

Eight Club Members Drawn to the APS Richmond Show

by A. Steve Patrick

It takes 12 hours of almost solid driving to go from Apopka to Richmond. **Steve Patrick, Bill Johnston, and Richard Blanchard** shared expenses in a four-day trip. Other club members attending included **Tom Lera, Bonnie Streeter, and Mike Schumacher. John Latter** and **Jean** had a dealer spot as well as **Haruyo Baker** and husband **George**.

The venue is first class with \$8 parking. The three first day ceremonies including the one for the Pollinators were held on the floor which increased visibility. The USPS had enhanced presence with virtual reality, a video participation game, and good cancellers from Kansas City.

Richmond is full of history and good restaurants. The “three amigos” visited the Hollywood Cemetery, the Tredegar Iron Works, and the Old Capitol grounds. They found an excellent BBQ place and an upscale soul food restaurant. The Confederate Stamp Alliance had a Friday night “coat and tie” banquet (@ \$125). Ask Tom about the food.



Mike S. had three exhibits in the show. One interesting single frame exhibit had fishing flies on stamps. Each stamp also had a matching real fly to go with it. Attached to the frame was a rod and reel and a creel with a stuffed fish.



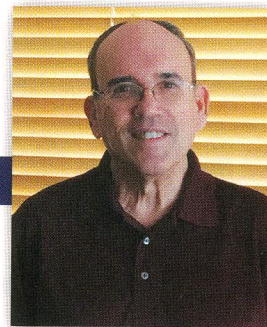
The ESPER stamp society organized a tour of the Maggie Walker historic home which was attended by 24 individuals who enjoyed the great program by the Park Service. Walker was the first woman bank president in 1903 and was a leader in the early civil rights era.

The next APS show will be in Birmingham, AL, in February which is an even shorter drive. Who wants to car pool?



Reminiscences

By Michael Rogers



Growing pains, but good ones.

[Continued from the June issue...]

Alvin Hintz and I were running ragged. Later, John Demeter join the staff. As the 1980's proceeded, the China company expanded with talented staff who helped the stamp shop clientele.

Come 1990, the China company, Michael Rogers Inc, relocated from the second floor above the stamp shop to a three thousand square foot loft blocks away. Most of my time was spent at MRI on Welbourne Ave. Pricelists continued to pour forth and MRI held booths at stamp shows on both coasts.

Business at the stamp shop was so good that John came to me with a welcome idea. How about he purchase a half interest in Winter Park Stamp Shop? While it was going great guns, my attention was elsewhere, at MRI. The beauty of the plan was, as part owner, he have a stake in his future. I liked that.

The mistake I made was ceding control of the day to day business while I took responsibility for the mail order. It didn't occur to me that he would change the way the business operated, considering it was a winning business model. What he did was have each customer negotiate his own purchase price. The problem there was the stamp shop had many wealthy clients who considered it unseemly to haggle, preferring to pay as marked. Then a loud mouth would come in, offering 50% of retail for a *Scott National Album*. Picture an image, the nickel and dime running a \$1,000 sale.

Within a year, the shop had a negative net worth. The bank was on verge of calling our line of credit. Both our homes stood as security for the paper. I purchased his half interest and he looked for a job elsewhere. Then six months later, I phoned and rehired John, telling him he was a good and honest man, a Barney Fife, not an Andy Taylor. The shop need-

ed him. John stayed on until it closed in 2009.

I was in a blessed position. The Bate-man China/Asia accumulation that I purchased in November 1982 was followed a week later by another in West Palm Beach. Large purchases came easily because China simply wasn't popular. As I straightened my inventory out, I could see weak areas. Though I had a wide and deep inventory, I never let the marketplace know. Thus I advertised to buy as well as sell.

Everyone knows today how popular China is. But then! I remember a conversation with the late Harry Graetz telling me that it was easier to find value from China Red Revenue covers by soaking off the stamps than trying to sell unsightly covers. Some of mine were priced in 1983 for \$75 but Harry wanted to pay \$55 each; no deal. In 1983, a pricelist of mine illustrated VF mint blocks of China 1894 Dowager blocks for \$550, but they didn't sell. In 1984 I was selling VF-NH sets of the PRC 1962 Mei Lan Fang imperf for \$200, pairs for \$400. A 1984 inventory shows I had over a thousand coiling dragon covers in stock—going price was anywhere from \$2-\$4 each.

I took the stance that shows were to spread the word that my company had a wide ranging China/Asia inventory. What MRI would sell at shows was either the straight forward material on pricelists or more one of a kind like collections and postal history.

Pricelists matched the prices of inventory carried at shows. We wouldn't discount on a pricelist or at a show. If a collector or dealer made a substantial purchase, we would gift literature instead. And then, it probably would be the literature or album pages we published. No doubt this was frustrating to folks accustomed to discounts elsewhere, but we were in a unique position. MRI had the

inventory not found elsewhere.

For a first time potential buyer at our booth, my-o-my! It was a big shock, but the second time around, we had harmony. MRI prices often were a whole lot better than expected because we didn't adhere to a percentage of catalog. Whether a fellow spent \$30 or \$30,000, it was at the prices marked.

Our booths were usually mobbed. Say at the New Yorker in Midtown across from Madison Square Garden, we had three or four straight tables together. Rarely would we have a Caucasian collector on the first day—as the four day show wore on, more Caucasians would show up.

I knew most of the repeat Chinese/Asian collectors by sight and the sound of their voices. Lovely people.

At one show, a Chinese gentleman with wife and young son in tow started pulling better material out of a counter book, asking "What's my discount?" As he chose, I handed his wife a Chinese history book which intertwined 19th century Chinese postal history in full color. Quite dazzling.

As his son peered at the book, the man wanted a look. I said, "No, the book is my gift to your wife and son. You need to ask them." He asked again about the discount, but by this time the stamps he picked out came to \$1,700. As I looked upon the wife and son poring through the book, I asked whether he had ever seen his son interested in Chinese stamps before. Delighted, the collector realized my point. When he reached \$2,000, he paid for his purchase, discount forgotten. The family thanked me for introducing the wife and son to Chinese history. I turned it around by opening my wallet to the picture of my son Kyle, who is half Chinese. When he was this young boy's age of seven, saying it is important for young people to know their heritage. ☐