



MEETINGS - 2ND WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH
STAUFFER MANSION - 7:30 P.M.
1241 Lititz Pike, Lancaster, PA 17601
Next Meeting - Wed. MAY 11, 1994

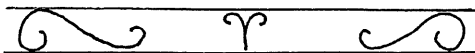
FOR INFORMATION ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION
CALL MARILYN SHIRLEY (717)872-2479 OR
MIKE SHIRLEY(717)394-0186

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

I wish to thank all those who helped to make the recent Stamp Show a success. I apologize to everyone for not being able to help. Unfortunately, I had another unexpected commitment, inasmuch as I was recovering from heart bypass surgery. I hope to be sufficiently recovered to participate in the upcoming June Program.

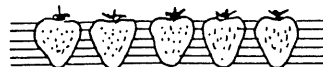
BILL GREINER



BILL GREINER, LCPS President, underwent quintuple heart bypass surgery on April 20th at Lancaster General Hospital. He is now at home, in good spirits, and recuperating nicely, already working on his stamps.

may host

The "Host with the most" for the month will be DAVE STRAYER.



MAY PROGRAM

The May program will be a Stamp Auction. Surplus catalogues, albums, supplies are also welcome. There is still time to bring your lotted material to the May meeting.

"Market Man" writes a stamp investment column with a twist for the Global Stamp News. He chooses the stamps of not only a single country, but a finite period of time as well. He also chooses stamps of striking beauty so that you may enjoy and even exhibit them before the time comes when you decide to sell, maybe in favor of beginning the challenge of forming a different specialized collection. He writes of what the dealer looks for when he is buying your stamps.

No doubt he will be much more critical than you were in purchasing them initially. He gives tips in areas of collecting mostly overlooked by other writers but which can be rewarding both esthetically and financially. This is the first installment of a three-part series.

... The Editor

MAKE COLLECTING PAY WITH MARKET MAN

Sticking strictly to stamps, not getting involved in postal history, how do you go about deciding just what to buy to create a fine collection which will prove to be a worthwhile long-term investment.

I suppose I could pick a "classic" country like one of the old German States, or Great Britain or early Switzerland, but that would be cheating: all you have to do is demand tip-top conditioning, pay through the nose for it, keep an eye on reputable dealers' prices, and sit tight. But few ordinary collectors can afford such luxuries, so I thought I would pick a country that has seen great popularity with American collectors, but is currently not in the limelight -- for good reasons!

When Laos came into being as an independent country in 1947, money was tight all around, collectors were wary of anything outside the major countries they knew so well, and news was slow to travel anyway. Hardly anyone had heard of French Indo-China (which broke up to form Laos, Cambodia and Viet-Nam) and fewer cared about it.

The country's way of life seemed strange, its language was totally opaque (and still is!), and maps were slow to reprint with these new countries. So Laos got ignored by all except French collectors, and it is to French stamp dealers that we owe virtually all the stock currently available.

Laos and a Kingdom - King Sisavang Vong had been King of Luang-Prabang since 1904 under French Protection, and at first the country formed part of a nebulous entity called the French Union, which name appears on its earlier stamps. Full independence within the Union came in 1953, and Laos left the Union in 1956. Three years later the King died, though in accordance with local religious practice his funeral did not take place until 1961 when the date was deemed propitious.

He was succeeded by King Savang Vatthana, but during his reign Civil War broke out and by 1975 he was forced to abdicate. Prince Souvannouvong took over as leader of the Pathet Lao rebels and the country became the People's Democratic Republic of Laos. In fact, during 1976 stamps inscribed "Royaume du Laos" (Kingdom of Laos) remained in use with that inscription crossed through in colored crayon or ink!

Long before this, Laotian stamps had become the plaything of an exploitative agency which did at least maintain the character of the issues as showing forth life in Laos and not simply as topical trash.

After the Communists assumed control, topicalization of the new issue program became blatant and naturally most collectors simply quit buying anyway.

That's the background: I aim to look solely at the issues from 1951 (the first stamps bearing the name Royaume du Laos) and the mid-1960's. I have picked this period because the stamps are attractive and interesting, they saw very genuine postal use, the country was mostly at peace and prospering, there was considerable US commercial and diplomatic involvement with Laos at the time, and because then "bad drove out good" these earlier stamps suffered a loss of popularity which is bound to lead to increased demand now that the country is throwing off the Communist yoke and aiming, however slowly toward democracy and renewed relations with the West.

When you see a Laos collection, you are bound to be struck by the delicate colors, the unusual scenes, and the large size of these superbly designed stamps. For this, we owe a debt of gratitude mostly to two designers - Leguay and Pheulpin. Both were French, but Leguay settled in Laos in the early forties and soon had a household that comprised a wife and a mistress, both resident in their house, and a joint family of some 25 children. Leguay often used his family as models - the Musicians on the 1957 set are his sons, and on the 16k value of the 1957 Rice set you can see his mistress Van Sy and daughter Elaine.

Laos is a Buddhist country, and this is reflected everywhere on its stamps. The Constitution required the King to be "a fervent Buddhist" and the country's Supreme Protector of the Faith. Six magnificent 1953 stamps show us statues of the Buddha in Laos; in 1954 three stamps marking the King's Jubilee have superb engravings of a Vientiane scene and these are among the country's blue-chip investments as although 300,000 sets were printed only 50,000 were sold, the rest being officially destroyed when withdrawn from sale, as was done with all issues.

In fact, sale quantities of most early issues were relatively small, and when you consider that there were some 20 post offices country-wide - though by 1968 this had shrunk under Communist invasion to no more than 13 - you will realize that postal use means even smaller quantities exist in fine unhinged and well-centered mint condition for your collection.

A six-value 1955 set shows scenes from the great Hindu epic Ramayana - for Buddhists still honor much that exists in Hinduism - and the issue under the French Union in 1956 was for the 2,500th anniversary of the Buddhist Era, though thanks to a slip-up they are inscribed for its "centenary"!

(TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH - Part II, "More Interesting Items").



A REPORT ON THE LANCOPEX STAMP SHOW
WILL BE IN THE JUNE NEWSLETTER.

ANYTHING BUT STAMPS NIGHT

Our June program will give our members, their significant others, and friends, the opportunity to demonstrate there is a hobby life outside of stamps.

If you are into crafts, collecting, performing; if your hobby is traveling, attending the theater, whatever it is, you are invited to bring examples of your interests to the meeting. You can tell us how you got started, the amount of time and effort you put into your hobby and talk about the articles you brought.

If you haven't been out to a club meeting recently, this will be a perfect time to "get your feet wet, again."

As an added enticement, we plan an expanded refreshment layout. Also, we will have a Judges' panel of

three to choose the best male and the best female entry.

We will dispense with the business meeting (that should bring out at least a half dozen more members). We will have the members bourse, that is, the table set up just inside the doorway where members can sell their wares to fellow collectors. So, let's make this a successful program. Time for wives to show they have a hobby life of their own and members, what turns you on besides stamps?

Please set-up your display between 7:00 and 7:30 p.m. in the space allotted - If display is large you may take more than one space. 7:30-8:00 p.m. will be viewing and noshing. 8:00 p.m. will begin the "show and tell". 9:00 p.m. will be the judging and awarding of prizes.

Let's all work to make this a pleasant rewarding and fun-filled evening.

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