

My Thoughts on Attending the Great American Stamp Show

By Robert Martin

Although I did not stay at the Sheraton Grand Hotel, I did spend some time there at the Universal Ship Cancellation Society hospitality room, and attended the Palmares Banquet on Saturday, which always has a whole lot of serious stamp collectors present, including several world-class exhibitors. This GASS was well arranged and very professionally done, with 35 Society booths, including one for Plate Number Coil Collectors' Club (PNC3) where they signed up 4 new members, had a 3 hour board meeting, and a 2 hour membership meeting. I am the Vice-President of PNC3, and effective September 1, 2022, I will be serving as the club President.

I ran into many old friends, including members from NSSS, and several members from Collectors' Club San Francisco. The lectures were great, as always, but I miss Jacques Schiff, who died a few years ago, who used to give the same, well-attended lecture every year about auctions, buying, selling, and valuing stamps. Janet Klug, Past President of APS could not attend, due to her deteriorating health. I miss her a lot. Kristin Patterson was there and presented a lecture that was standing room only about selling on eBay.



The American Philatelic Society booth at the entrance to the show area.

GASS had 69 dealers present, many with multiple booths, something for everybody, except not much for beginners and children, as is almost always the case nowadays. The American Topical Association (ATA) and the American First Day Cover Society (AFDCS) were co-sponsors. They had nice booths. The United States Postal Service (USPS) had a very large booth. The USPS held a First Day cover ceremony on Thursday, the first day of the GASS, but I was unable to attend the first day. Unfortunately, the USPS is not getting adequate input from GASS organizers on what to bring to sell, so many collectors were disappointed. For example, postal stationery collectors were disappointed.

There were lots of great exhibits, too many to view, as always, but the ones I did get to see were well done, especially for collectors who are primarily interested in seeing covers, which appear to be about 99% of exhibits nowadays.

Schuyler Rumsey had a very nice auction going on during the entire convention, but I was unable to spend much time there. I was slightly disappointed that the one item I really wanted got bid up beyond

my maximum I was willing to spend, but at auctions like these, held on the internet with telephone bids as well as in-room bidding going on, not too many bargains were to be had. I wanted a "crash cover," that was rescued from an airplane crash, but it was not to be. I am always looking for items that are unusual that beginners and children will find interesting.



Viewing lots for the Schuyler Rumsey live auction.

I was not able to attend the APS general meeting this year, which I always have done in the past, because it conflicted with the PNC3 Board meeting I was required to attend. At every GASS over the past 22 years, I have had issues with wanting to attend two or more lectures being held at the same time. I do not know if there is a solution to that problem, but it would be nice to find a way to have the popular sessions not occurring at the same time. I miss one popular dealer, Brian and Lori Hunt (Hunt's Stamps of Texas) who were not able to make it. I hope to see them at future shows.

I was pleasantly surprised when past APS President, and well-known prolific philatelic writer and international judge John Hotchner sat next to me at the Palmares banquet. He is a quiet and unassuming man who has contributed incredibly to our hobby. Sadly, his wife of 53 years passed away a year ago after a long illness, but the benefit for us is that he now has more time for philatelic ventures. I also got to spend several minutes with Bob Lamb, former Executive Director of APS, and a storehouse of knowledge. It sounds like I am just dropping names, but it was exciting to meet and talk with these philatelic leaders. Roger Brody, famous collector, exhibitor, signer of the Roll of Distinguished Philatelist, and former President of Collectors Club at New York City was there, gracious as always, along with the current President of the Collectors club, Lawrence Haber. There are just too many to mention, so I am stopping here, but the fact is GASS is where one will find these people.

Sunday, as always, was the slowest day, but I was able to get some face-to-face with expert Canada stamp dealer, Roy Houtby (Roy's Stamps) from Ontario, who spent over 30 minutes giving me some valuable advice and guidance about my collection of Canada stamps. Many people choose to leave on Sunday mornings, but I have found Sundays to be an excellent time to get a little more facetime with dealers.

Technically, the lighting was good, and parking, though not cheap, was plentiful. The concession stand had an extremely poor selection, and pretty high prices. For example, a bottle of water cost \$5.00 plus tax. Many people attending chose to cross the street to the 7-11 store or go a half block to a Subway sandwich shop, where prices were closer to normal. The Registration booth was well staffed, and security was well done.

The lighting and projection equipment in the lecture rooms were of good quality. I think about 10% to 15% of attendees were wearing masks, but that seems to be rapidly phasing out. I am strongly in favor of protecting one's health, and the health of others, but getting over masking requirements is welcome to me, especially because I can understand people better when they are not being muffled through a mask.

If the cost of admission were \$50.00, it would have been well worth it, but as always, it was FREE!

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