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SOUTH INDIA PHILATELISTS' ASSOCIATION

(FOUNDED 1956)

(AFFILIATED TO THE PHILATELIC CONGRESS OF INDIA)

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS FOR STAMP COLLECTORS

by *BILL OLCHESKI*

January is a time for making resolutions. We are beginning a new year. --- one in which we will be offered thousands of new stamps from both established and emerging nations around the world.

Here are a few resolutions you might want to consider, along with commentary on why they will add pleasure and knowledge to your enjoyment of our hobby. **BEGIN WITH AN INVENTORY.** There is no way you can have an organised collection without knowing what stamps you have. That means you have to sort through all of the boxes labeled "miscellaneous". With an inventory, you know what you need; you know what duplicates you can trade; and you have at least a starting figure to determine insurance needs and estate planning.

SET UP A BUDGET. Decide what you realistically can afford to spend on stamps during the year. By setting the budget for the year, you can check about once each quarter to see how close you are adhering to the amount you decided to spend on stamps. You may budget Rs.120/- per year --- that's Rs.10/- a month. Some months you will not need that much, so couple that with the budget for the next month for more expensive item. The amount you budget is not important. For some people, Rs.10/- a month is a lot; for others, several hundred Rupees a month is not too much. Only you know how much you can afford to spend and how much you want to spend it.

UPDATE YOUR ALBUMS AND CATALOGUES. Periodically a part of your budget should be spent on supplements to bring your albums up to date. At some point you may decide you need a bigger or fancier album. Figure that possibility into your budget. If you cannot afford new catalogues (Stanley Gibbons), you may want to consider a used one. These can be found everywhere from stamp clubs to dealer stores or even by mail. The used catalogue will cost only a small fraction of what the

new ones cost. They work fine, since the catalogue numbers seldom change, and the prices are only an arbitrary reflection of what catalogue makers believe the stamp should be worth.

SET COLLECTING GOALS FOR THE NEW YEAR. You might try to finish a certain country or set a cut off date and resolve to finish a specific number of pages by the end of the year. Make sure your goals are realistic so that you can avoid the disappointment of missing your goals.

SUBSCRIBE TO A STAMP MAGAZINE OR NEWSPAPER. You need the information such publications contain to keep up with developments in the stamp world. You also can learn a lot by reading the ads. in the stamp papers. Find out who is buying what and how much they are paying. You can compare dealer prices for the same stamp by looking at ads offering similar material. Of course, condition and other factors influence the value of the stamps, but at least you can have a general idea of what it is going to cost you to fill those blank spaces.

EXPLORE JOINING A CLUB OR STARTING ONE. At the very least, you ought to consider visiting a club in your area to determine if it has anything to offer you. If you cannot find a club, consider starting one. If you do not want to join a local club, consider a national club/ Association/Society like SIPA. This gives you a monthly Bimonthly magazine plus many other services, such as access to circuit approval books. There are also many national societies for specialty collectors. Name a topical -- such as scouts, birds, or space -- and you probably will find they have a national group you can join by mail.

CONSIDER STARTING A "FUN" COLLECTION. This is particularly good resolution when you reach the point where it costs too much to add to your general collection. Topicals are pretty, they are inexpensive, and they are

fun. If you doubt this, stand behind the customers at a stamp show table sometime and watch as they sort through the mixture boxes. I get a great deal of satisfaction out of watching a grandfather and a grandson or grand daughter searching through the boxes. As each one makes a find, it is pointed out to the other, and the fun goes on -- at minimal cost.

GET ACQUAINTED WITH THE BASICS OF COLLECTING. Are you comfortable using perforation gauge or water marking a stamp? If not get a book and brush up on the basics. You need to have the knowledge if you are going to be accurate in placing stamps in your album.

SHARE YOUR HOBBY. Make this the year that you introduce at least one person collecting. The person you pick can be of any age -- a senior citizen in the retirement home town to the kid next door. A note of caution: We live in a suspicious society and there is always the danger that someone will mistake your intentions, particularly when dealing with young children. The best way to solve this problem is to ask the parents if a small stamp club could meet at their house once a week. Your would, of course, invite the parents to attend. Who knows, you may make collectors out of the parents as well.

