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WE think

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF WOMEN EXHIBITORS

What inspires exhibitors? Where do they get ideas for new exhibits? How do you get the idea for an exhibit to actually BECOME and exhibit? Here is how Liz Hisey does it.

The Creative Process

By Elizabeth Hisey

Where do I get my ideas? One response is that I have always been right-brained. My background in television, the medical field and banking has always been on the creative and people orientated side.

I did not start off as a stamp collector but as someone who really wanted to just exhibit. I would go to shows, look at exhibits and visit the dealers. The availability of “stuff” was overwhelming.

From the beginning I knew that the more traditional style of collecting and exhibiting was not my style. Then I discovered Display, and I have to thank Phil Stager and Ruth Caswell for their inspiration and encouragement.

My humble beginnings as exhibitor/collector began when my husband suggested that collecting rabbit stamps would take up less space than collecting

china rabbits and musical boxes. Little did he know that eventually those would be replaced by binders, boxes and files of stamps, covers, postcards, ephemera and background information on a varied assortment of subjects.

Having started off with rabbit stamps, the idea for *Around the World in 24 Hip Hops* arose from the multitude of souvenir sheets and other Year of the Rabbit (1999) material that I accumulated. What could I do with them and how could I tell a story?

It became obvious that I had a worldwide collection and from there it was a very small step to *Around the World* (with apologies to Jules Verne). By dividing my collection into time zones the exhibit

fell into place, and with the addition of non-philatelic material, Rabbit had his story to tell. There are a couple of time zones that really required some creativity as they had countries in them did not produce any 1999 rabbit stamps.

Rabbit has done well for himself. He has reached a Vermeil and is currently resting



Figure 1. Title page from Liz Hisey's exhibit "Around the World in 24 Hip Hops." [Editor's Note: Enlarge for better viewing by clicking the "+" button on the Adobe Reader toolbar.



Figure 2. Liz Hisey's "Around the World" exhibit is a Display exhibit, which can incorporate non-philatelic materials to help tell a cohesive story.

in his hutch waiting for some commercial usages to turn up before venturing out again. This is a challenge to find as few dealers carry modern covers.

I found a cover at APS AmeriStamp Expo in Biloxi that reminded me of a restaurant in New York State. This restaurant served wonderful Portuguese food, so I bought it. While driving back to Florida from Mississippi, I wondered what I was going to do with it. Then a light went on. I would do an exhibit on food.

I had been a caterer in Connecticut before we moved to Florida, so have always loved to cook and eat. Well, that was a very large subject, so

where to go from there? I started to accumulate what I call my "pantry." These are stamps showing ingredients and covers in all classes just as long as they have a picture/stamp/meter with food. *Around the World* had shown me just how much fun there was in Display exhibiting, so that became my base.

Thinking about how to exhibit food led me to menus. But where do you go to find the menus? I searched for and found several different types of menus. Some came from Ebay and some from dealers in ephemera.

I started off with 2 frames, then 3 frames and finally

saying to myself "okay we have to really get serious here." That is when I put together *Christmas Dinner at the Portland Hotel* (6 frames). It has done very well and judges comments have helped increase the medal levels (most recently a gold at NAPEX).

I walk several miles a day, and this is the time when I let my mind loose and think about what I have in the "Pantry" and what types of exhibits I want to put together. Once I have the basic idea, I then bounce it around with husband Bob and other people. I listen to what they say and also ways in which they think the story could be improved. I also find that networking with friends at shows is a great source of ideas. Brainstorming often results in me visiting the dealers to start yet another accumulation of material!!

I currently have several exhibits in the works. One is a day in the life of my grandparents during the Edwardian age. I have my grandmother's cook book and think I will take recipes from it and put together a story of what they ate during one day in their life. Another is to do an oriental menu.

In amongst doing the menus I have also mounted and shown other exhibits. One was *The Life of Tom Turkey*. Again he came from the "food" base, but was also an opportunity to collect non-food material. He has had a rocky life so far. *Tom Turkey* is a one-frame-exhibit and the judges and I have had different expectations of the exhibit.

