

Rotary Club of Calgary West
(A Year of Rotary Fun and Fellowship)

The Weekly WESTERNER

Box 4572, Station C, Calgary, Alberta T2T 5N3
Holiday Inn, McLeod Trail, Fridays 12:15 pm

President: Karl Herzog **President-Elect:** Sa'adat Keshavjee

Past President: Lynne Thornton **Secretary:** Ron Morrison

Treasurer: Des DeFreitas

Directors: Stan Beveridge, Ron Brookes, Bryden Horwood, Margot McDermott
Bernie Ward, David Williams



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President **Karl** called the meeting to order at 12:15 and welcomed **Steve and Marie Rickard** back after their extended and unplanned stay in London due to the Icelandic volcano.

Ron Jones led us in the singing of the national anthem and **Jim Willson** gave the invocation before we all proceeded in an orderly fashion to the buffet table. Our SAA, **Kurt Schurer** had to be reminded that the scribe's table gets to go first after the head table.

Karl called the meeting to order sharply at 12:40 and thanked the Holiday Inn and staff, for their efforts in providing us with a great lunch of roast turkey. Karl introduced the head table. Seated on his far left was **Crawford Caswell**, to thank the guest speaker, our speaker **Peter Fleck** and **David Hamilton** to introduce Peter. Keeping Karl company on his right were **Gordon Rodrigues** and **Jim Barnes**.

Our incoming president **Sa'adat Keshavjee** introduced our visitors and guests. **Des DeFreitas** led us in the singing of our welcome song.

Gordon Rodrigues's name was drawn as the lucky winner of the 50/50 draw.

Karl reminded everyone that the club assembly is Wednesday, April 28, beginning at 5:30PM at the Holiday Inn. He told us that "it is not the kind of meeting where minutes are taken and hours wasted. I assure you that it will be a very captivating event."

Karl announced that **Marco** will be leaving his host family, the Keshavjees and joining Karl and **Cindy** for the remainder of his time with the club.

Announcements

-Bryden Horwood reminded everyone that the deadline for entries (April 26, 2010) in the District Peace Photo contest is fast approaching, so, if you want to enter, do so quickly. Remember the great prize monies available, \$750 - \$250. For more information and to enter please go to www.rotarianpeacephoto.org.

-**Ted Valentine** announced all of the birthdays for the next couple of months and a hearty happy birthday wish was extended to them all.

-Marie Richard presented a club banner from a Rotary Club in Manai, Nairobi, Kenya, a club that she and Steve visited while in Kenya.

SAA – Kurt Schurer was very easy on us all and any fines levied were accepted with very few complaints. There were several happy bucks from first grandchild to new grandchild while in Nairobi.

Guest Speaker

David Hamilton introduced our guest speaker, Peter Fleck, an avid stamp collector. Peter is presently vice president of the Calgary Philatelic Society and was the recipient of the organization's Founders Award Dinner in 2009. Peter is also a freelance journalist and photographer with over 30 years of experience. Peter was founding editor of Calgary's Christian newspaper "City Light News" from 1987 to 2003. Peter has photographed Ernest Manning, Sandi Patti and many, many more provincial and local leaders.

Peter combined his love for stamps and currently writes an article for a bi-monthly publication called, Treasures as well as being a humour columnist with the Canadian Stamp News magazine. Peter also does business in the little known field of discount postage, which he will explain to us.

The Wonderful World of Stamps

Presentation to the Calgary West Rotary Club, April 23, 2010 edited from Peter's Slide notes.

Title Slide: The Wonderful World of Stamps

Many of you here today are familiar with my work as a photographer, as we could see by the picture I took of Rotary's Strawberry Shortcake Valentine's fundraiser in 2008. But today, I want to focus on the word, philatelist. If any of you are familiar with Greek, you'll note that the literal translation of the word is "lover of taxes." That's actually the opposite of what the person who coined the phrase wanted to convey. But his knowledge of Greek was found lacking. At least it's better than the alternative. Before then, stamp collecting was known as timbromania, taken from the French word for stamps, which is timbre. So, if that were still the case, as a stamp collector, I would be known as a trimbromaniac. I find philatelist a little more dignified.

So where do we start?

