

# Cover Story

## A PITTSBURGH CHRONICLE

by Josh Furman, Al Nagy, and Steve Patrick

Excited, we deplaned at Pittsburgh Airport and waited with Sharon while Al went for the rental car. We drove to the Westin, the show hotel right next door to the Convention Center, left our luggage with the bellman, and headed directly for the show.

There was a line out the door! Turns out that the line was not for admission—it was after ten, and the admission line had already dispersed inside. It was the line for Stamps in Your Attic, an appraisal and referral service for folks who had grandpa's collection/accumulation and didn't know what to do with it. That line was constant, all day long every day of the show, right up to closing, even though there were four or more appraisal/referral folks working the desks. Amazing!

There were a couple of hundred booths of dealers and societies, thousands of pages of the best exhibits you have ever seen, a huge number of meetings, discussion groups and lectures, and an auction going on along one wall of the vast room. Where to begin?

Some of us had dealers in mind, so headed right to business. Josh was searching for postal cards and stopped at every dealer whose sign even intimated that he had some stock. Al was looking for semi-official Canadian air stamps and covers; Steve wanted Florida postal history, so we went our ways.



Steve Patrick and Josh in flight – Photo by Al Nagy

During the day, our paths may have crossed with a nod, but we were engrossed.

Evening activity took Steve to the stadium to see the Pirates lose in 12 innings to the Rays, while Al, Sharon and Josh drove to South Pittsburgh and dinner at the Hofbrau with local beer, potato pancakes and Wiener Schnitzel along with other German fare on the menu. For dessert, Sharon was thoughtful enough to order her Black Forest Cake with three forks. Stuffed, we called it a day.

Friday was more of the same. There were so many dealers that we were able to spend another day of searching the boxes.

Perhaps we should interject here that the meetings and other events were fascinating. There were four First Day Ceremonies. The three on Thursday were for the United Nations Economic & Social Council and for the third issue of U.S. Flags of our Nations 44-cent stamps, eleven different stamps in all, and the Marshall Islands first day ceremony for their 19<sup>th</sup> Century steam locomotive stamps. Other events and discussions on the multi-page agenda were exhibit tours, society meetings, lectures on exhibiting, auxiliary markings, art on stamps, judging criteria, Japanese philately, book signings, leader workshops, mourning stamps and covers club show and tell, and on and on. There was simply not enough time in the day to get to everything. Prioritize, prioritize. We split for dinner, Al and Sharon checking out another of Pittsburgh's gems while Josh and Steve strolled down to Primanti Brothers, famous for their sandwiches, all of whose main content was slathered with French fries and cole-slaw inside the sandwich!. The story is that the sandwich was invented during the depression so that day laborers could eat their lunch with one hand. A bit sloppy, but not to be missed, it is a Pittsburgh experience.

Steve stopped back at the Cabaret Theatre to see if there were any tickets that night for “Into the Woods,” a Stephen Sondheim musical. It was sold out. But a woman in the lobby had one she wasn’t using and gave it to Steve, no charge. Turns out she was the wife of one of the actors. Steve enjoyed the show in the company of her mother and step-father. Just ask!

Saturday morning at nine, an hour before the show opening, was a meeting of the APS at which all officers’ reports were presented, the president gave a review of society progress in a number of areas, and members were recognized for various achievements and accomplishments. Our highlight was Steve being presented with his 25-year pin which promptly joined other show pins on his cap. Highlight of the day for Josh and Steve was a lecture/slide show presentation on Alexander Calder: America’s Modern Art Ambassador—A philatelic perspective, by Mark Haiman. Just spectacular. Once the meeting ended it was back to the show floor. Even if we didn’t find exactly what we were looking for, we did make many contacts with folks of similar interests, met many interesting dealers and collectors. Saturday was Josh’s day to walk the exhibits. Mind-boggling.

We all got together for dinner Saturday night at a good Italian place a few blocks from the hotel. Large plates, large portions. The walk back to the hotel helped digestion a good deal.

There were several highlights of the day on Sunday. Sharon and Al had spent all their money (probably not) and went to the Pittsburgh Aviary. Wonderful selection of some of the most colorful birds you have ever seen. For all the show participants, there was a fire alarm at about ten to one. The lights were flashing, the sirens were blaring, and the message repeating, “There is a fire emergency reported in the building. Find the nearest exit and leave immediately.” Well, we all sauntered toward the exit, some dealers stood dumbfounded thinking; “How am I ever going to get all this stock out of here?” Others were scooping stock off the table and into their cases as fast as they could. It was a madhouse. By the time most of us got downstairs to street level and stood around for two or three minutes, the all clear was announced and the escalators reversed so we could go back up.



Al and Sharon Nagy investigated the more liquid side of life in Pittsburgh and found this unique brewery. Check out [www.ChurchBrew.com](http://www.ChurchBrew.com) for an interesting history.

Another highlight of the day: We spotted Jim Pullin in disguise! He was actually dressed in jacket and tie for a meeting of some of his peers in the APS. We’re mystified about the jacket and tie. Everyone knows he’s from Florida.

Steve and Josh joined Jeff Shapiro in a brief tour of some of the exhibits. Josh then went to a fascinating lecture/slide show on the history of U.S. cancels from the earliest hand cancels and killers to the beginnings of machine cancels. Steve went about souvenir hunting and getting cancels on everything in his bag, up to and including his hotel room key!

Then back to the airport and home after an exciting and invigorating whirlwind of philately.