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This is a publication of WE — Women Exhibitors — Whose mission is to be the vehicle through which women exhibitors can encourage each other through sharing information, ideas, experience, advice, problems, and solutions.

For more information contact Ruth Caswell (Chair) :
ruthandlyman@earthlink.net

"The essential part of creativity is not being afraid to fail."

EDWIN H. LAND (INVENTOR)

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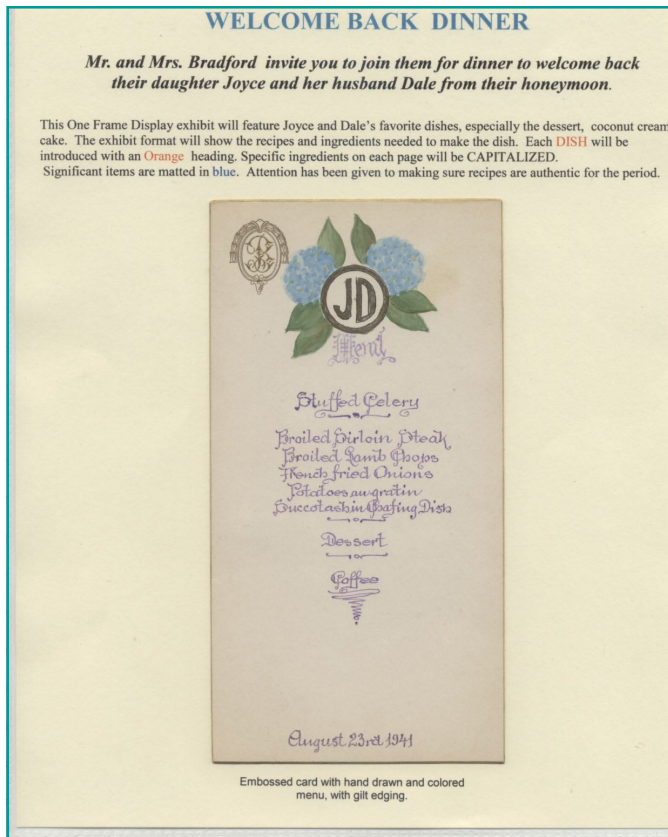


Figure 3. Title page for "Welcome Back Dinner" display exhibit by Liz Hisey.



Figure 4. The "Welcome Back Dinner" menu included potatoes au gratin, whose recipe is illustrated by this page in the exhibit.

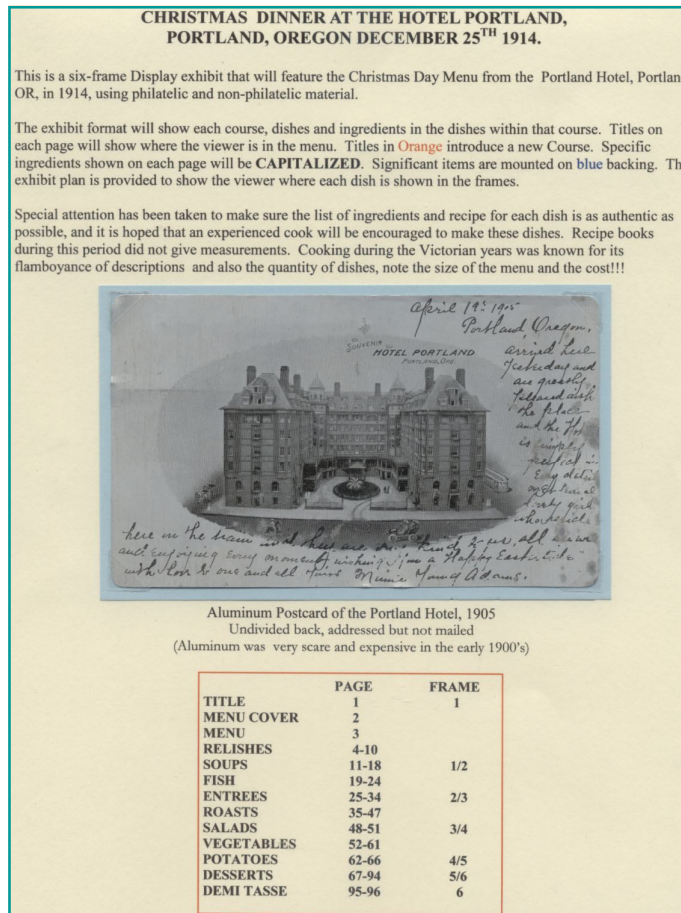


Figure 5. Title page from a display exhibit entitled "Christmas Dinner at the Hotel Portland," which most recently won gold medals at the National Topical Stamp Show and NAPEX, and the display grand at NTSS.

