

The Cover Story

Oh, The Things You Can Learn Stamp Collecting! Joy of Exhibiting – 1972 World Chess Championship

By Mike Schumacher

When we started collecting stamps, covers, postcards and/or other philatelic items, the thought of exhibiting at a stamp show was probably an unknown concept. As Philatelists our goal was collecting the items of interest to us and filling the spaces in our album(s). I started the same way (filling album pages) and over the years different things caught my attention and provided a great deal of enjoyment and learning. The more I collected, the more albums filled my bookshelves and the more time I spent flipping through the pages and enjoying the items that I had accumulated. While perusing the album pages, the thought occurred to me that I was the only one who was enjoying these items. I therefore decided to join a stamp club and it was there that I learned about the concept of exhibiting at the local stamp show. The club President Ross Olson was very knowledgeable and proficient at exhibiting, as he had won a number of gold medal and show champion awards for his exhibits. He agreed to teach a series of classes on how to exhibit, for those of us who were interested in exhibiting. Thanks Ross! Thus, begun my adventure into exhibiting at the local stamp show.

Over the years, I had accumulated a fair number of items related to the “1972 World Chess Championship” and that seemed like a good topic for an exhibit that would be interest to others. Putting together my first exhibit was of course a bit of a challenge, as there was a lot to learn about how to lay things out, write up important information, as well as figure out and follow APS (American Philatelic Society) exhibiting guidelines. At last the big day came and my exhibit was mounted in the frames at the Minnesota Stamp Expo and I was excited and pretty darn proud. Other people would now also get to see and enjoy the material. During the 3-day show, I spoke to many people about the exhibit and some remembered news coverage about the event and others had an interest in chess. All in all, the exhibiting experience was a success and that doesn’t even count the awards that were achieved: silver medal, best novice exhibit, best exhibit with promise to improve, creativity award and finally the “People’s Choice” award for the show. Needless to say, I have been exhibiting ever since.

This particular exhibit has under-gone numerous revisions over the years (from 5 frames to 10 frames) and been shown at various shows across the U.S., as well as in Winnipeg, Canada, and three times in Iceland (after all that is where the 1972 World Chess Championship was held). Over time the award level on it has improved, but the real enjoyment is still sharing the material and experience with other people. For example, in Canada, I spent a couple of hours one afternoon discussing the material with members of a youth chess club. Upon returning home I sent the club some of the extra material that I had accumulated. They were delighted. In

Iceland, I got to meet, talk with and get my picture taken with the President of

Iceland, as well as meeting with members of the Icelandic Chess Federation to discuss and see what material they had from the match. I learned a lot from this meeting. In time, more items were purchased, and the exhibit was totally revised.

Needless to say, getting involved in the world of exhibiting has led to many wonderful experiences - meeting and learning from new people around the world, as well as sharing the joy

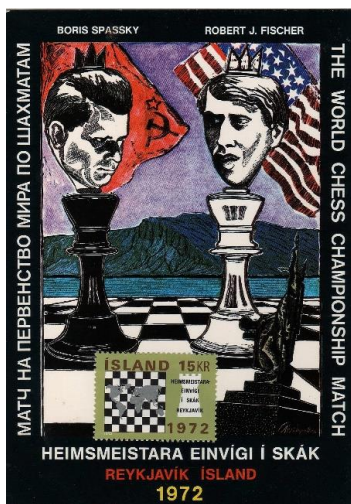


Figure A5

of my Philatelic interests. Exhibiting has certainly expanded my Philatelic world and increased the depth of knowledge about the material I collect. Yes, many hours have been put into creating

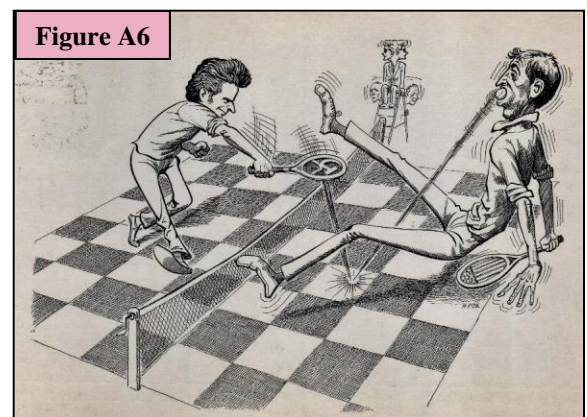


Figure A6

exhibits and revising them, but the payback in sharing the enjoyment with others and the learning has certainly been well worth the effort. So, for anyone, who has considered exhibiting and want someone to discuss it with, I am available. I certainly am far from knowing everything about exhibiting, but I should be able to get you started and point you in the right direction about where to find information. Try it, you might like it!