(American lunar landing stamp appears with the words, "In the beginning, God...") We're not going to go back that far, to Creation. But the biblical analogy is appropriate in that the earliest references in literature to any kind of postal service are found in the Old Testament of the Bible. For example, 2 Chronicles 30:6 says, "So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah." You'll also find mention of postal services in the books of Nehemiah and Esther.

Early Mail

I was recently in Israel where I picked up a series of "Ancient Letters" stamps. The first shows a clay tablet from 1230 B.C. It was from the Canaanite Period, prior to the Israelites occupying the land. It features cuneiform script. The next time you find yourself sending an e-mail or perhaps text messaging, think of how long it took them to send out a letter back then. They first had to prepare a tablet with wet clay, then carefully etch in the script, let it dry and finally bake it before sending it out. What you see is also just the letter. But each letter was enclosed in an "envelope" also made of clay. So to be a postman back then required you to be built much like Arnold Schwarzenegger. Postal systems have been around for about 6,000 years. The very first letters were comprised of these clay tablets with cuneiform script. So for the first 6,000 years, the technology hadn't changed. Next we see a letter written on a pottery shard with ink. This was much lighter and faster to compose. It's from 589 B.C., the First Temple Period.

Finally, the last stamps show a letter from 134 A.D. That's about 100 years after the crucifixion of Christ. It's written on papyrus, which is a form of paper made from the papyrus plant. It's amazing that something coming from a plant has lasted so long. Now the earliest postal systems were operated by the Chinese, Babylonians and Assyrians about 6,000 years ago. These were solely available to the ruling classes, although the Assyrians did open it up to merchants about 5,000 years ago. However, in China, the postal system was closed to the public right up until 1879. If any non-royal was caught trying to use the system to send something, it was punishable by death.

The First Stamps

The "penny black" from Great Britain, which came out in May of 1840, is the first postage stamp ever issued. A blue two-pence stamp was supposed to come out the same day but was delayed a day or two by the printers. Canada's first stamp, which was issued in 1851, was a three-penny "beaver." Following Great Britain, the next postage stamps to be produced were from the Swiss cities of Zurich and Geneva in 1843. But the second country to issue postage stamps was Brazil. United States is the third country on the list. It released its first federal stamps in 1847 but had some regional issues dating back to 1845. After that came stamps from Mauritius (1847), Bermuda (1848), Belgium (1849), France (1849) and Austria (1850). Canada was the eleventh country in the world to issue a postage stamp. Great Britain's first stamp featured Queen Victoria, Brazil depicted a stylized numeral, the United States had a pair of stamps with Washington and Franklin, and Austria pictured the Coat of Arms, while Canada is the first country to highlight an animal on its inaugural postage stamp.

Sir Rowland Hill

Great Britain's Sir Rowland Hill is credited with introducing postage stamps to the world. As a result, he is celebrated by postal authorities around the globe. A Mongolian stamp featuring a portrait of Hill is used to illustrate this. In recognition of Great Britain as the founding country to release stamps, it is the only country in the Universal Postal Union permitted to issue stamps that do not feature the name of the country on them. Great Britain continues the practice of not publishing its name on stamps to this day, but most of its stamps are marked by a small silhouette of the queen's head. However, the creation of the stamp was only part of Hill's campaign for postal reform. He also introduced a uniform rate for letters destined for any part of the country, whether it was just across the city of London or from one end of the land to the other. The "penny postage" rate that he introduced was also far more affordable than what people had been paying in the past. Furthermore, his new system required payment from the sender rather than the recipient of mail. The previous system had been open to abuse. Some people devised a secret code that they would put on their envelopes. The recipient would come into the post office, examine the envelope with the code, and then refuse to pay for it, cheating the postal system of its rightful revenue for delivering the message.

A Who's Who of the Planet

Over the years, stamps have featured a virtual *Who's Who* of people throughout the world. That includes heroic figures like Mahatma Gandhi (pictured on an Indian stamp) and villains like Adolph Hitler (pictured on a German stamp). Queen Elizabeth II, to the best of my knowledge, on the strength of the many nations belonging to the Commonwealth and her longevity as the reigning monarch, has been featured on more stamps than anyone else in history.