Another direction was *Little Tommy's 4th of July*. This was an illustrated mail exhibit that also grew from some food-oriented covers I had collected, and again gave a greater scope in collecting advertising covers.

Tommy has a problem in being a convincing one-frame-exhibit. From collecting advertising covers for *Tommy*, I started collecting covers to put into a multi-frame exhibit *From Ground to Gullet*. This is the story of "Wheat", and another is *Making an Apple Pie*, also using advertising covers to tell the story.

Again using food as a base

for exhibiting, I started collecting postcards. This led me to begin working on an exhibit *The Art of Breaking Bread* showing people around the world, workers, cowboys, military, etc eating and drinking.

This collection has spun off another potential exhibit *Eating Across America*, which will be an exhibit of railway dining cars from the early 1900's up till 1970's.

So where do I get my ideas? They come from having a passion for a subject, in my case food, and then letting my mind branch out into the various aspects of the main

"Ideas won't keep. Something must be done about them."

ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD (ENGLISH PHILOSOPHER)



Figure 6. A cinderella item illustrates the ingredient sherry in a recipe for creamed diamondback terrapin. See how carefully the exhibitor chose the elements exhibited on this page to tell the story?

subject. Being right-brained makes this a lot easier than those who are left-brained. Right brainers also have a love

of play, fun, and looking for the creative output, and to me that is what exhibiting is all about.

Got a great exhibiting story?
 Having trouble with an exhibit?
 Have some suggestions for WE?
 Got some creative new ideas?

Write about them!
 Contact the editor:
tongajan@aol.com

I think...

What is the most important aspect of exhibiting?

By Janet Klug

“Hi, Gertrude! It is great to see you again! I see you are exhibiting at this show. How did you do?”

“Oh, I only got a silver.”

“Oh, too bad. I’m so sorry.”

Only a silver. Wow. How terrible is that?

In my humble opinion, a silver is not terrible at all. Neither is a silver bronze, a bronze, a certificate of participation, a vermeil or a gold.

Medals are simply one jury’s opinion of how well the exhibits in that show met the criteria by which stamp exhibits are judged. Sometimes they are spot on; sometimes not. But YOU, the exhibitor, still have an achievement of which you should be proud.

Why? Exhibiting is not easy. It takes time, concentration, effort, creativity, money (sometimes a lot; sometimes not), intelligence, and a willingness to “put yourself out there.”

If you have made an exhibit, you have achieved something that only a small percentage of stamp collectors ever attempt. And for that effort you are rewarded by the feeling of achievement you get when you see your exhibit in the frames. Your effort expanded your mind,

gave you a creative outlet, allowed you to share some of your collection with others, taught you new things and provided opportunities for you to meet new people and make new friends.

When you think in those terms, aren’t all of those aspects of exhibiting actually MORE important than what one jury thought about an exhibit at one show?

And hey, in the Olympics a silver medal and a bronze medal are celebrated as wonderful achievements. Why are these achievements denigrated in the world of philately?

The “it’s-only-a-silver” mentality does not help those who are struggling to get a silver or a vermeil or a gold, nor does it help those new to exhibiting who are just learning how to do it. Shouldn’t we do a better job of nurturing these beginners?

Maybe we should all reset our brains so that when the medals are posted we do cartwheels up and down the aisles and shout “Whoopie! I had all of this fun AND I got a medal, too! What a great hobby!”

Got an opinion on some aspect of philately? Send it to the editor for publication: tongajan@aol.com

“To think creatively, we must be able to look afresh at what we normally take for granted.”