And now for a few items from the 1972 World Chess Championship exhibit:

1. **Iceland's first chess stamp** was issued on July 2, 1972, to coincide with the opening day of the event. **[Figure A1, on front cover]** It depicts "the globe superimposed on a picture of a chess board. The idea behind the design is obvious: it demonstrates the news that the world chess championships are being held this year." Hannes Petursson, SKAK Iceland Chess Magazine. Two million stamps in sheets of 50 were printed utilizing photogravure by the Thomas De la Rue Company in London, England. Most of the stamps were purchased for use at the match. The Icelandic Postal Administration set up a temporary Post Office at the Laugerdalsholl Sports Center. Two Icelandic Postal employees were canceling the special issue commemorative stamps and three additional postal workers were stoically licking each stamp and placing them on envelopes. People stood in lines (daily) for hours to get their envelopes stamped and canceled.
2. **First day covers:** Most first day covers will contain either or both the special chess match cancel or a Reykjavik cancel. **[Figure A2 & A3, on front cover]** A few small town first day cancels can be found, but they are rare.
3. **Cachets:** An event of this world-wide magnitude that ran for nearly three months certainly provided the Icelandic Chess Federation and other stamp dealers an opportunity for creativity and making money. My research finds nearly 90 different cachets were created during the event. Obviously, can't show them all here, but a couple have been included. **[Figure A4, Bobby Fisher autograph, on front cover]**
4. **Postcards:** My research finds 50 different postcards were created for the event. Again, only a couple of them shown here. **[Figure A5 & A6]**
5. **Other memorabilia:** This being a "Display" type exhibit other non-philatelic items can be included to help tell the story, such as admission tickets; medals; greeting cards; autographed items; banquet placemat; newspaper clippings and magazine covers. One item included here. **[Figure A7, Official Program]**
6. **Exhibit highlights:** One of the biggest challenges of this exhibit is finding properly mailed items using the Iceland chess stamp during the period of the match (AKA non-philatelic material). The couple of items included here are exhibit highlights because of who the sender and or recipients are. **[Figure A8]**

Hopefully this article may encourage those of you who have been considering your philatelic endeavors into exhibiting - to follow through, and/or spark an interest in those of you who haven't yet considered the idea. Currently, I have six different exhibits (all pertaining to Icelandic philately) that I have shown and a couple more ideas in the works. I have also been assisting the research efforts of a fellow exhibitor who lives in New Zealand on his "Icelandic Military covers" exhibit.

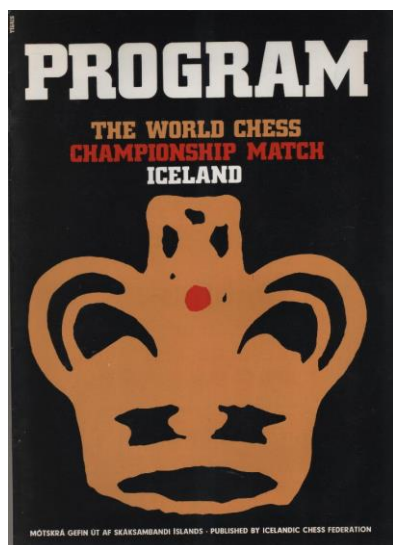


Figure A7

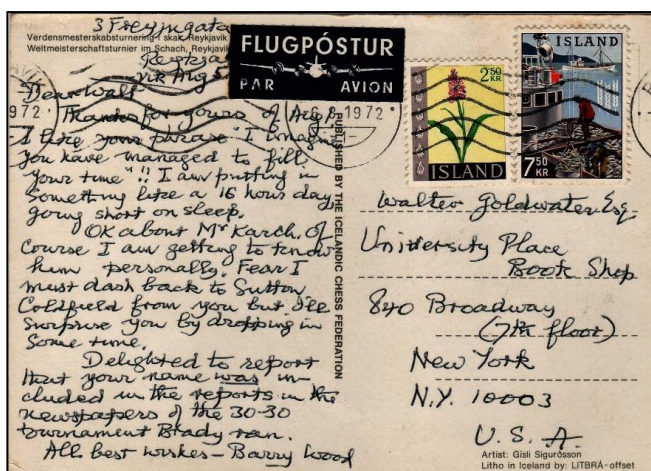


Figure A8, Postcard sent to Walter Goldwater Esq., tournament chess player; President of the Marshall Chess Club (where Fischer spent a lot of time playing chess) & founding member of the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America