

# Reminiscences

By Michael Rogers



## A sea change in the history of a long and successful philatelic career.

**E**ffective July 1, I merged my company Michael Rogers Inc. with Daniel F. Kelleher Auctions. Kelleher, established in 1885, has a public auction house in Hong Kong named Dynasty Auctions which will be renamed Kelleher, Rogers Auctions on September 1. MRI will join with Kelleher in Michael Rogers Online offering U.S., worldwide and Asian philatelic material.

I have accepted the role of Managing Director. I'm not involved in administration anymore; no more balance sheets and flow charts and I won't be dealing with employee distractions. My responsibilities include what I enjoy doing most. I shall be on the road, seeking material to buy or accept on consignment. Kelleher will now have material for sale at shows.

Business conducted solely for the sake of business seems like an empty shell; being a professional philatelist has brought me fine friendships along the way. If you've seen me at a stamp show, you know that I'm enjoying the experience.

You're probably wondering why I have taken this step. The answer is simple: This is my way of easing into a less stressful lifestyle. Less stress will minimize the occurrence of migraine headaches. And because I'm with folks who know me very well, I can stay in the field doing what I excel at.

Getting here has been an interesting ride.

A couple of years ago, I made the decision to part with my company. I'd gone through months of headaches, my neurologist suggesting retirement. If I was a salaried guy, I could simply quit, but having a company such as mine is a complicated affair. The company was worth so much more as a going concern than to close it. And closing MRI meant my employees would be out of work, something I didn't

want a hand in.

There isn't a cure for having migraine headaches. You can't have an operation or move to a more favorable climate. There's some meds that will prevent most migraines, and there's pain medications. Everything has a side effect and things lose their tolerance.

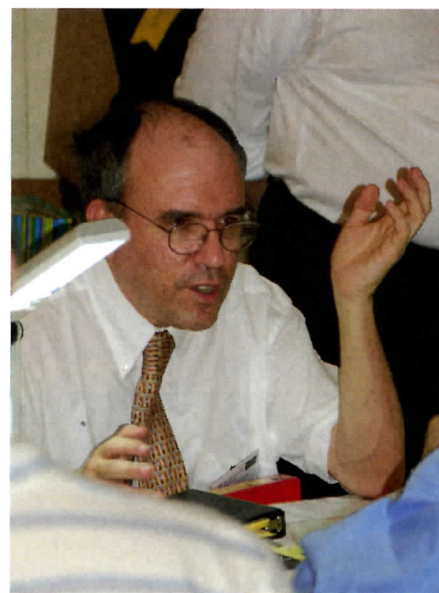
Either take more potent meds or work on the stress.

I didn't advertise or go to a business broker. I was very careful, thinking over each move. Many would be interested though few would understand. I didn't want to open my business records to the curious. To have a public auction company is a great responsibility. These elements rule: integrity, having good business sense, being well capitalized and being a fine philatelist.

I wanted my company to remain in Winter Park, in order to protect the employees. Ah well, no company I interviewed was interested in that. Two overseas firms didn't want to sign a non-disclosure statement so they didn't get further than an introduction, and all wanted me to remain as a full time employee in whatever city they were headquartered in. One company even wanted to see my mailing list early on! That's confidential.

A friend recommended I try the Kelleher auction firm. I imagined they would not be interested as they had a public auction house in Hong Kong, and I thought what I had duplicated theirs. Well, I couldn't have been more wrong!

The two partners who own Kelleher were well known to me. Larry Gibson is a friend going back more than two decades. He transformed my company into a key player in the China/Asia Auction field, working here from 1996 to 2002. My vision was too narrow; he desired auctions in Hong Kong, so he went on to a differ-



The change in the author's career allows him to focus on his greatest love—buying collections and visiting and consulting with fellow philatelists.

ent venue. And we are friends.

