

# How I Learned to Collect Stamps

by David Allen

One Saturday in 1960, I was along when my mother went to a stationary store in downtown Washington, Illinois. While she was busy, I found a display rack of stamp albums and packets of stamps. I was mesmerized but did not show my mother then what I saw. Only later did I tell her that I wanted to collect stamps.



Figure B1

I was 9 years old and no one in my family knew anything about collecting stamps. My mother knew of a program at school involving saving stamps and got me involved in that. You bought the savings stamps and when you filled your booklet, you got to trade them in for free books. (I did not learn until many years later that these savings stamps were included in the Scott's U.S. specialized catalog [Figure B1, US S1]).

After I told my mother that was not what I meant, we revisited the stationary store where I showed her the rack I had looked at. Though puzzled, she bought me a

small Harris World stamp album (Cerlox bound) and a packet of stamps thinking that this would be a passing fancy. I also later bought the "Big Bag" of 700 stamps. She also said that I could have stamps off our mail and suggested that I contact relatives to collect stamps for me. My sister still sends me stamps she saves for me.

My mother became my first stamp collecting teacher. She taught me how to soak stamps and I bothered her incessantly to identify countries where the country name was not in English. Since she knew Latin, French and a little German, she could help me with Western European countries and their colonies. She could identify Oriental countries as a group. When the writing was in Cyrillic, she would tell me it was Eastern European or Russian. Then she would send me to the stamp identifier. [Figure B2, France 156]



Figure B2



Figure B3

My father also supported my interest. We went to

the Peoria gun show twice a year where I found one stamp dealer who filled U.S. holes I had. Later my father found out that his employer, Caterpillar Tractor Company, had a stamp club. I could join if he joined, attended and was also a collector. He became a topical collector, three pages, only to allow me to be in the club. So, two nights a month became a Father/Son stamp outing. The big draw to the club was the

free stamps for each member at each meeting from the foreign company mail (meaning two shares for me). The stamps were mainly from Central and South American with some from Europe, with the most common stamp being from Mexico [Figure B3, Mexico C265]. He would also buy me inexpensive lots from the club auctions, including a set of 1965 Scott's Catalogs (2 volumes).

At the Caterpillar Stamp Club, Bernt Von Glaznip took an interest in helping me with my German collection. (He had started stamp collecting while in a German concentration camp and would soak his stamps in the rain water.) He would give me stamps that were minimum value that I needed and would sell me slightly more valuable stamps as my allowance of 30 cents per week, supplemented with lawn mowing money, would support. He also showed me how to watermark stamps (German) on the easiest stamps in the world. I also learned perforation gauging from him.



Figure B4

After Thanksgiving in 1967 my entire family was involved in an automobile accident that would claim my father's life and leave my mother in the hospital for 7 months. I, along with my sister and brother, lived with neighbors across the street during that time. For Christmas that year, I got an unforgettable Christmas present from Caterpillar Tractor Company. It was 3 complete mint sets of German semi-postal stamps picked out by Bernt Von Glaznip [Figure B4, Germany B78].

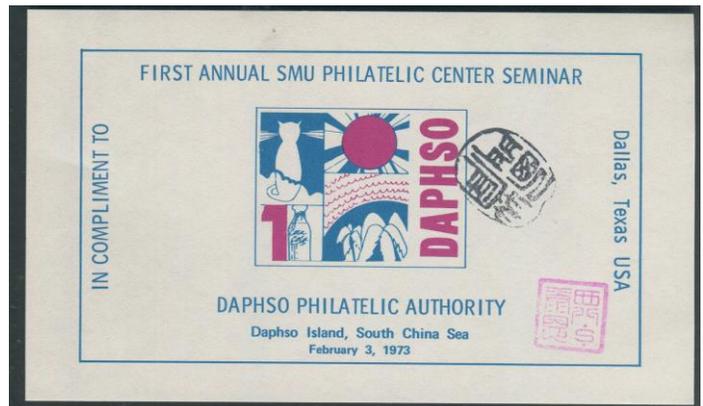
After a hiatus for college and a move to Dallas in 1973 for my first job, I looked up a stamp club to join, finding and joining the Dallas Philatelic Society, I met Joe Brooks in that club. He was an elderly widower, and a framer by trade. He invited me to come over to help him with his collection on some Sunday afternoons for free duplicate stamps. While I did very little to help him, he did much for me. It was at his hand that I learned how to really read and understand the Scott catalogs for all the details. With this I also began to understand stamp grading and condition. His house was a mixture of framing and stamp collecting in different rooms. (Prior to this time, I had been collecting mostly by the design of the stamp, some watermarking on German and British stamps, and some occasional perforation checks.) We would also have Sunday dinner together mostly with him paying. So, I also learned about Dallas restaurants. Occasionally he would give me sets of more expensive stamps including the first Greek airmails. [Figure B5, Greece C4]



**Figure B5** again on the hunt for a stamp club. I found Mike Rogers' Stamp Store on Park Avenue in Winter Park and he told me about the Central Florida Stamp Club, then meeting at the Orlando Science center building. I joined the CFSC and continued my education in stamp collecting. Over

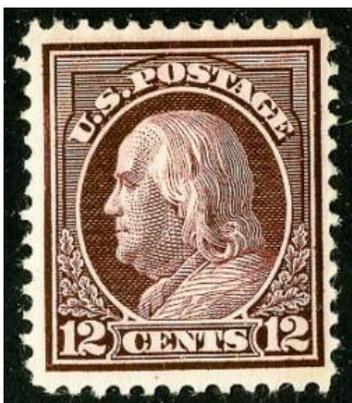
As an aside, the DALLAS PHILATELIC SOCIETY purchased a small uninhabited Pacific Island, named it DAPHSO after itself, and issued stamps for it in the late 1970s. If you have ever seen stamps from DAPHSO, I think they are Cinderella's [Figure B6] made by the club where I was a member when in Dallas.

In 1981 I moved to Orlando and was



**Figure B6**

the years I have learned many things in many ways from many members of our club. I learned about the Micarelli Identification guide and used it to type the Washington-Franklin issues I have



**Figure B7**

[Figure B7, US 417]. In general, I have learned that there is a wealth of information in the collector community here and in books on many philatelic subjects. With this knowledge, I have also learned how little I know about Philately.

In learning, I also can begin to teach. Passing on what I know to new collectors as it was passed on to me. May the learning and teaching and collecting continue as the philatelic community continues to grow.