

Travels with Mel

“Who the hell is Stanley Gibbons?”

By Mel Borofsky, photo by Michele



Last month while riding between the Tower of London Bridge and Trafalgar Square on the #15 London Transit bus, my wife Michele and I were enjoying the double decker ride. Halfway through the ride I suddenly spotted a familiar store and shouted, “Quick we have to get off; that’s Stanley Gibbons!”

Wide eyed, Michele replied, “Who the hell is Stanley Gibbons, we don’t know anyone in London.” With great resistance I maneuvered her off the bus and pointed to the sign above the shop. She understood immediately and warned me not to spend too much money.

I did overpay for a set of Solomon Island stamps, £14 or \$22.00, Scott catalogued at \$18.50. It was worth it thought, they did place my purchase in a Stanley Gibbons plastic bag (see photo).



Did You Know? by John C. Robbins

Did you know that you can download and listen to a weekly podcast about stamps, stamp collecting and postal history? "STAMP SHOW HERE TODAY" is available at StampShowHereToday1.podbean.com and on iTunes.

Episode #29, titled "WESTPEX" first aired on May 7th, 2015. During this show, the four hosts tell stamp stories and discuss Japan's missing post office and their experiences at WESTPEX 2015. All prior podcasts are also available.

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By PSE

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Description

Stamp Show Here Today is a podcast dedicated to stamps and stamp collecting. Brought to you by Scott Murphy, Caj Bretfus, Tom Schilling, Jessica Mosher, and Geoff Mosher. Features weekly episodes that include current stamp news, stamp guides, expertization techniques, professional opinions, beginner's advice, and more. SSHT is meant for all stamp collectors of all ages and levels of experience.

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3 Episode 32 – Grills	Hello listeners, welco...	6/2/2015	Free
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6 Episode 29 – WEST...	Hey listeners, welcome...	5/7/2015	Free

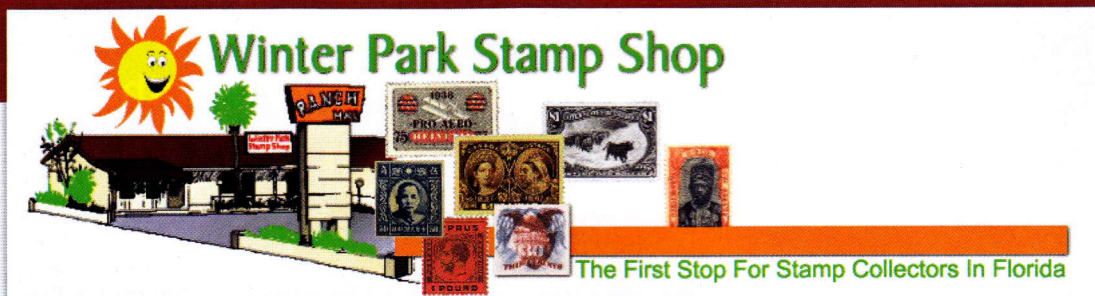


Reminiscences

By Michael Rogers

Bob Womack and the "Can Do" Stamp Shop

A cheerful ad for the late, great Winter Park Stamp Shop.



We would joke about the depth of Bob Womack's philatelic knowledge. It was said he could place his finger on the surface of a stamp and tell you the watermark. When I joined John McDaniel's staff in 1973, I soon realized Bob was indispensable to the McDaniel business. Bob Womack knew his U.S. backwards and forwards. Bob would solve any philatelic problem John assigned.

Opening Winter Park Stamp Shop down the street from John's office in 1978 was pure chutzpah. John was everything I wasn't. He was retired military, well established and wealthy with a breath-taking inventory. I was a skinny buck toothed guy, not yet 30, with a net worth of less than \$6,000. I would label empty counter books to give the illusion of a much broader stock.

That first year, Winter Park Stamp Shop's sole employee was me. There was an onerous clause in the shop's lease stating that if the store was closed for even one week day, the lease would be voided. I would be out of business.

A few months into the first year, I suffered through a day half blind with the contagious eye infection called conjunctivitis, also known as "pink eye." Without an employee, I had no choice but to sit in a corner of the shop and hope no customers came that day. Not that it was much of a concern in those early days.

When John rented his office years back, his thoughts were on renting a large enough floor space for several rooms. He contemplated his mail order business and operating a mail sale. He chose a building in downtown Winter Park with a sweeping, double deck staircase in front and no elevator. He had parking in the rear but could access his office only by a steep metal staircase.

When John employed me, I didn't give those steps a thought, but his aging staff did. William Brownell was a tidy gentleman, working well past his eighties until a bathroom fall ended his days with John. Bob would curse them under his breath, returning from lunch each day. I remember the days when John would eat at his desk, rather than get the exercise of climbing steps to and fro. Actually, John's steps turned out to be my blessing later on: given the choice, a collector might well choose a bright street level store over climbing two flights of stairs for an office environment.

Come 1983, Bob Womack came a-calling, wanting to know whether there was a place on my staff for him. Was there! Winter Park Stamp Shop was going gang busters, plus I needed help sorting out the China I'd acquired a few months back.

Winter Park Stamp Shop developed a reputation as a 'can-do' stamp shop. We could buy anything that came down the pike because Bob would reinforce my growing knowledge. We had the ability to serve the most advanced collector because we would guarantee everything we sold. Employing an expert who can correctly distinguish the US 19th century grills and knew the Washington Franklin types intimately gave me great confidence. Instead of sending a stamp out for certification or identification, I had an in-house expert.

Bob was happiest in our office, working with stamps, away from the public. With a fierce intellect and caustic humor, he was quite forceful in his opinions. I would say he didn't suffer fools. One had to be careful asking for his help in the stamp shop as he was dismissive of anyone not his equal. Balancing his great abilities with his lack of diplomacy was challenging. That being

said, we both were glad that I had an office in the back for him, away from distractions.

He lived in Deltona, some thirty miles away. As his health deteriorated, we would see him less and less. Bob suffered a gruesome death in 1991 from the complications of diabetes.

Weeks after his passing, I received the unexpected news that I had inherited Bob's highly specialized stamp collections. There was an album of Confederate States with many provisionals, all forgeries. A collection of U.S. 1883 2 cent brown Washington Scott #210 boasted a rare first day cover but the meat of the two albums were the very many fancy cancels and plate scratches.

As I packed up his philatelic library and the collections, I became uneasy. Bob and I had spoken many times so I knew his reasoning. His family didn't understand his collecting; possibly they resented the time he spent on his hobby. Thus he would ignore them, giving me his collections.

Coming out of his den, I told Mrs Womack I'd feel a lot better if she would allow me to purchase his collections. I wrote her a hefty check. I suppose buying the collections instead of accepting them as gifts made me not a very good businessman. I reckoned Bob had been so good to me over the years that I would return the favor.

Other collections went elsewhere. The coin collection went to his coin dealer, the semi precious stones collection was inherited by his dealer. I asked about his collection of 19th century rare books. A family member was destroying them. Then I better understood why he gave his collections away.

Happy to be helpful at mikechina303@hotmail.com. ☐