

## On Exhibiting By Richard Pederson

Much has been written, pro and con, about the value of exhibits at stamp shows. Some philatelists are driven by the quest to achieve high level awards at national and international shows. For those individuals, the exhibit area is the primary reason for participating in a show. At the other end of the spectrum are those who pay little or no attention to the exhibits, feel that exhibitors are elitist philatelists who are out of touch with the rest of the hobby, and believe exhibits only increase fees charged to dealers and those attending the show.

I have read and heard many of the arguments pertaining to exhibiting over the years. As a member of the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors (AAPE), who is also a dealer and collector (Prexies and Allied Military Government issues), I certainly have my own opinions on this topic. I understand the concerns of those who are afraid of expenses being driven up by the costs associated with subsidizing exhibits at major shows. Obviously, if dealers have to pay more for their tables, those costs are going to be passed on to collectors in the form of higher prices for stamps, covers, and collecting supplies. The real question is, are those higher costs offset by benefits realized from having the exhibits.

I admit to having my biases, on the topic of exhibiting, since I am an AAPE member who is in the process of actively building one or more exhibits that I hope to enter into competitions in the not too distant future. Despite that, my interest in building a competitive exhibit is relatively new when compared to my many years of collecting. Even when I had no interest in exhibiting selected portions of my collection, exhibits were always a major part of what drew me to attend regional, national, and international shows. I found exhibits to be both entertaining and educational. I was fascinated by the stories they told and by the significant research expended by exhibitors when studying topics that were, at times, both narrow and obscure. I was also thankful to have had the opportunity to view many philatelic rarities that I would never have seen if it were not for shows providing space for both competitive and non-competitive exhibits. In addition, exhibits have the ability to draw people to shows who otherwise might not be interested in the hobby.

If just a few of those curious enough to view the exhibits become hooked on stamp and/or cover collecting, the entire hobby benefits. Who knows how many collectors were drawn into the hobby, over the years, after attending a show to see rarities such as the inverted Jenny, Hawaiian missionaries, 1 cent Z-grill, or

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the unique 1856 1 cent magenta from British Guiana. I feel certain that some of those first time attendees, after viewing the exhibits, decided to look around, bought a few stamps or covers, and before they knew it were captivated by the many pleasures of philately.

It is certainly necessary to maintain a proper balance between selling and exhibiting since it is the dealer booths that pay the majority of a typical show's costs. Nevertheless, I believe that dealers also benefit from being at a show with exhibits. In addition to giving some collectors more incentive to attend the show, the exhibits can help bring in new collectors, and draw serious philatelists that are willing to spend significant sums to improve their collections and/or enhance their exhibits. If you have not attended a major regional or national show having exhibits, I challenge you to give it a try. You just might discover that it further enhances the enjoyment you get from philately.

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