LOOK TO THE FUTURE. Have you made plans for what is to happen to your collection when you go to the big stamp store in the sky? If you have not, you are being unfair to your survivors who may not know how to approach disposing of a collection at a price fair to the buyer and the seller.

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SIPA MEETINGS

SECOND SUNDAY of every month - Regular meeting at the Philatelic Bureau, Anna Road Post Office, Madras - 600 002. (10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.) **FIRST AND THIRD SUNDAY** of every month - Auction meeting at our Library Hall at 6, Nannian Street, Madras -3 (Timing 10.45 a.m. to 1 p.m.)
SIPA Library Open Tuesday & Sunday, 6, Nannian Street, Madras -3. 7p.m. to 8.p.m.

TREAT YOURSELF TO A NEW YEAR'S PRESENT. It does not have to be something expensive. You might consider a fancy Perf gauge, a subscription to a stamp publication, a big magnifying glass, or a watermark detector.

If you keep all of these resolutions, 1993 can be a banner year for you and your collection.

DEPARTMENT OF POSTS STAMP NEWS - 1/93

The Stamp News wishes all its readers a very happy and prosperous 1993.

I NEW ISSUES

1. William Carey Rs 6.00 Issued on 9/1/1993

Dr. William Carey a cobbler turned missionary, is called the Father of modern missionary. His life's motto was "EXPECT GREAT THINGS FROM GOD, ATTEND GREAT THINGS FOR GOD".

Some of the contributions of his life's labour were the starting of 100 rural schools encouraging girls education which swelled to 900. He also compiled dictionaries of Sanskrit Bengali, Marathi, Punjabi, Telugu and Bhutanese. He started Serampore College the only institution imparting high academic education and theological teaching under one roof. He started the Horticultural society of India and laid the foundation of the Botanical Garden in Calcutta.

The stamp also marks the bicentenary of his arrival in the Indian soil.

2. Fakir Mohan Senapati Rs.1/= Issued on 14.1.1993

Fakir Mohan Senapati belongs to the calibre of great writers like Prem Chand, Bankim Chandra. He was self educated and studied assiduously in Sanskrit and English. Fakir Mohan's one aim one purpose and one desire was the upliftment and promotion of Oriya literature. His contribution to Indian literature as a nationalist and a short story writer lies in the portrayal in realistic images the grim life of the exploited and the down-trodden and giving new life to a nation's language, literature and national awareness. The stamp on this great Oriya literary figure issued to commemorate his 150th Birth Anniversary.

II SPECIAL CANCELLATIONS/COVERS

1. A special cancellation will be provided on 11.1.93 at New Delhi on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the All India Manufacturer's Organisation.

2. A special cancellation and special cover will be provided at Panchgani on 20.1.93 on the occasion of Asia Plateau Panchgani Silver Jubilee Celebration year 1993.

III PHILATELIC EXHIBITION — KERAPEX

The 7th Kerala Philatelic Exhibition namely Kerapex-93 will be held from January 16th to 23rd at Ernakulam. Kerala has large number of well informed professional philatelists. All the philatelic exhibitions held in the previous years had large number of visitors who had evinced very keen interest in all the finer points of philately. Ernakulam where the exhibition is being held is in the central part of Kerala and is well connected

by rail, road and air with major cities of India. The climate during January is very pleasant. Ernakulam/Cochin is also an important place of tourist interest in South India with its beautiful natural harbour and backwaters.

Stamp News-2/93

1. Council of Scientific And Industrial Research (CSIR) : Golden jubilee.

Established as an autonomous society in 1942, CSIR today is the premier R & D organisation with a comprehensive charter for advancement of S&T for national development. CSIR has over the years developed nearly 2800 technologies/knowhow/designs of which around 2000 have been licenced to over 5000 parties who have generated an industrial out put of over Rs. 5000 crore.

The stamp depicts in miniature, the contributions emanating from CSIR for industrial development for social welfare and nurturing of human resources for research.

