



# Our Hobby Has a Future



As I begin writing this column, I can't seem to get youth off my mind. I've just heard that Carl Gerhardt from the Sarasota, Florida Philatelic Club is very ill and in the hospital. During the eighteen months that I lived in Sarasota I remember Carl bringing stamp collecting to the local Boys and Girls Club as well as several schools. And when there proved to be more interest than he could satisfy he recruited me to lead a local school club.

I've also just read the oft repeated claim that kids are not interested in stamps and that stamp collecting is dead. I look around and I see a much different picture. On a recent beautiful Saturday, twenty-three kids showed up for a stamp camp at the American Philatelic Center. And when parents arrived to collect their kids, they not only had trouble getting them to leave but some of the younger siblings also wanted to stay. We are worried about having sufficient adults to oversee all the

scouts signed up for the workshops at APS STAMPSHOW in Pittsburgh. This is the type of problem we like!

In the July issue of the *Philatelic Prospector*, journal of the Sacramento (CA) Philatelic Society, I note that 180 scouts took part in nine sessions offered over three days by Bill Oliver and Fred Rickert. I've also recently observed the monthly online chat of APS youth group, the Young Stamp Collectors of America, and am thinking ahead to meeting the first group of three Young Philatelic Leader Fellows at StampShow that the generosity of the membership has made possible.

Few kids may pick up stamp collecting on their own, but when exposed to the hobby the interest appears genuine. Kids may stray from stamp collecting. Even more than adults, kids go for the latest fads. But our last member survey indicates this is nothing new. Few of you report no pauses in your collecting, and the break may be 20, 30, or even 40 years.

At the Women's Festival, held at the American Philatelic Center in late May, the name Kathryn Johnson raised my curiosity. When I joined the APS in 1980 someone by the same name wrote a junior column for *The American Philatelist* and also served as President of the Junior Philatelists of America (JPA). I had not heard of her since 1981 or 1982. I figured it was a common name and could not possibly be the same person.

I was wrong. After nearly a thirty-year absence she was returning to the hobby. A few weeks later I saw her again as a Summer Seminar student. Then, at the invitation of Treasurer Dan Walker, she sat in on the Finance Committee following the Seminar and made a sufficient impression on President Wade Saadi that he is asking the Board to approve her as our new Membership Committee chair at the Board



Stamp Camp at the APC.

meeting prior to StampShow.

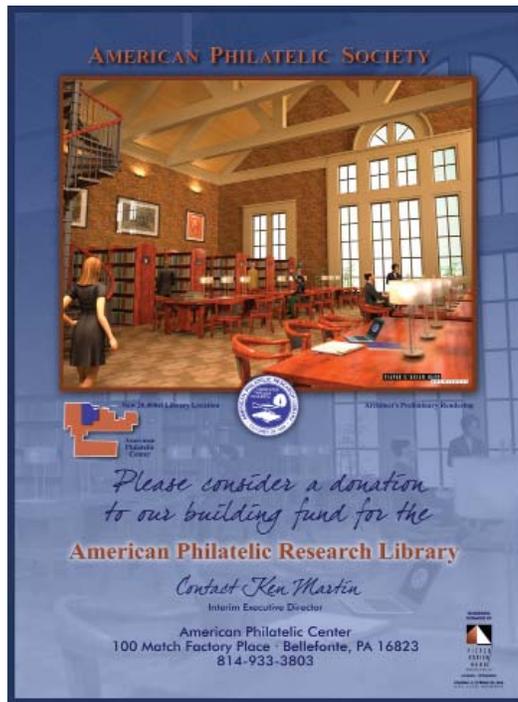
I should not have been surprised. Dane Claussen, her successor as president of the JPA, became editor of *Stamp Collector* and president of the APS Writers Unit 30. Her predecessor John Taddy is still an APS member and his opponent for JPA president, Dan Siegel, currently chairs the APS Bylaws Committee. I succeeded Dane as JPA president, and the auction director during my term was Bob Birnbaum who has served on the APS Finance Committee. Brian Liedtke who serves the Wisconsin Federation of Stamp Clubs was not far behind Bob and me.

The JPA no longer exists but new organizations such as the Young Stamp Collectors of America do and as long as adults cultivate kids' interest the hobby will not die.

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Member Ed Bates wrote in response to a recent column with an idea for broadening the outreach of APS. His concept is that any APS member anywhere in the USA and probably some foreign countries could be a contact person between local historical, art, music, and many other societies and the USPS, or any applicable foreign Post Office, to establish special cancellations when appropriate.

He believes "This could be a win-win-win proposition with the local society profiting from sales of a special cachet cover, the USPS selling stamps and the APS gaining local recognition while also encouraging stamp collecting. The idea derives from my association with the Trinity County (CA) Historical Society. They had found and restored one of the 'mud wagons' (a stagecoach) used on the local route about 100 years ago. It was to make its debut in the county seat's Fourth of July parade. The stagecoach/steamship triangles had been issued that spring, and the Postmaster suggested the special cancellation at a station set up along the parade route on the porch of the museum the society operates. I don't recall the actual numbers, but the



postal clerk sold a lot of stamps and the society sold more than 1,000 cacheted envelopes, which is not bad for a community with a population of 3,500 in a county the size of New Jersey with less than 14,000 total residents."

Great work, Ed!

In a similar vein, in mid July the American Philatelic Center hosted Jazz PA. While events in our building provide a small revenue stream, we also took advantage of the opportunity to show off several exhibits of music related stamps and covers, exposing several hundred individuals to the potential of topical stamp collecting.

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A great pleasure in serving as Interim Executive Director is that I get to send thank you notes to many generous members. I was delighted recently when, during a single week, the thanks you included five firms — AIG, Bank of America, Boeing, Chevron, and General Electric — that matched the contributions of our members. At a time when funds are so tight for many people what better way to make a gift go farther. Although a number of companies recently has cut back matching programs, others will even match gifts from retired former employees. But, note that some programs allow for

a match of a gift to the American Philatelic Research Library, but will not match a gift to the American Philatelic Society.

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At the Summer Seminar, President Saadi and I discussed the importance of visuals and how it would be wonderful to have a rendering of the planned permanent space for the Library. However, we also agreed the Society could not afford to spend thousands of dollars to have this done. With little to lose, I sent an e-mail to member Charles O'Brien who I knew was an architect for a major firm in the Atlanta area. About four weeks later, O'Brien provided a preliminary rendering free of charge. While the three-by-four-foot blowup he provided to display at STAMPSHOW is more dramatic, even the small illustration shown here should be very helpful. Thank you, Charles. And thank you also for helping to promote STAMPSHOW by showing your exhibit of Roberto Clemente in Pittsburgh!

By the time you read this, I hope to have met several thousand of you at StampShow. While the recession has impacted the show a little, it will still be larger than many international events.

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Last month I mentioned, the debut of our revamped website was nearing. We have narrowed the time frame and are now hoping to be live by the second week of September. Our September monthly e-bulletin will begin a series on new features on the website. Please take a look and share your comments. Any good website needs to keep evolving and improving, something that will be much easier to accomplish with your input.

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Thanks for your membership and thanks for helping us to insure a bright future for philately.