



Article from the Canadian Forces Philatelic Society Bulletin Vol. 25, No. 2

Some thoughts on a snowy day

by Michael J. Burnford

When I was young, most boys (and a good number of girls too) collected stamps. At that time, when generally a country issued a new set of stamps every few years, one collected the Whole World or maybe the British Empire, and a collection of a few hundred stamps was quite an achievement.

What a different story today. Most countries issue fifty or more stamps a year. That is more than the number issued by Canada in the first forty years of stamp use.

Consequently, collecting habits have also changed, and most collectors concentrate on one or two countries- or possibly a specific theme such as air mails or stamps with ships or birds, etc. The range of topicals is endless as are the various areas of interest.

I never cease to be amazed, though, at the number of people that dutifully trot off to the post office as each new issue is released, and carefully place it in their printed albums.... and call themselves stamp collectors. The alternative trend today of course is First Day Covers. Unfortunately these are not First Day Covers at all but merely a printed cover bearing a cancelled-to-order stamp (generally considered worthless) and sent out at the convenience of the department concerned.

I realise that most postal departments are intent on producing equipment which will totally obliterate any stamp attached to an envelope, and when the equipment fails it would appear that the employees are trained to finish off the job.

A cover I sent to New Zealand the day the 36 cent Queen stamp was issued, and which was clearly cancelled locally, was returned to me by the recipient with at least seven cancellations (as well as some smudges from the Toronto Postal Terminal).

I consider it to be a greater challenge and accomplishment to acquire a perfect copy of a stamp with a nice c.d.s cancel in the lower-right corner. I am constantly seeking more presentable copies to include in my collection.



My greatest concern however is the future of the common stamp. Few people today sit down and write a letter; so much easier to pick up the phone.... and when one considers how much can be said in two or three minutes it is also cheaper than the mail. Personally I do like to receive a letter from family or friends and I believe it truly expresses the fact that they took the trouble to put pen to paper.

Nearly all business mail is now meter-stamped, and the introduction of the fax and e-mail is rapidly turning the mailbox into a receptacle for bills and junk mail- none of which has a real stamp on it. Where are all those changes leading? Surely a combination of factors is sounding a death knell for the common postage stamps as we know them today.