The stamp which is in the denomination of Re. 1/- was released on 28.2.93 by the Hon. President in the function being scheduled at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

II SPECIAL CANCELLATIONS/COVERS

A special cancellation will be provided, from 17.2.93 to 19.2.93 at all philatelic bureaux on the occasion of 40th Anniversary of Employees Provident fund organization. Blank Cover will be sold for Re. 1.50 per cover.

2. SPECIAL CANCELLATION/APS COVERS

The following special covers are being released by the APS during the month of Feb'93:

S.No. Sponsoring Unit occasion Date of release

a) 40 Medium regiment (SP) Golden Jubilee 01 Feb 93

b) 70 Armoured Regiment Silver Jubilee 11 Feb 93

The above special covers will be available for sale in philatelic Bureaux, Anna Road - HO Madras, Bombay GPO, Calcutta-GPO and Parliament Street-HO, New Delhi.

3. POSTAL STATIONERY

(a) Inland letter card with the advertisement message of Ministry of Welfare "Drugs push you into pain and sufferings" was released w.e.f. 9.2.93.

(b) Aerogram with the advertisement message of spices board "Indian spices - Mark of INDIANESS and Quality" is being released w.e.f. 1.2.93.

N.B. In order to enable Dept. of posts, New Delhi to Mail you the future issues of 'Stamp News' for individual addressees kindly confirm by writing if you are interested in getting the Stamp News. You may confirm it to the following address:

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If you have any suggestions/views/opinion on philately in general kindly write to the above.

ROYAL MAIL AND THE COLLECTOR

The Editor visits Royal Mail to ask the Head of Philatelic Marketing a few questions. Old habits do die hard. It is therefore probably not surprising that many still refer to the GPO when infact the General Post Office ceased to exist in 1969, while others believe that both posts and telephones still come under the jurisdiction of the Post Office.

Indeed, much has happened since the changes of the 70s: perhaps most importantly - and one which many may not realise - is that The Post Office is divided into three main sections: Royal Mail, Post Office Counters and Parcel Force. The Stamps you buy to use or collect are produced by Royal Mail, who also deliver your letters. If you buy your stamps over a post office counter, then the responsibility lies with Post Office Counter, who are commissioned by Royal Mail to sell the stamps. However, if you buy your definitives in booklets from a non-post office outlet, or you use the British Philatelic Bureau, then again the responsibility lies with Royal mail.

If you are not already some what confused, then you might be, for Royal Mail has, over the past year, undergone a major restructure.

Equally many wonder what Royal Mail does to promote and encourage the collecting of stamps - and

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(Philatelist)

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not just British new issues.

With so much change occurring, we visited Royal Mail Headquarters to ask Colin Pawson, in charge of Philatelic Marketing, a few questions.

I understand that Royal Mail has undergone several changes recently: can you explain these? Royal Mail has undergone, during the financial year from April 1991 to March 1992, a major restructure. For example, the 64 postal districts have been combined into nine geographic divisions. The organisation of Royal Mail has been divided into four strategic business units: Royal Mail International; Cash Co (cash carrying); Royal Mail Streamline (business direct mail); Royal Mail National (dealing with such diverse areas as postcodes through to electronic mail). The work which was at one time handled by Royal Mail Stamps and Philately (later Royal Mail Stamps) will now come under the jurisdiction of Royal Mail National, although this will be simply known as 'Royal Mail'.

Within Royal Mail the production and distribution of new stamps has been separated out and will be headed by John Wright, who was previously Deputy Manager of the British Philatelic Bureau. John will liaise with Barry Robinson, head of Design for Royal Mail, and the stamp printers, and will deal with the distribution of stamps to all outlets.

The British Philatelic Bureau will be the fulfilment facility for Royal Mail.

Before the re-structure there was a separation between the philatelic market and what can best be described as social mail market. Yet the two are essentially the same and have therefore brought these two markets together under new head of Stamps and Personal Mail. I can give one example of the benefits of bringing the two together and that concerns the youth market. In the philatelic area is there highly successful Stamp Bug Club and an ambitious social programme. In the social mail area there was the national young Letter Writers Competition to promote letter writing among the young. Within the Post Office itself there is yet another youth department promoting the Post Office schools. It seemed there would be a benefit in bringing these activities together, under the aegis of Stamps and personal Mail.