David Wessely, proprietor of A-One Coverz (aonecoverz@aol.com), gave Denise Stotts an issue of The American Collector published in Piney Creek, Maryland in January 1897. The following article is reprinted from this early hobby publication.

Recruiting: Why so few women?

By Paul W. Gardner (published in 1897)

Why are there so few lady Philatelists?

This question has often come up in my mind and perhaps it has in yours. The collector and dealer are now both deeply interested in increasing the number of stamp collectors; both pecuniarily so.

Nearly every new collector makes a new customer for a dealer and will eventually cause a rise in the price of stamps in individual collections, as stamps are a commodity regulated almost entirely by supply and demand.

The more demand there is for obsolete stamps the smaller becomes the supply and the higher go the prices greatly to the delight of their owners. But there is another and far more interesting side to stamp collecting than the pecuniary one, a side which the collector ought to pay more attention to, and the side that will appeal more strongly to our lady friends and serve to interest them in taking up our pursuit. I mean the aesthetic side. If our pursuit does not deal with much of the beautiful in art; it is nothing. But it does. Take a stamp and look at the beautiful lines of engraving, the beautiful designs copied from nature, the historic figures, the delicate scroll work and the many other features. Then there is the historic

Fields for months of delightful study, yes for years. Not the least of all these is the pleasure from arranging and re-arranging your collection.

Do not all these things appeal to the tastes of our lady friends? Yes and more, too.

They are pursuits always near to the feminine heart. When then are there so few lady Philatelists? It is a difficult question to answer. Perhaps one answer would deal with the pecuniary side. Young ladies and girls do not like to squander their savings on bits of engraved paper when there are so many things of the toilet and finery to be looked after, and sweet-meats to be purchased, but back of this and every other explanation I believe lies this one answer: Their interest has never been aroused.

The Philatelic dealer and collector are doing everything to interest the boys and induce them to form a stamp collection. There is a fine opportunity open to dealers and the society that first takes up the cause of interesting the ladies and young girls. A systematic and persistent effort must be made. The artistic and historic value of Philately must be set forth. After which we will receive that touch of refining influence that will give us one more powerful hold upon the general community.



Volume II, No. 1 of The American Collector (published in 1897), contained this article about recruiting women collectors. The newsletter was edited by R.M. Miller. The back page of it had an ad offering to sell U.S. 1847 5¢ stamps (used) for 60¢ and the 10¢ value for \$3.00. The angst about recruiting sounds uncannily similar; the prices for stamps do not!

Festival for Philatelic Women
Bellefonte, PA
May 28—31, 2009

"When in doubt, make a fool of yourself. There is a microscopically thin line between being brilliantly creative and acting like the most gigantic idiot on earth. So, what the hell, leap!

CYNTHIA HEIMEL (PLAYWRIGHT)

WE (Women Exhibitors)



Festival for Philatelic Women

May 28–31, 2009

At the American Philatelic Center, Bellefonte, PA

Activities & events for women of all skill levels.

For more information:

Women Exhibitors
7227 Sparta Road
Sebring, FL 33875

E-Mail: WEfestival@comcast.net

Open to all, but philately is explored from a woman's point of view.

"Success is going from failure to failure without a loss of enthusiasm."

WINSTON CHURCHILL

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COALPEX, a stamp show held annually in Walnut Creek, California, was recently the site of the first-ever all-women exhibition. WE chair Ruth Caswell reports about COALPEX.

The first all-women exhibition

By Ruth Caswell

COALPEX invited WE to the first-ever philatelic exhibition exclusively by women collectors. The show was held June 14-15, 2008, at the Walnut Creek Civic Park in Walnut Creek CA and was presented by the Stamp Clubs of Contra Costa & Alameda Counties. WE members, thirteen in number, responded to this invitation with 16 exhibits filling 42 frames. These exhibits came from near (California) and far (Paraguay). A variety of divisions and classes were represented.

