

# Reminiscences

By Michael Rogers



## Negotiating

**A**s I remember, it started out with reams of paper pouring out of our fax machine, over 150 sheets. The cover letter asked for an offer based upon the images of the family China collection. I could tell there was real potential here.

For a whole lot of reasons, I'm not a fan of making an offer based upon fax or photocopy images. Often pertinent detail is missing to make an informed decision. Authenticity and condition is difficult to determine without seeing the material in person. A photo is so much better than a blurred image. I've never been one for pitching a "what if" high price and dealing with the disappointment later. Not fair to the buyer, not fair to the seller.

In the way the pages were annotated, it seemed clear the collection was assembled in China before the 1970's. Of no concern was whether the stamps were hinged; what mattered was how they were affixed to the page. Yesterday I was soaking Shanghai large dragons where someone thought gluing them to card was a good idea. Seeing a fax isn't going to disclose how stamps are mounted or their condition.

I had business up north so made arrangements to see the owner on the way back from New York. I sensed he wanted a valuation before I arrived as a test of my sincerity but there was no way I was going to pitch in the dark. That I had the ability to examine his collection in person surely would bring greater understanding; this would realize a precise valuation. The appraisal was free and he was under no obligation.

Thank goodness I didn't price his collection beforehand. The entire collection had been buried in the ground during the huge Cultural Revolution so everything was lightly toned which didn't show up in the faxes. As it turned out, bundles of covers weren't faxed because the owner did not know what was important to convey.

The album pages were described with Chinese characters. The collector laid out his stamps in story-book fashion, telling



a fascinating tale. Though the son wasn't a collector, I conveyed to him how his father told a story through his stamps. Turning the pages, were mint stamps, then cancellations highlighted by pertinent maps, then varieties, with enlarged drawings to show the details. While there weren't any rare stamps, the sum total of many unusual stamps plus the presentation would enable the toned stamps sell easier. The covers were intriguing. I knew I could convey my pleasure to collectors down the road.

As I turned the pages, the owner allowed that the only reason he was selling the collection was it was time for a new car and he had his eye on a brand new Lexus. When he told me what the model he wanted cost, let's say I had "sticker shock" :)

I pondered how to handle this as I couldn't pay his price but didn't want to hurt his feelings. I believe in the mantra "How to do business without being nega-

tive." So I looked at the fireplace mantle and took another tack. There were photos of his children, so I reached into my wallet for my Kyle's photos and steered conversation that way. For a long while, we chatted about children and other wonderful things. Finally, he looked at me, the connection made, saying "Michael, what do you think you're doing?" "Negotiating," I said. He grinned, saying "You know, for a white guy, you're real smart :) I'd be happy with a Honda." So I reached into my briefcase for the paperwork and paid him.

Afterwards he gave me his father's handwritten account of burying the collection during the Cultural Revolution. In those tumultuous times, intellectuals were cast out of the cities and their possessions ransacked. The family carefully wrapped their valuables, placing the stamp collection in a tin box, then secretly burying them. Fascinating reading. And yes, I will share it in print one day. ☒

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The relaxed smile of Michael Rogers is a familiar sight on many of America's largest stamp show bourses.



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## Michael Rogers

We have been asked on a number of occasions if there is a particular "thread" that runs through all of the formidable names of the gentlemen and ladies who are inductees into the **American Stamp Dealer Hall of Fame**. It is, in some ways, an easy question to answer. In fact, the inductee being announced in this issue of **ASD&C** answers it for us—

**Michael Rogers** entered the business of dealing in stamps in 1976 with just \$600 in his bank account—and in the interim years became a key worldwide influence (and expert) in his specific specialty area. He became such a major authority on the subject of China/Asia stamps and postal history that collectors (and dealers, too) couldn't possibly avoid beating a path to his door.

When one examines the names preceding Michael in this Hall of Fame, the remarks above hold true for practically all of them. A dealer's great influence for the betterment of our hobby is the key criterion for admission.

In his own words, "Its all about character and integrity. 'Integrity' is doing business on a level playing field. A sense of honor goes a long way. Contracts are fair only if they protect both sides. I believe business runs best according to simple truths and trust in the Lord. Money tempts; values don't."

The above, of course, is just the proverbial "tip of the iceberg" to the philosophy that has always guided Michael. He goes on:

"What distinguishes Michael Rogers Inc. is the philosophy that every collector can be a friend. Treat a customer as a friend and not a number. 'Empathy' translates into helping a collector know how to appreciate difficult material without feeling intimidated.

"Though the company bears my name, MRI is really the accomplishments of a family of cohesive staffers and supportive friends. The list of credits would fill a page.

"I'm as enthused as those I help. Imagine having employment where you're involved with your hobby, poring through stamps and postal history, bringing satisfaction to the table, chatting away with mighty fine people. I call that heaven!"

Michael graduated in 1972 from Oglethorpe University in Atlanta, Georgia, and the next year went to work for dealer John McDaniel. By the end of 1976, he had resigned and started his own business with that \$600. The business became successful enough for him to open his Winter Park, Florida, stamp shop in 1978—a storefront that he ran in that lovely suburb of Orlando for 29 years. His firm's large offices continue today in that same city.

Over that period, Michael's business grew into a multi-level operation handling every element of stamp dealing from filling want lists to holding major public auctions and mail sales. During that time, his business handled some of the most important philatelic properties in the (beginning in 1982) China/Asia spectrum. Michael became a board member of the China Stamp Society, wrote and still writes a major column for *Linn's Stamp News*—and now, a regular column here in **ASD&C**.

He's written over 700 articles on his subject matter and even collects, himself: worldwide Airpost stamps and postal history plus GB QEII, Ethiopia, Liberia, Yemen, Japan, Manchukuo, and Taiwan.

Welcome to posterity, Mr. Rogers!