At one time we viewed our organisation with the one man at the top. Everything seemed to be there to supply the Chairman. Now we have turned that upside down so that the customer is at the top, and the entire organisation supports the customer. How does Royal Mail and the collector come into contact?

We are aiming to become closer to our 'philatelic' customer - in quotes because I include everyone from the young new stamp collector through to the most erudite philatelists interested in our products - and we are listening to views on our services and products. How should Royal mail react to the philatelic market: maintain

it: develop it? an important responsibility.

The only opportunity Royal Mail has, to come into contact with the philatelic customer is the British Philatelic Bureau. Those who buy their stamps over one of 20,000 main post office counters are not coming into contact with Royal Mail Post Office Counters sell stamps on behalf of Royal Mail.

We are working with Post Office Counters to ensure best service for our existing and potential philatelic customers. In the past the experiences of the customer may have been all we would like to hope.

We must not forget that a further outlet for stamps in 50,000 plus retails (that is, non-post office) outlets, although as yet they only sell books containing definitives and Christmas stamps. This must be an area we look at, to introduce philatelic products. Many of our customers may lose habit of going into a post Office, and will be accustomed to buying their stamps through retail outlets. As a result they will not be aware of the range of philatelic products available.

There is, of course, a further difficulty experienced by staff behind post office counters; there is often no easy way of telling whether a customer for a stamp wants it to use a letter or to be collected. We at Royal Mail take great care with the design and production of our stamps, but the facts may not be conveyed by the post office counter clerks.

At Royal Mail we work increasingly closely with our colleagues in Post Office Counters, aiming, by direct contact with newsletters and videos, to keep all fully

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informed about new products, including new special issues and definitives.

I believe that the majority of collectors go to the ordinary post office counter to buy their stamps. We are therefore spending a lot of time and effort to raise the level of service they receive there.

HOW IS THE PUBLIC MADE AWARE OF NEW BRITISH STAMPS?

The public will become increasingly used to seeing stamps offered in supermarkets and confectioners. We must see whether such outlets can be used to promote the hobby of stamp collecting. Such outlets improve the possibility of people becoming stamp collectors simply through possession.

Those who want pictorial stamps will find, when using a main post office, that the latest special issue of stamps will be offered, provided it is within a fortnight of the first day of release of that issue, or they may be given the award-winning Greetings stamps which are on sale for considerably longer.

Although special stamps are not seen on the majority of mail, approximately one third of the 60 million items posted each day carry at least one stamp - and that's a lot of stamps.

I believe issuing new stamps is the best way to encourage collecting. First we now have a second class stamp included within certain special issues. Previously second class special stamps have been limited to the Christmas issue, but with the increased effectiveness of

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letter sorting automation, we can better cope with distinguishing between first and second class special stamps.

Second we have the Greetings stamps, a new category that shares some of the characteristics of both the definitives and special issues. They are pictorial, colourful, and highly popular - and remain on sale for a long period.

I certainly want to see more special stamps on mail. There is a need to motivate and educate counter clerks, so that special issues are offered as first choice during the two weeks they are available, a sales period which I believe is appropriate.

It is true that there sometimes seem to be objections from counter clerks to handling special stamps. We are working on obtaining a more precise understanding of counter clerks' difficulty in handling special stamps - if there is a difficulty. It could be a problem of perception. Perhaps stamp collectors are considered difficult because of their specific demands. If the counter clerk feels unable to help the customer, perhaps the service provided by the British Philatelic Bureau should be offered.

Television advertising has proved very effective in promoting new special issues. This is enforced by point of sale posters and notices at post office counter positions. We are assessing the impact of these posters, although we know that over half our customers obtain their information about new stamp issues from this source.

Very important are our Stamp Bug Calendars-

we distribute about 3 million each year. The importance attached to the calendar by our customers was demonstrated in 1988 when the issue date of the Sports stamps was changed: we had many complaints because the actual release date was not as printed on the calendar.

