Many thanks to Ralph Lanesman from Israel, for his very interesting article, of how he became a Stamp Collector, and about his collecting interests.

I hope you find his article as interesting as I did. I am always interested to read of how collectors started, and how they compile their collections etc.

If anyone else, wishes to share their collecting interests – Please just send the article in, and I will publish it.

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I am pleased to welcome our 2nd Overseas member to the society. Details below:-

NEW MEMBER:-
011: Reuben Mowszowski.
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THE JOYS OF JUDAICA – A Personal Perspective
By Ralph Lanesman. (Israel)

As a schoolboy, I became a stamp collector, no doubt like many thousands of others, begging stamps off relatives and acquaintances, and then swapping the duplicates with school friends and in time accumulated a fair collection.

After my return to South Africa in 1949 after serving in the IDF, I concentrated on Israel stamps, having subscribed to a New Issue service operated by a local agent for the Israeli Philatelic services and continued in this vein for over 30 years. Soon after arriving in Israel on “Aliyah” in 1980, I recommenced my subscription direct to the
Philatelic Bureau.

Having met a fellow collector with close connections with the Israel Thematic Collectors Association, I started considering what specific themes I would concentrate on in tandem with my ongoing subscriptions for Israel’s stamps, now augmented by living in the land. I decided that the topic “militaria” offered an interesting theme with a fairly large crop of issues throughout the world. My friend, who apart from his passion of collecting cricket stamps and memorabilia, also collected Synagogues and I soon fell prey to the theme of Judaica. From a very tender age, I had manifested a lively interest in every aspect of Judaism and Zionism and so it was natural to turn to Philatelic Judaica.

What distinguished Judaica from collecting Israel was the fact that Judaica required something from you unlike belonging to a New Issue service which at regular intervals would send you your stamps, and all you had to do was to recognize a stop-order debit on your bank account.

Now it was a different game, but how did you get to building up a collection. In the first place, I bought a few items from the catalogues of auction sales and from some meagre stocks held by local stamp-dealers. As auction sale prices became almost prohibitive as most lots featured very specialized material I decided I was going to try and augment stocks by exchanging stamps with general collectors and then sift through the material I received very carefully to determine their Judaic content. Every time I found a stamp belonging was a moment of joy and satisfaction. Search and research was the essence of success.

I then heard of the existence of the Israeli Judaica Collectors Association, who brought out a periodical check-list. I also subscribed to the Israeli Philatelic Association’s magazine “Shov-el” which had an article on Judaica in each issue, and collected snippets from newspapers and magazines. As in those days, there was strict foreign exchange control applied in Israel, I couldn’t buy from overseas stamp traders and the Israeli dealers, although advertising that they stocked Judaica, invariably their stocks were limited as well as being expensive.

Information reached me of the existence in the USA of the Jewish Historical Philatelic Society and I joined that body. I soon learnt of the pioneering work of John Henry Richter in compiling his book “Judaica On Postage Stamps” which he described as an annotated checklist of stamps issued to December 1972. By the time I learnt of its existence the book was virtually out of print and I was lucky to acquire one of the few remaining copies. Richter continued producing up-dates to his book which were published in the periodical of the J.H.P.S. and a complete summary was brought out in 1982, including many items omitted from his land-breaking book in 1974 and which only came to his knowledge later. At a later state I terminated my subscription of the American
periodical and subscribed to the English Judaica Collector.

I now had quite a formidable array of lists and articles on the subject and I increased my exchange activities. I became aware of a local stamp exchange club and together I came by a large quantity of mainly common general issues of stamps and checked as to their connection. In this way I was amazed to find how much Judaica could slip through the cracks. Some of the checking was easy, but I learnt much that interested me as a by-product.

When Dr. Benjamin Reuter’s Encyclopedia of Philatelic Judaica was published in 2002, I had an additional source of checking and particularly in the field of USSR Judaica-related material. Some of his inclusions were indeed subject to query and even criticism, but it became a daily companion to me. I had a large accumulation of Russian stamps in my Militaria collection and of duplicates as well, and this proved a rich source of material. Reuter lists over 700 items of Judaica stamps in his section on the USSR and I found approximately 30% of them amongst my existing stocks, not to speak of some 50 items of postal stationery. Reuter’s work is not particularly user-friendly at this stage as only one volume of three saw the light of day and that dealt exclusively with Jews and their works. The later volumes, publication of which was interrupted by his untimely death were to deal with the Bible, Synagogues, Holocaust, Arab-Israeli Conflict, Stamp Designers, Printers as well as short biographies of the Jews and their works as appeared in Volume 1. I don’t understand what factors have led to the hold-up but it’s probably related to a paucity of collectors of the theme, world-wide.

The last 3 years I have been in retirement and I have devoted many hours to my interests in philately, particularly Judaica from which I repeat I have received much joy and satisfaction. I welcome Gary Goodman’s initiative in providing a forum for collectors to gain deeper content to their hobby.

