



The Overprint

Newsletter of the Reading Stamp Collectors' Club

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**Most Meetings Held the first Tuesday of Every Month at 7:00 p.m.
Meeting Site: Berkshire Commons, 5485 Perkiomen Avenue (Route 422)
Turn North on Lincoln opposite of the Dairy Queen.
Proceed 300 feet, turn left on Washington and look right of center at the stop sign.**

Tuesday, June 7, 2011

Auction !!!

Bring your unwanted stamps ***and*** your wallet so you can share your extras
and bid on other collectors duplicates!

Another closed album...

At the May meeting we learned of the passing of Richard Jarrett, another of our members.

When I first began to go to meetings about 15 years ago, Mr. Jarrett was a regular attender.

Since then, we lost many of our members. However, I can recall Mike Matus, Bob Brown and John Zitrick all serving as president in my first years of membership.

My, how a group photo of our club in 1996 would be different! *-stan*

It Pays to go to Stamp Club

At the May meeting, your editor bought two drawing tickets and won \$23.00.

I have plans for that money--

- to pay off the mortgage
- down payment on an Inverted Jenny
- fill up my truck with gasolene
- buy many cookies, milk shakes and burgers!

For the attendance drawing, Barbara Zitrick's name was pulled and she was not present. The prize is now \$15.00.

Miniature Trees on Stamps reasonable alternative to Real Thing

by Stan Raugh

One nice thing about stamps is that if you cannot afford the real thing, you often can collect it philatelically for much less money.

For example, if you like elephants there are many reasonably priced stamps for much less than the cost of a several-thousand-pound beast.

I know about ten years ago, the going price for an elephant was \$50,000. (You probably wonder how I know that—well, a circus owner told me that, to explain why he rented an elephant whenever he needed one for a show).

Not to mention, of course, that elephants eat like...an elephant. And they need a *really* big house.

So, if you like elephants, collect them on stamps!

I know this is a stretch, but it leads to a story about Bonsai.

A few weeks ago, I got to attend the tail end of the Mid-Atlantic Bonsai Convention near Harrisburg.

Bonsai is a Japanese word that basically means a tree in a pot. Hundreds of years ago, the Chinese began to collect interesting trees dwarfed by nature and grow them in a pot..

The Japanese picked up the idea from their neighbors and Bonsai were mostly grown for temple decorations.

Then, especially about two or three hundred years ago, individuals began growing Bonsai.

Originally, all Bonsai were "collected," which means enthusiasts would scale cliffs and climb mountains to look for small trees abused by nature and dwarfed in size. Less than ten percent of the trees that fit the bill can be harvested as there has to be a proper root base to support the plant.

I have a DVD of a fellow collecting trees in the American west and have a friend who has traveled out that way to dig old trees.

Stories are told of trees growing at altitudes so high that the growing season is only a few weeks. Typical trees are 75 to 2,000 years old and are delicately removed from nature.

Successfully collecting and keeping a tree alive is a windfall. I have never seen them for sale for less than a few hundred dollars and I did see one for \$8,000. Mind you, these are starter trees, typically about two or three feet high and maybe as wide.

Today, most Bonsai start life as seedlings or nursery stock. They may be trained in similar or different styles than collected trees.

Another interesting factor is the pots in which Bonsai are grown. They are made in many different styles. Pottery pots of a nice design sell for from less than \$20 to a few hundred dollars or more.

The largest expositions of Bonsai are in Japan where the best in the world are grown. Shows may last as long as ten days. Entrants will often rent antique Chinese pots to show off their Bonsai trees. These pots rent for thousands of dollars a week!

Bonsai existed in the United States mostly at arboretums or a few public gardens before World War II. A few Japanese-Americans also practiced the art. What gave the hobby a boost was that American GI's saw these plants during the occupation of Japan and came home to create Bonsai.

By the 1960's there were a number of professional teachers and the result is that by now we have some American Bonsai hitting 50-plus years of training. Some are appraised at tens of thousands of dollars. But inasmuch as dozens of stamps depicting Bonsai have been issued, you can get one for a lot less. And, you don't have to water it for up to seven times a day!