money; Mom worked two jobs to supplement the family income. I remember a 1956 Chevy that lasted til 1964; the passenger floorboards were eaten away by rust! She had a succession of City of New York positions including a stint with the New York Police Department. Mom knew education was the passport to a better life; she hired tutors for Elaine and I so we could excell

scholastically. Elaine's the smart one: she could glance at a text book and nail the test; I had to attend summer school to repeat a science class. My saving grace was that I would read across the board - history, sociology, religion, fiction—so I could hold my own with an adult.

My mother taught me to always tell the truth. I never heard about shading the truth or the virtues of a white lie. She says lying is too stressful; no one can remember a lie's details later on. A lie is like crabgrass, if you're found out, it spreads out and everyone knows you cannot be trusted. Grandpa came to the US with nothing but his good word, he worked hard, and earned the trust of a tradesman who helped him establish his first store. In the stamp business, deals are done on the basis of a handshake.

In business, we're always presented with “either or” options. Do one thing or the other for the pot of gold. Problem is, there's often too little information to make the right choice other than easy profits and a hunch.

One day a few years back, a man and woman who appeared to be in their thirties showed up in my office with two footlockers of pretty nice US postal history. They introduced themselves and said they were selling the material as part of an inheritance for which they wanted \$10,000. I remember the US 1851 3 cent #11 unofficial perforated on cover (today's catalogue value \$8,000) and many more deluxe pieces. Safe to say the two trunks were worth \$150,000.

The more they pushed for me to buy, the more nervous I got. It just didn't feel right. I have a set of questions to ascertain whether it is indeed an inheritance or owned, and boy o boy, it just didn't feel good. The guy was jumpy; I thought him on drugs. So I bade them good-bye.

Two months later, a gentleman with Guardian-Ad-Liten paperwork came to the office, inquiring whether I'd purchased the two footlockers. I said I'd seen them, but not purchased. He found that hard to digest. He just couldn't understand why I

didn't purchase when there was such an obvious profit. I said sometimes the deal that you don't do is the best option. I never heard the outcome, and for all his harsh words, he didn't apologize.

I cannot tell you how many times folks approach us with stamps and envelopes that resemble something they've seen on eBay. Because we're in economically stressed times with so many people out of work or on short hours, a seller is more inclined to bring most anything in. My company has a billboard sized sign perched 20 feet above our building on one of the busiest roads in Central Florida, so we see a lot.

eBay is informative if you know how to use it. The easy way is to scroll through and pick out an image that resembles what you have for sale. Problem for a neophyte, unfamiliar with perforations, watermarks, hinged vs. NH or all the other “pesky” details, is figuring out what's there. Anyone can list any item at any starting price -- including one which is way too high. Thus what's really important is using the “Advanced Search” feature to find out if it sold and for what price.

So one fine day in my stamp shop, we have a stream of seven potential sellers and every one of them had seen their material up on eBay! Problem was, the guy that thought he had rare US Washington & Franklin coils didn't understand the definition of a coil was imperforated on two sides. (He offered to trim them for me!) Misidentified, overpriced.

My favorite has to be the lady with a Golden Replica US 1918 24 cent inverted Jenny first day cover. She was disappointed to find out she wasn't going to realize the \$550,000 the real stamp sold for. I reasoned that if she had a photo of a house, it wasn't as valuable as the house. But she was sure I was making fun even tho I showed her an identical Golden Replica invert that I had in stock priced for \$1.

She saw it on eBay! ☒