Having stamps pre-packed as a way of easing availability has been suggested. Packing is a subject we are considering all the time. It has to be appropriate for the outlet: a retail outlet will need a different form of packing compared with a post office counter. We must also consider the environmental issues: stamps should not be over-packaged. Equally, would the customer want both a pre-packaged set of stamps, and a set torn from individual sheets?

Comments are also received about the face values of our stamps. I repeat that I believe the introduction of the second class special stamp to be very important. We try to offer variety, such as with this year's Europa set which had three different first class values. It is appropriate to have overseas rates as they are ambassadors: while we might look at introducing new values, they must have postal relevance and be justified by the amount of mail carried that would use such a rate.

Business mail is an interesting area: it is known that stamps on direct mail achieve a higher response rate compared with metered mail. It is a possibility as an area of development that stamps could be produced for direct mail-such as pre-cancelled mail. Business mail would benefit by having stamps for its particular needs. However, this would be an operationally and customer-driven requirement, rather than something introduced purely for philatelic interest.

It is my belief that the collector is reassured if items are introduced for operational requirements or through customer demand. The parcel operation did have a stamp at the basic parcel rate for a few years, but the proportion of parcel mail that is stamped is very small. Perhaps there is a case for a postage paid indicator for parcel mail, but as yet there are no such plans. I think we could see stamps for, say, Royal Mail Special Delivery, where an additional fee is paid over and above the normal postal charges: the stamp would represent the additional fee.

Consideration is being given to servicing first day covers over the counter. However, selling fully serviced first day covers is very much in the hands of the British Philatelic Bureau. The cost of stocking serviced first day covers in all 20,000 post offices, and the possibility of having to destroy those that were not sold, prevents such a procedure. It is more appropriate to sell the customer an envelope to affix the stamps as desired. It is important that application forms for serviced first day covers through the Bureau are readily available over the counter.

It has to be admitted that the availability of stamp products through sub post offices can be improved. There are sub post offices that are very, very good, but

there is room for improvement.

Regarding availability of special stamps, while I would not want at the moment to extend their period of sale there may be ways of encouraging dealers to maintain stocks. We intend to have discussions with the Philatelic Traders' Society more frequently and to build a closer relationship with stamps dealers. We need to hear what opportunities they see for promoting stamp collecting, not just of British issues, and how Royal Mail can help promote the hobby. We are not in competition with dealers-we are complementary.

'Organised philately' has a responsibility to develop those collectors that Royal Mail attracts with television advertising into the new issue market: to show the benefits, attractions, popularity and interest in the wider range of older stamps. Royal Mail is immensely good at attracting people into the hobby: it's the follow-through that now needs to be looked at, using 'organised philately', such as stamp clubs and the British Philatelic Trust, because Royal Mail is not in that market.

While we sell new issues for up to a year, we do know from research that many casual customers are not aware of the issues of the previous twelve months. We are losing the opportunity of promoting such stamps, so this is an area we will do something about. If potential collectors start looking at stamps of the past twelve

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months, they will wonder what other stamps are available.

SOME COLLECTORS COMPLAIN AT THE NUMBER OF NEW STAMP ISSUES-WHAT IS YOUR VIEW?

The number of special stamp issues in a year is governed by market forces. Royal Mail has always been flexible on this matter. There is the practical problem of producing and distributing more than say eight special issues a year. There are, of course, the two 'fixed' issues each year. Europa and Christmas.

I am genuinely concerned about our customers' views on the number of issues, but it does seem to be mainly what we read through the philatelic press.

When customers cease a Standing Order arrangement with the British Philatelic Bureau, we ask the reason why. Often the views contradict each other: some not worried about the cost but more concerned with the actual number of stamps, while others take the opposite view.

Remember that we are receiving an increasing number of requests for subjects to appear on special stamps. Clearly being recognised by a stamp issue is seen as an accolade by many organisations and individuals.

With British stamps one finds a variety of design and subjects. the use of the Monarch's head and de-

nomination giving uniformity.

