

# The Cover Story

Where Did You Get All This Stuff to Sell? By Phillip Fettig

We get asked that question a lot of times. Selling does not make a dealer successful, but instead buying is the critical part necessary to make a profit and stay in business. Over the years I have made some great purchases and others that....well ended up with an unpleasant odor in the air! Ann had the same experience in her store. This will be the first in a series about past purchases, the good, the bad and sometimes, the funny.

The first story will be from a purchase made at what turned out to be my favorite source, the Michael Rogers Auctions. As a side note, I will certainly miss his auctions. Now that I am on the downhill part of 70 I had planned on cutting back anyway and Mike helped that decision along. I am sure I will not be the only small dealer or collector that will miss his box lots.

So, speaking of box lots, many of you know I have made a specialty of those, along with collections for several years now. How do I get the stuff to put in them you ask? Well, in many cases I buy larger groups of box lots. Back around three years ago I saw a lot in the auction catalog that looked interesting, but way bigger than I had ever tried for before. It was listed as one collector's country collections, over 200 individual folders and envelopes in 10 cartons! I had plenty of other smaller lots (more my speed?) to look at that day and almost marked that one off my list. I told the employee to hold off moving that one into the viewing area until last. When the time came I decided it was too much for me but I might as well look, maybe for no other reason to see what something that big looked like.

I started going through the boxes and found an amazing bonanza. The collector had put each country in a nice folder with a clear plastic front cover so you could read the neatly typed front page. The page identified the country, complete with other names it may have had during its history. Most also had the total number of stamps in that collection listed. Figure (1) shows the top of two of the cover pages. Then came the amazing part - most pages were hand drawn with boxes to match the number of stamps in the series for that date. The timeframe was neatly printed by hand for each stamp or series as appropriate. Figure (2) shows parts of 2 different county collections. I was making notes as I looked at each box, making a list of countries and the number of stamps present. I began to realize that the estimate of 200 country collections only covered those contained in the folders. There were another large number of smaller collections placed in envelopes. At this point I started to get both excited and nervous which resulted in a two week roller coaster ride of bid, don't bid combined with "what am I thinking of". Ann gave me her usual great advice - "Do whatever you think best". Auction day finally arrived and, as always the case, accumulations and large collections are near the end. By the time it came up I had already spent over \$1,000 and was not feeling positive about getting in a bidding war. When the lot was called, my roller coaster was on a high and I wanted the collections. It seemed forever when the auctioneer declared me the winner, although it really was less than 60 seconds to spend a four figure sum, all on one lot! This is probably nothing new to many dealers, but it sure was to me!

Now it was time for Ann to figure out if I "had done my best". The boxes contained the advertised 200 country collections plus 100 or so smaller ones, from 1-10 pages, in 9"x12" envelopes. The stamps were 99.9% hinged (mint and used) on the pages and I doubt that we found more than 10-20 that were damaged. Even more amazing was that in processing the collections we found very few errors in catalog number identification. I didn't keep accurate track of the time we spent, but I would estimate Ann worked at various times for around a year as she processed each collection. I would deliver a box to her from storage and she would start in cataloging a country. She wrote the catalog value in light pencil for the better items with values \$1.00 and higher. Some better sets were removed for our counter books, but most were left in the binder and the cover page would be changed to reflect the total stamps contained. I would then add up the catalog value of the remaining identified better items and then figure remaining items at a catalog value of .25 each. Then I would set a price for that item by making a judgment call on its value. I considered how strong the country was in the stamp collecting world, the years the collection covered and the ending estimated catalog value. Obviously I asked a higher percentage of the estimated value for countries like Germany, Iceland and Japan than I did for the Hungary or Ghana. I did momentarily question my pricing when a dealer snapped up the China collection for my asking price without even mentioning the time honored dealer discount. It didn't take long for me to relax in the knowledge that I was happy to have received what I had asked for and the dealer seemed pleased. Even more important, our customers seemed to indicate approval by the fact that somewhere around 18 months later there were no more of these little gems left.

Next installment - Why advertising pays, even if gets in the wrong newspaper!

# New Member Spotlight

By Carlos Guffain

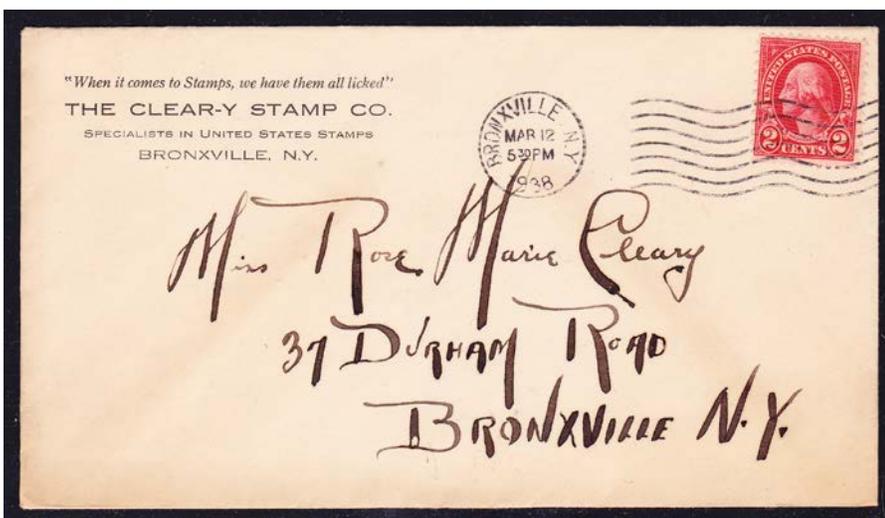
My name is Carlos Guffain and one of the new members of the Central Florida Stamp Club. I am married with two sons and have been living in Orlando for 30 years. I started coming to Orlando in 1975 when my parents retired here. I was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico to a military Puerto Rican family. Being raised in a military and then diplomatic family, by the time I was 18 years old, I had lived in the Caribbean, North America, Europe and Central America. I definitely inherited my Father's passion for history and art which was further developed by the many interesting places we have lived and visited over the years, as well as formal university studies.



I began collecting at a very young age, starting with stamps from places lived and visited. From that I started to collect coins also from places lived and visited. Collecting evolved into a passion and expanded to include rare and collectible books, magazines, comics, intaglio prints, paper money, covers, cards, and other collectibles. My passion in collecting is in the context of history and art appreciation. Regarding stamp collecting, my focus has been in US stamps. I have also developed a collection of Spanish stamps from the time encompassing the Spanish American War of 1898, as well as stamps from and for Puerto Rico. I am currently interested in expanding these collections as well as take more interest in world stamps.

Now that I am retired I hope to be able to expand my knowledge of collecting from my peers and colleagues in the Central Florida Stamp Club.

## Cover Corner by Phil Fettig



Tired of seeing the same old dealers at the shows? Maybe you should try this one! If the name "THE CLEAR-Y STAMP CO." is not enough to intrigue you, then how about the motto "When it comes to Stamps, we have them all licked"? Makes me wonder if the mint items still had gum! With the lack of a street address I have no idea if this operation was a storefront or mail order. Either way that is a strange omission. Also note the cover is addressed to somebody named Cleary so I am not sure of its purpose. Of course, 78 years later I could not find

any record of the store. Bronxville, NY is a small village within Eastchester, NY. It is a suburb of New York City, located 15 miles north of Manhattan with a population of 6,400. I guess now any collectors have to attend the shows in the city. This is just another example of the fun little things you can find going through material.