I knew David Coogle through Andy Levitt. Andy and I would chat time to time. As Andy's right hand, David's name would wander into the conversation. I reckoned there would be the day when I would have the chance to know him. Now that I'm with Kelleher, I've come to know David as a great guy, a man of uncommon integrity and compassion.

Essential to the transaction is that I stay involved. How wonderful that I am able to participate in the evolution of what MRI will become.

It's a win-win. MRI consignors and bidders are treated to a higher level of service through public auctions in Hong Kong, superior auction catalogues, and an enhanced online service. I have more free time for face to face road trips and trade shows, describing auction lots and writing magazine articles. Wow!

And this is not the end of the story. More to come! ☒



# Reminiscences

By Michael Rogers

## Alvin Hintz and the Winter Park Stamp Shop

**S**urely the key to Winter Park Stamp Shop's success was hiring Alvin Hintz, this a few months after the shop opened in mid 1979. At first I couldn't afford hiring anyone. With the sure sight of youth, I had great confidence in my decisions.

Alvin managed freight in an Orlando warehouse. One day the owner told him to quit because Alvin had a slight frame and the owner figured Alvin was getting pretty old (at age 35!) for such labor.

Feeling the pressure and not understanding his value in the marketplace, Alvin was panic stricken. I, however, knew he'd be perfect for my stamp shop. Low key, easy to be with, philatelically knowledgeable—a natural!

Limited by just 516 square feet on trendy Park Avenue in downtown Winter Park, I designed the stamp shop to be as self service as possible. I could hold down the fort, balancing five or six customers at the same time.

As a new experience, I suggested Alvin to go with the flow, to relax and enjoy. Make believe he was in his stamp den. Simply being behind the counter would give him credibility; any customer would assist in overcoming that little fumble, if it would be made.

For hours on end, quite normal in the day to day activity of a stamp shop, Alvin would patiently fill the mint and used U.S. stockbooks, maintain our supplies like albums and supplements and help collectors filling in their albums. I don't believe I ever heard him raise his voice in anger or discord.

Alvin collected mint British Commonwealth, spending hundreds of dollars yearly on new issues, occasionally filling in on earlier material as he could. He would spend peaceful evenings at home painstakingly cutting black Showgard

How many stamp shops have you ever seen that promoted business with a full-scale billboard? One could probably count them on the fingers of one hand.



The late Alvin Hintz, who ran Michael Rogers' Winter Park Stamp Shop—a true collector who turned retail philatelist, a perfect combination—and a delight to visit with.



mounts for Scott albums. Those Grenada new issues filled a lot of pages!

Collectors gravitated to him because he was a collector. Isn't it refreshing to ask about stamp mounts and album pages and receive first hand experiences as advice? When Alvin and I touted certain brands, we could say they were truly tested in the field.

The man sure was gullible. The U.S. 1938 \$5 Coolidge mint is quite popular; every U.S. singles collector needs one. It's an appealing stamp. One day I was fortunate to purchase a batch of bright, fine-very fine, mint never hinged examples, perhaps 15 or so. I wrote an "On Sale" tag, putting them out for \$75 each, instead of the normal retail of \$120.

A smooth talking dealer came in when I was out of town, saying "Hey, I'll take them all. They are priced at \$15 each." Alvin told me afterwards he thought the

price was too low, but they were on sale! (I made the dealer return them.) But you know what? I'd rather that my employee be too trusting than being rude or heavy handed, taking a suspicious bite out of everyone, afraid of being taken advantage of.

Alvin once tended to a dying friend, giving the guy the guest room, taking care of him until the move to hospice. I only know the story because I overheard a phone conversation. Alvin never commented on this extraordinary act, privacy and humility reigning.

Alvin's mother passed away in her mid forties. When he started losing weight, he convinced himself it was equally dramatic. When he received his diagnosis of diabetes, he learned how to manage his care. I know his diabetes was a relief.

Alvin passed away in 2001. He is spoken of fondly by all who knew him! ☐