POOR STANDARD OF SERVICE – OR JUST UNLUCKY!

I cannot speak highly enough, of the excellent service that I receive when buying stamps from dealers abroad. The stamps arrive in perfect condition and well packaged. And most importantly, they always seem to have stocks of Judaica themed stamps. I also find that the overseas dealers will also take the time, to try and find certain items or themes in their stock too.
However, after poor experiences in the last 4 weeks, I have now got no confidence in the U.K. dealers here.
No wonder the hobby is in the state it is. Stamp Dealers should be trying to encourage business, and not be rude and put people off.
I have come to the conclusion, that Stamp Dealers are not Businessmen.

Let me explain my 3 recent experiences.

1:- I decided that I would get in contact with a dealer that advertises in Stamp Magazine. I obtained his list, and compiled an order for a number of German issues. Basically, I ordered 4 or 5 of each issue that I required. (All with a Judaica connection, of course). I also requested his best terms, after-all I was purchasing quantity of the issues.
At the same time I sent in a full A4 sheet of wants. – This is really against my policy, as I usually find that dealers charge you over-inflated prices when you send in a wants list – as they know you want the items!.

I looked at this transaction as a nice little order, as I required quantity of the same issues, and a nice full wants list – which I would have thought as potential business from a “customer” to the dealer.

When I did receive a reply and very small package back, I was very disappointed and upset – not necessarily with the lack of stamps, (as I should have expected that from U.K. dealers already.) But I was annoyed with his rude reply.
In his reply, he stated that he did not have quantity of what I required, only 2 or 3 of each, so he could not offer me any discount on my purchases. (I must say that the lack of his stock, is his fault not mine)
Also, due to the time taken of going through my wants list of a couple of hours – which incidentally, he did not have anything from my list – He stated that he has not made any money on the order, and he would make more money stacking the shelves in Tesco’s.!

When will this dealer realise, that my wants list was potential business.
And his rude reply, has lost him a customer.

2:- From another dealer that advertises regularly in Stamp Magazine, I ordered some stamps from the U.S.A.
I ordered 2 booklet panes of stamps – I received literally just the panes, ripped from the booklet at the selvedge. – I would have thought that I would have received the complete booklets!.

3:- Yet another dealer that advertises regularly in Stamp Magazine, from which I regularly buy new issues from, sent me a set of stamps from Norway, that I had not
ordered. I had ordered a set of Norway stamps from a year earlier, than what they sent me. So I returned the stamps.

However, as the stamps were only valued at £3.20 I did not bother to obtain a Certificate of Posting.

To cut a long story short, after a delay of just over 2 months, they have now told me that they did not receive the stamps, despite when I had rang them during the last month, they said that the delay was due to holidays and a backlog of orders. – And they never said that they had not received the stamps.

For the sake of £3.20, they are going to loose my business.

It was their fault for sending me the wrong stamps in the first place. – But I am kicking myself, for not obtaining a Certificate of Posting.

I did pay by Visa, so I do have some comeback, with Visa, if I am not happy, but would you really bother taking it any further for just £3.20…………………

[I HAVE JUST HAD A SCRIBBLED NOTE FROM THIS DEALER TO-DAY, SAYING THAT THEY DID RECEIVE THE STAMPS THAT I RETURNED, AFTERALL – BUT NO APOLOGY!!]

By the way, this is the same dealer, from whom I ordered a stamp, a couple of years ago from on a First Day Cover. (cost over £50) – only to find that the cover that I received was not a cancelled “mint” stamp – but a computer generated version of the stamp. When I complained the dealer said that I had not requested the mint stamp version!!

I should have learnt my lesson then, and not continued dealing with him.

This dealer is a member of the P.T.S. (Philatelic Traders Society) – but although they were sympathetic, with my valid complaint, and agreed that I was in the right, - they could do nothing.

With incidents like the ones that I have mentioned above, dealers are not going to encourage stamp collectors to part with their money.

And I have instantly decided to buy very, little now from dealers in this country.

I would be very interested to hear comments and views following the above experiences.

Personally, I think that Stamp Magazine should start to “Name and Shame” these dealers that offer shoddy goods and service.

Then there is the dealer on the south coast, that took money out of my visa card, for an order that I had not ordered, or received….But that’s history, of a few years ago!! – with that incident, I passed it on to Visa, who dealt with it on my behalf.
CAN YOU HELP?

Within the last couple of years, a number of Austrian stamp issues, have been designed by a Michael Rosenfeld.
The issues that he has designed include the 2005 Heidi Klum stamp and the Lifeball/Naomi Campbell stamp.
The recent 2006 issue “Mail From Another World”, was also designed by Michael Rosenfeld.
If he is Jewish, then these stamps could find their way in a Judaica collection – But I am unsure if he is or isn’t.
Can anyone please help?