I accept that just recently our release programme has been loaded at the beginning of the year, with substantial gaps later. We are doing something about this, such as releasing the Prestige book in the autumn. Some issues are influenced by other factors, such as we try to release the Greetings stamps in time for St Valentine's Day.

Obviously a more regular release pattern aids production and distribution questions.

We also have to bear in mind that it is desirable to issue special stamps as close as possible to an appropriate date, although sometimes to achieve that does mean a cluster of issues close together which we try to avoid.

When the cost of collecting British new issue is raised, particularly in relation to promoting the hobby among the young, I compare youngsters paying about 10 each for compact discs, and maybe buying one or two a week. Take a look in electronics games shops and see how much is being spent. with cartridges costing around 20 each. To refer to stamp collecting as an expensive hobby is to be out of touch with today's world.

The range of stamps is so vast that a collection can be tailored to any interest and your pocket. Our research has shown there are two basic types of collector: those for whom completeness is important, and those who are just happy to amass stamps and develop a collection without worrying about it being complete.

What is important is to choose a subject that interests, with stamp designs that attract. There is a strong case for saying that stamp collection is an inexpensive activity in today's leisure market.

How does Royal Mail help the hobby of stamp collecting to grow, and how do you see the future?

We have found that some 80 per cent of today's adult collectors started their collections when they were between seven and 14 years old. Therefore we invest heavily in developing the youth market. The Stamp Bug Club has 70,000 members, while our schools programme reaches 17,500 schools. That programme aims to help teachers cultivate skills of observation and develop visual communication in children. Quite deliberately it does not refer to stamp collecting-but of course there will be a building of awareness of stamps and their designs.

We have also developed a package which gives detailed advice to teachers on how to set up school stamp clubs. The package includes membership cards and posters; and these are eye-catching and do not solely illustrate British stamps.

We have also produced a pocket diary for teachers, which acts as a term planner, and highlights the dates of release of our special issues.

When I hear criticisms that philately is all profit for Royal mail, I raise an eyebrow, bearing in mind what we invest in many areas, and in particular with youth.

Not that the hobby is only youth-oriented. With

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Dear Members

Wish you a Happy New Year!

increased leisure activity and earlier retirement, stamp collecting is a hobby that many can return to. Post Office Counters has launched a new club called 'Active Life', which has its own magazine, and stamp collecting is promoted within that magazine.

I firmly believe that stamp collecting remains one of the worlds's greatest hobbies: it is truly international. Many postal administrations are putting much considered effort into the hobby. The Royal Mail was a sponsor of the Philatelic Code of Ethics which was adopted by the Universal Postal Union.

Despite the social changes that have occurred, stamp collecting has remained strong for the past 150 years.

I really do believe that there is a positive future for the hobby: I think it can grow. Everyone should 'talk it up'. After all there are three million stamp collectors in the United Kingdom. It is one of the country's — and the world's — greatest hobbies. Be more positive about it: say, this is a worldwide, and worthwhile, activity.

SOMETHING ABOUT MAXIMAPHILY

Maximaphily is now a days one of the new branches of Philately, gathering collectors of Maximum Cards.

The first collectors of "analogical cards", as they used to call their pieces at the beginning of this century, did not derive from philately but from collectors of picture postcards, having stamp and cancel on the view side (denominated "TVC" from the french "timbre cote vue") to testify on sight their postal usage when collected into an album.

When around 1870, the first stamps of Egypt showed Sphinx and the Pyramids, and view cards began to be printed, some of these collectors who arrived at such country, mailed his greetings card sticking on the front-view of it a stamp of the same subject, creating by chance an interesting piece: the ANALOGICAL CARD was born!

Just after World war I some of these collectors, who also had some interest in philately, tried to make analogical cards not by chance but by seeking for cards that would fit well with the stamp, and by having them cancelled in a place which will agree with the subject of stamp and card. Most of these collectors were in touch with others in different nations, and helped each other in this new hobby.

