

The Other Side of the Mountain

The tale began today on page two, continued on page three and now it is time to tie it altogether in this edition of "As I See It."

There is one last piece to fit into the puzzle before I take you on my journey down the other side of the mountain.

On July 1, I completed my second of two terms as president of the American Stamp Dealers Association. Yep, that's right—term limited out, thank God! Little did I know when I volunteered to run the amount of time I would spend on the Association over the past four years. As difficult as the time commitment was I can say that it was worth it. My presidency was blessed with a wonderful mix of people who also gave freely of their time as well to make our Association much better. If you are a subscriber to *The American Stamp Dealer & Collector* (and I hope you are) my last four president's columns were dedicated to the officers and directors who served with me.

It is time to look out on the valley below.

First, anytime you make a radical change in course in your business the rumor mill cranks up into high gear. So to set the record straight going forward, I am not retiring or going out of business. This is merely a realignment to put my business needs in harmony with my changing personal needs.

I wrote on page three of this newsletter about using my new found time for travel, writing, gardening and wood working. Let me expand on this just a little bit. The commitment that I made to the ASDA, four years ago, wound up taking about 15 to 20 hours a week of my time. This caused me to abandon two important projects. The first involves a complete redo of my website. To date, we have worked at revising the "Our Latest Newsletter" portion of the site, *Are you Selling?*, the Show Schedule and Philatelic Links pages. There are still a couple of refinements to come for these pages but you can now see them on our website: www.jameslee.com.

The literature page is next in the mix and most of the work on it has been completed so please check it out as well. The hard part started July 1st and that involved completely recasting each page that has both essays and proofs, postal history or fancy cancels. We have hundreds of listings to delete and several thousand new listings to add to the site. This will take the next several months.

The second project is an updating/rewriting of Dr. Clarence Brazer's handbook on essays which was published in 1941. This one will take several years to complete. There are other smaller writing projects on the docket as well, including writing up my Hilton Head Island Civil War material.

We plan to aggressively buy and sell essays and proofs, postal history with an emphasis on the 1861 issues and the Civil War (now including Confederates) and certain areas of fancy cancels that are of interest. Today, about 80% of our sales come either through the Internet or phone and mail marketing with the balance of the sales coming from shows. This mix will continue—however, our show schedule will continue to change.

The major shows (March Party, Plymouth, NAPEX, StampShow, ASDA National Postage Stamp Show in October and Chicagopex) will continue to be our focus however we will add Indypex and the Georgia show since we have grandchildren in each of those markets.

This plan will be in effect until the international show in New York City in 2016. At that time we will reassess where we are at and probably slow the process down but keep the sales volume constant. As the legendary Chicago dealer Bob Weisz has often said: "I won't stop dealing until they start to shovel the dirt over me".

This reminds me of the only time I ever met the late legendary dealer, Ezra Cole. I encountered him at his booth at CAPEX in 1977 in Toronto, Canada, 36 years ago. (Rich Drews and I both took time off from work to experience our first international show.) Ezra must have been in his 80s at the time. He had a wonderful exhibit of Washington-Franklins and Fourth Bureau Issue stamps under the glass. Each issue was represented by various pieces of part sheets.

I asked him how he had managed to assemble such an impressive holding and I will never forget his response. He paused and looked over his glasses and said: "Well sonny, I had my pick of the sheets at the philatelic agency when they were on sale there in Washington, D.C. Mostly they have been in the bank since then." Well by 2016, the game will have gone full circle. It would be nice to very slowly fade away as did the legendary Ezra Cole.

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