

Preparing for the Disbursement of Your Collection By Richard Pederson

As I write this article, I am having to deal with the possibility of moving my mother from an assisted living facility to long term care. In doing so, I am also having to make sure her affairs are in order. Many of her possessions must be disposed of and her will needs to be reviewed and updated, if necessary. While dealing with these issues, it made me think about how many stamp collectors enter the later years of their lives without making adequate preparation to facilitate dealing with their affairs once they are no longer here.

It is amazing to me how few stamp collectors tell their families and friends how to dispense of their collections once they have passed. Not only do most loved ones fail to have any realistic idea about what the collection they have inherited is worth, but they have even less information about how to dispose of it. Most of those who do provide information to their descendants have established worth based upon retail or catalog values rather than the actual worth to a willing buyer, be it a dealer or another collector. Some people have a hard time grasping that a collection, predominately made up of common material, may only be worth a small percentage of catalog value to a dealer who already has an abundance of that material in stock. In fact, many of the collections I look at have no value to a dealer and are best given away to a new collector or donated to the American Philatelic Society (APS) for use in its youth programs.

With the above in mind, every collector or dealer should leave clear instructions on how to handle their holdings and provide a realistic assessment of what they are actually worth. For instance, a collector could provide a list of trusted dealers he/she felt should be contacted upon their death. The collector should also provide a rough estimate of what his/her collection is worth (e.g., less than \$1,000, \$5,000 to \$10,000, over \$50,000, etc.) accompanied by a list of key items in the collection, including catalog number, condition, and any certificates of authenticity, so that a dealer can better assess their level of interest in the collection.

There is nothing worse than leaving loved ones with a stamp collection and no information on what to do with it. It is painful enough having to deal with the passing of someone who is near to you. Having to dispose of a collection that was assembled over a lifetime, and that you know little or nothing about, only adds to the burden.

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Most collectors would like to see the stamps they loved, disbursed in a way that benefits those left behind, but also placed in the hands of someone who will enjoy and preserve them. Without making proper preparations, your stamps could be mishandled, thrown out, or sold for a fraction of what they are worth. Do yourself and your heirs a favor and make sure that your collection is organized, properly described, and there are clear instructions on what to do with it if the time comes when you are not able to dispose of it yourself.

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