The first Associations arose in France and Belgium in the forties and the name MAXIMUM CARD replaced the old one. Statues and regulations were drawn up by the Associations in Europe, but there were some different points of view and contrast among them. Only when Maximaphily was accepted within the F.I.P., some old fathers of the Maximum Card, each representing his own nation, were gathered into the "Sub-commission of Maximaphily" and obliged by the F.I.P. to draw a sole "Regulations concerning the admission of Maximaphily Exhibits to every Philatelic Exhibition under the patronage of F.I.P.". That happened in Prague in 1978 but as everything moves with times, new regulations were fixed by the F.I.P. at Rome Congress, in occasion of ITALIA '85: not only for Maximaphily but also for other competitive branch of philately, to better conform the evaluation of Exhibits.

To come to the point, a MAXIMUM CARD is a philatelic item made up of three elements; a view postcard bearing a stamp and its cancellation on the view side. These three elements must have between them the MOST OF

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CONCORDANCE. Exhibits should conform to F.I.P. special regulations and, among these, the most important that: "Picture postcards with mere reproduction of the stamps are forbidden.

This challenges those Postal Administrations issuing, under the name of Maximum Cards, official cards representing a drawing of the stamp or, worse still, the same stamp. Best cards to use are those we can find on the market or, when that is n't possible, a private card representing a document pre-existing to the stamp issue.

NATIONAL EXHIBITION

After much tussle and hassle, it seems to have been decided that a National level Philatelic Exhibition will be held at Calcutta from 25 to 29 December, 1993. Interested collectors are requested and advised to prepare their exhibits in earnest right from now. There would be a Mophila class for the collector who have only the modern stamps in their possession.

THE LAST POST

We regret to report the death in January of P.M. MEDHORA, the editor of INDIA'S STAMP JOURNAL, who was killed with his wife in bombing incident in Bombay.

Since the death of Jal Cooper, Medhora has kept India's Stamp Journal a lively monthly publication. He has been active at International Exhibitions and on a number of occasions has served on the Jury. A kindly character, he will be missed by his many friends in India and those of us who knew him well and enjoyed his company. Pray may their souls rest in peace.

Phiroze Medhora was an erudite philatelist, President of the Empire of India Philatelic Society and - what is much more - one who shed light on the philately of Indian States.

THE FIRST COLLECTOR OF CAT STAMPS.

Many old time collectors will remember my first wife, Ingeborg Herst, whom I married in London in 1937. Ingeborg was not a stamp collector, but she was determined to learn all she could about it. A cheap album and a packet of a thousand different stamps held no appeal. Topical collecting was just starting, and since she always had had a great love for pussycats, I suggested that she start collecting cats on stamps.

There was then only a single stamp with a domestic cat on it, the Lindbergh stamp, commemorating his flight over the Atlantic. His intentions of bringing a cat on the flight were of course not realised.

Eventhen I was writing for stamp magazines, and I mentioned Ingeborg's new hobby, asking at the same time if anyone knew any other stamps with cats on them. Someone wrote in telling us that Peru No.376, a new issue in 1938, had a cat on it. Though it could not be seen, the Spanish inscription on the stamp mentioned that the vase on the stamp had a cat in the design.

That made two cat stamps. When we extended the collection to early illustrated covers, cats were plentiful. A company that made industrial bags has a slogan "Do not buy a cat in a bag" and their covers showed a cat with its head sticking out. They used the design for over forty years, and we had more than a dozen covers with that design in various colours.

Then there was the company that made mouse traps. Their covers showed a cat, while telling anyone who looked that their traps did a better job. An insurance company showed the victim of an accident, living at home on a steady income, with a cat at her feet.

One day one of the hobby's leading fancy Cancel Collectors came to my office to show Ingeborg a cover that he had bought. It has No.65, the 3c 1861, postmarked Port Royal, S.C. with a cat with its mouth screeching. He had paid \$ 50 for it in a New York Auction. It started a whole newfield, postmarks with a cat (CAT) in the name. There was Car Creek, Montana, Cat Spring, Texas Cathedral cat, California and Catskill, N.Y.

The collection began to grow. Then we realised that in the early 1930s, dozens of post offices began using home made cancels on their stamps in order to build up postal receipts. One office used an owl and a pussycat, while another showed a cat and a dog doing battle. There were dozens of them.