For this momentous event, the show chair, David McNamee, organized an awards reception for WE. The cake and other refreshments were enjoyed by all. At this show, exhibits that had previously won gold awards competed against each other for the *Best of the Best* medal. The winner for the single frame best was *The First*



Stamp of Latvia: Printed on Maps, and the winner of the multi-frame best was *New Hebrides/Nouvelles Hébrides*. The show exhibits competed for the *Grand* award. This award was given to *A Tourist's Guide to New Orleans at the Beginning of the 20th Century*. Opportunities to talk with the judges were numerous, and for those who could not attend, feedback was

sent with return of their exhibits.

The comment, "*what a wonderful show*," was heard over and over, and the exhibits were viewed and read by many attendees. Viewers stopped at each exhibit and spent time studying the material in the frames. Such attention to our efforts is one reason many of us create exhibits.

In addition to exhibiting, philatelic shows are a time to renew friendships and make new friends. Conversations - philatelic and otherwise - permit us to gain new exhibiting ideas and to make connections with WE members. Bravas to the COALPEX committee; to Vesma Grinfelds, the WE liaison; and to all WE for bringing about this forward looking event.

"There is no failure except in no longer trying. There is no defeat except from within."

ELBERT HUBBARD (AMERICAN PHILOSOPHER & WRITER)

STAMPSHOW Exhibits by women

Congratulations to two WE members who are participating in the Champion of Champions competition:

Elizabeth Nettles, Ph.D.
The Louisiana Purchase Exposition and the Mails

Patricia Stillwell Walker
Baltimore Postal History: From Colonial Times to the UPU

Open competition exhibits made by women:

Barbara Harrison
Publishers and Artists

Ruth Caswell
The Tag-A-Long 1¢ Inkwell and Quill

Dalene Thomas
Pharos—Lighthouses of the World

Diane DeBlois (and Robert Dalton Harris)
The Government Presence in Your Community: Post Office Post Cards

Maureen Lynch
Categories of Balloon Mail: Pushing the Envelope

[Editor apologizes for any omissions.]

Visit

STAMPSHOW

Hartford,
Connecticut
August 14—17, 2008

STAMPSHOW PROGRAMS

SELECTED STAMPSHOW SEMINARS/ MEETINGS (Given by women and/or WE members)

(Recheck times & places at the show & check the show schedule for other seminars that will interest YOU!)

Thursday, August 14

10:00 a.m. Kid's Stamp Camp (Cheryl Edgcomb) - Halls A-B
2:00 p.m. 100 Greatest American Stamps (Janet Klug/ Don Sundman—Room 11

Friday, August 15

10:00 a.m. Adult Stamp Camp USA (Cheryl Edgcomb) - Hall A-B
12:00 p.m. Victorian Letter Writing (Diane De Bloise) - Room 23
1:00 p.m. Exhibiting & Judging Traditional Exhibits (Janet Klug) Room 13
4:00 p.m. Exhibiting & Judging Postal History (Pat Walker/ Peter McCann) - Room 13

Saturday, August 16

10:00 a.m. Kid's Stamp Camp (Cheryl Edgcomb) - Halls A-B
Alphabetilately: An Exhibition of Philately from A to Z (Cheryl Ganz) - Room 12
Columbia, Land of Philatelic Opportunity (Debby Friedman) - Room 21
Stamp Saturday (Gretchen Moody, requires advance registration) - Room 22
1:00 p.m. *Guide to Stamp Collecting* book signing (Janet Klug) - APS Affiliates table
2:00 p.m. AAPE Open Forum—Room 15
3:00 p.m. Exhibit Critique (Pat Walker & Jury) - Room 27
5:00 p.m. WE MEETING (Ruth Caswell) - Room 12

Sunday, August 17

9:00 a.m. Introducing the Youth Philately Fellows Program (Gretchen Moody/ Alex Haimann) - Room 11
Judges Roundtable - Room 21
10:00 a.m. Kid's Stamp Camp (Cheryl Edgcomb) - Halls A-B
2:00 p.m. Civil War Printing (Georgia Barnhill) - Room 12

[Editor's Note: Sorry if I missed anyone. Please check the complete schedule.]

"To be able to fill leisure intelligently is the last product of civilization."

BERTRAND RUSSELL