

Phil the Postage Stamp Chapter 7 — After the Fire

By Randall Priest

After I had been cleaned up from the fire and placed into a large box with many of my friends, I spent some time thinking about how good my life has been over the years. This brush with what could have been the end of my life was just one more adventure in a long list of things I'd bumped into over the years.

We were in the large box for some time. Then one day I was shaken awake when the box was moved. We were all poured out on to table, and as my eyes adjusted to the light, I could see that our pile of stamps was very large. As we were moved around the table, I was struck by the fact that we were handled with very little care. That was not how I remember being handled in the past, when we were moved very carefully, from place to place with those steel jaws. All I saw this time was a big hand, lifting us up and dropping us back on the table.

After some more pushing and shoving, we were separated into different piles. The pile that I was in was picked up and placed into a plastic bag. We were squeezed into the bag and the top was zipped shut. Fortunately, I was facing out, so I could see what was going on. There were another three or four bags filled with my friends. One bag was not closed yet. It was sitting on a platform. Under the platform was a dial with numbers on its face. At first I thought it was a clock, but the numbers were too close together, and there was only one hand. I watched the hand move as more stamps were added to the bag. When the hand reached number one, the bag was removed and then closed. All of our bags were placed into a new box, and we were off on another adventure.

After a long trip, we were taken out of the box, and placed on a table. As the bags were rearranged, I finally had a clear view of my location at the end of a long table. I could see that some of my friends had been placed under glass, and there were some sort of small books—rows of them. At the far end was a rack with steel jaws holding packages. Everywhere I looked there are more stamps than I can remember ever seeing. My view seemed to be from a display case, and I could see the whole room. Then I remember. I was in a place like this a long time ago.

Yes! Now it's all flowing back into my memory.



Philatelic Serendipity by Francis Ferguson

I should have learned by now. Never underestimate what might just turn up at a local show. The Transport series of stamps has been an object of my collecting interest for some time now. Normally I would have looked at the used plate blocks and seen the common numbers and passed on them.

However the New Hartford NY (founded 1772) cancel was of particular interest for me, since that is the town in upstate NY where I spent the first 10 cold years of my life, until moving to FL in 1970.

I wish these stamps could talk, and tell me how they ended up in Central Florida!

The Cover Story

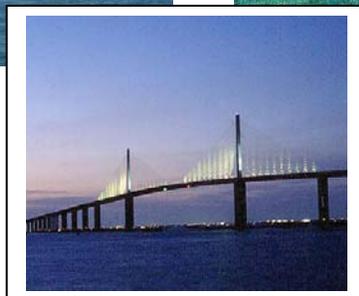
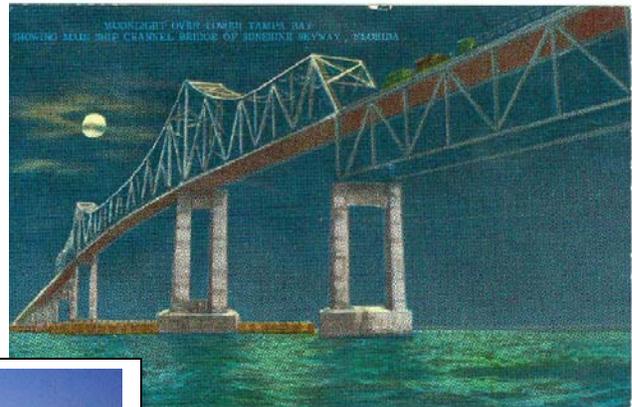
Bridging Tampa Bay by Phillip Fettig

This month I will return to Florida in my philatelic travels. In 1955, my parents took my brother and myself, on “vacation” to visit an aunt in Florida. Years later I figured out it was a planning trip for our 1956 permanent move. In any event, during that vacation to Clearwater we took a trip to the south to see the relatively new Sunshine Skyway Bridge. I had not really had a good look at the Gulf of Mexico up until then and was astounded as we started up the span and a freighter came into view below. While the Gulf does not really qualify as a full pledged “ocean”, it was close enough to ensure my future was going to include being on (or under!) water somewhere.

Discussions concerning a bridge across Tampa Bay started during the 1920's. Arguments were made for a bridge or a tunnel to replace the need to take a ferry or make a long inland trip through Tampa to continue south. The Sunshine Skyway was completed in 1954, and connected St. Petersburg to Manatee County and points south. A second span was added in 1969 to allow two lanes in each direction.

On January 28, 1980, the Coast Guard Tender USCGC BLACKHORN was leaving Tampa along with a Russian Cruise Ship and the approaching inbound tanker, the SS CAPRICORN during nighttime. The BLACKHORN and CAPRICORN collided and the tanker's anchor snagged the Coast Guard Ship, pulling her over and 23 crew members were killed as she sank. This accident happened in the narrow channel approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the bridge. On May 9, 1980, during a storm the SS SUMMIT VENTURE collided with a support column and knocked down over 1200 feet of the bridge into Tampa Bay. Six cars and a Greyhound bus fell 150 feet into the water, killing 35 people.

A completely new bridge design was completed in 1982 and part of the old bridge and roadway were made into a State Park dedicated to fishing. I prefer to remember the original bridge as shown on the front cover and on this page. In 1963-64 I had the pleasure of passing underneath the old span as a young Seaman standing Lookout Watches on the Destroyer Escort USS GREENWOOD. I used to sneak a look at the cars passing overhead and wonder if some young man was gazing down in awe as I did years before.



Editor's note --- The new bridge at night is a spectacular sight!