The collector with Cat Cancel was Charles Gramm, of Cranford, N.J. (He died more than 40 years ago.) No way would he part with the cover, and the likelihood of finding another was remote indeed. But death came to Charles Gramm as it will to all of us, and the late Percy Doane sold his collection of U.S. 19th century fancy cancels. I was fortunate in buying the cover for \$ 75.00 or so, and on her birthday some time in the 1940's, Ingeborg received it as a gift.

Over the years, a few other people began to collect pussycats. One was a chap in Brooklyn, with whom Ingeborg exchanged stamps and covers that were duplicates. We both looked so longingly at each other's collection that a pact was made that when either Ingeborg or the chap in Brooklyn died, he or she would make a gift of his or her collection to the other.

Ingeborg died in 1954, and I honoured the obligation. It was difficult to part with it, but a promise is a promise and the vow was kept. Need I say that he was most grateful to receive the collection?

Over the years I lost track of him, and to this day I have

no idea whether his collection must have found a new owner, and the buyer put the Port Royal Cover in the auction of a prominent New York auction firm. By then I had obtained a new wife, a former pharmacist, whom I tried to get interested in pharmacy by collecting mortar and pestles on stamps. (I was not as successful in getting IDA interested in philately, and her collection of mortars & pestles were sold, with a magnificent strike on an early U.S. Cover bringing more than ten times what it had cost me. We still argue as to whom the proceeds should have gone.

Ingeborg was ahead of her time. I read in John Carlson's printed story "THE CAT STAMP STORY" that more than fifty countries have issued stamps with cats on them. This is a revelation, as his saying that this country has issued cat stamps on three occasions, one of them being a set of four different cats on four stamps.

By Herman Herst Jr.

GREAT HONOUR TO YET ANOTHER INDIAN PHILATELIST

Election to the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists is regarded as the World's pre-eminent philatelic honour. Instituted at the Philatelic Congress of Great Britain in 1920, the Roll was first signed in 1921 by King George V. and thirty nine others who were leading philatelists in the world at the time. During the past seventy years, 236 more have been elected.

At the meeting of the international Board of Election which was held recently it was unanimously decided to invite six philatelists to sign the roll on 18th September at the 75th Philatelic congress of Great Britain to be held at Edinburgh. They are (1) ISTVAN Gazda of Hungary; (2) OTTO HORNUNG of Great Britain; (3) HIROYUKI KANAI of Japan; (4) KNUD MOHR of Denmark; (5) MARY ANN OWENS of U.S.A. and (6) Brigadier DILJIT SINGH VIRK, AVSM of India.

Brigadier DILJIT SINGH VIRK, AVSM of India is well known in India and U.K. He worked with the Indian Army Post Office from 1939 and saw active service during World War II. When India became independent he was entrusted to build up a postal service for its Army, which he developed, and attained an excellent standard of efficiency. He was awarded the Ati Vasist Medal for distinguished service in 1969. He has assembled reference collections for the Indian Army Postal Service which are shown at National and International exhibitions. He is the real postal historian and his books on THE INDIAN ARMY POST OFFICES 1939-1947 and INDIAN POSTAL HISTORY 1873-1923 were awarded the Martin Memorial Trophy in 1991. Since his retirement he has been engaged in the Study, Research and Promotion of Philately and Postal History. He has published several books on these subjects and he has also written extensively for the Philatelic press. Brig. Virk is a senior leader in the higher echelons of the Philatelic Congress of India and has represented it in the FIP Commissions for Postal History and Philatelic Literature. He is also a FIP Accredited Juror.

To this great organiser of postal services, erudite philatelist and a postal historian and one who continuously tried to impart his knowledge of postal history to the up-coming generation, we extend our hearty felicitations on the signal honour of becoming a R.D.P. An invitation to sign the Roll is the highest honour a philatelist can aspire to in the world of Philately.

Brig Virk is the second Indian to receive this honour. Shri DN Jatia, now President of International Federation of Philately, signed it in 1983.