

Isolation, Communication, and it ends with me.



By Jim Lee

I learned from being quarantined that I was isolated and cut off from the physical philatelic world. When I was not working at my standup desk, I spent time sitting at a table. The light there was not the best so I would use it as a place to reflect and contemplate what was going on in the world.

One day I was just sitting and reading through three recent issues of *The American Philatelist* that I had brought along on the trip. I realized that the number of members, that had deceased, and that I knew personally was starting to pile up. Most, I was not even aware of their passing. It was a “chicken little the sky is falling moment!” I needed a proactive way to stay in touch with my philatelic friends.

Next, I read through my database of names and addresses. I could recognize and visualize over two hundred names. It dawned on me that for the most part we are all about the same age. Most of our contact had been via shows, email and with an occasional phone conversation about an item or want. I wanted this to change.

My solution was to create a monthly call list. Each day I tried to call between three and five clients for the sole purpose of just reaching out to see how they were doing. We talk about anything other than politics. The conversations focus on family and interests outside of philately. This seems to help the isolation problem for all involved. It also takes the socialization that was missing from our lives to a whole new level. It also piqued my thinking about the next part of my column.

Our collecting community is very tight knit. As we sail through the fourth quarter of life most do

not think about the deaccessioning of their collections. This also applies to all the other things that we have acquired and enjoyed over the course of our lifetime. You may remember this point was brought home to me when I had serious surgery ten years ago. It was supposed to be routine gall bladder surgery, but that went south and nearly cost me my life. Eleven days in the hospital gave me plenty of time to think about the “fourth quarter.” Five years later my wife Melanie and I decided to downsize. We were convinced that our four children had left the nest for good. When you are going from 5,000 to 2,500 square feet you realize that everything that you have acquired and enjoyed over the years is not going to be able to go with you. You are forced to decide what is important and what is not.

We made a list of the things we wanted to take with us and the things we did not. Most of the things on the list were antiques, family heirlooms or other furniture. We sent this list out to each of our children and told them they could have whatever they want. **That is when I realized that it ends with me.** We have learned much from this experience.

Please take time to think of your own situation and plan. In the 30 years, I have witnessed some terrible outcomes for collections, and I will share just two examples.

The first, a client died without his wife having any idea as to value of his collection. She sold a \$150,000 stamp and postal history collection to a local dealer of for just \$10,000.00. Yes, there are people who will take advantage.

The second, both the husband and the wife passed within a month of each other. The daughter was left to pack up and sell the house. I got called in near the end. Most of the collection had already reached the dumpster and was reposing in a landfill somewhere. I spent \$5,000.00 on what was left of what had been at least a \$25,000.00 collection.

Now is a good time to plan for your possessions, your collections, and your time.