Who Collects Stamps

Stamp collecting is known as, "The king of hobbies and the hobby of kings." It is a popular hobby among royalty. That's pretty easy to understand since stamps typically portray their images. Included are a number of celebrity collectors, including the tennis star Maria Sharapova who "came out of the closet" five years ago by publicly acknowledging that she was a stamp collector. Stamp collecting is far more popular in Europe than it is here. In Germany, for example, stamp collecting is even taught in the schools.

And in Madrid, every Sunday, one of the major public squares is turned into a giant stamp and coin market.

Stamps as an Investment

About a year ago, there was an article in *The Calgary Herald* detailing how stamps had outperformed the stock market as an investment vehicle over the long haul. But it is important to note that this is for higher end stamps. Lower value stamps can be acquired in bulk for less than their face value. I personally buy large lots of mint Canadian stamps at a discount. I do this mostly by auction. I then resell the bulk of them for postage. That is because all stamps ever issued by Canada are still valid for postage as long as they have never been used. But in the process of buying these large lots, I sometimes obtain a number of premium stamps. For instance, I recently received a 1963 dollar stamp that I resold at an auction for \$8. It had a catalogue value of \$15. But the catalogue value reflects what you would pay for the stamp from a dealer. In a private sale, you usually make less. Even more significant was a pair of 3-cent Queen Victoria stamps from 1898 that I acquired in one of these large lots. The gum on the back of the stamp was like new and they were very-well centered. As it turns out, each stamp has a catalogue value of \$300. That actually reflects an increase in the catalogue value by just over 60 per cent over a four-year time period. It's unusual for me to find items of such a high value in a "discount postage" lot. But along with some other higher-value stamps in the lot, they were tucked in an obscure place in the box and overlooked by the auction house.

Exciting New Stamps

Last fall, Canada Post issued a series of stamps commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Montreal Canadians. The souvenir sheet of three \$3.00 stamps showcases some amazing technology. By tilting the stamps back and forth, you can watch Maurice Richard, Jean Beliveau and Guy Lafleur each score their 500th goals. By incorporating a different image every 1.5 degrees, the video imaging is possible. And then this past winter, under extreme secrecy, Canada Post issued a stamp commemorating Canada's first Olympic medal on home soil. It was the first time Canada Post commissioned a stamp commemorating an event that had not yet happened and was not guaranteed to happen. If Canada had failed to win a medal at the Vancouver-Whistler Winter Olympics, all of the stamps would have to have been quietly destroyed. This is also the first time Canada released a stamp with no pre-determined issue date. The moment that Canada should win its first gold, the post office had to respond very quickly. Fortunately, it only took Canada until the second day of medal competition to win a gold medal. Within two hours of that happening, the stamps went on sale in Vancouver and were available the next day throughout Canada. Ironically, the winner of the gold, Alexandre Bilodeau, was a member of the Canada Post Freestyle Ski Team. As it turns out, the risk that Canada Post took was not that great. Canada ended up winning the most gold medals ever at a Winter Olympics. The 14 golds won by Canada surpassed the previous record of 13 set by Norway and the Soviet Union.

Rotary International in Canada

Perhaps for those in the room, however, the most exciting new stamp will be coming out this June 18. A 57-cent domestic-rate stamp is being released to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Rotary International in Canada. It's being launched in Montreal, just two days before the Rotary convention, June 20-23. The stamp features the traditional Rotary vest. No head is visible on the design in order not to attribute a particular face to the club. The Winnipeg club that started in 1910 was the first club outside of the United States. There are now approximately 33,500 Rotary clubs in 160 countries. Shown on the PowerPoint are the stamp, booklet cover, first-day cover and commemorative postcard.

Rotary on Stamps Fellowship

Canada is actually a late-comer to join the Rotary stamp bandwagon. Over the years, more than 2,000 stamps, souvenir sheets, special cancellations and philatelic items have been issued by 130 nations in honor of Rotary International. The Rotary on Stamps Fellowship was founded by the American Topical

Society as a forum for collectors of Rotary stamps. Pictured on the slide are Rotary stamps from the U.S. (1955), Cuba (1940), Bangladesh (2004) and Australia (2005). Also illustrated are a set of nine penguin stamps from Congo in 2002 featuring the Rotary logo.

Crawford thanked Peter and presented him with our Boltman.

Karl adjoined the meeting at 1:30 and reminded us that the club assembly is on Wednesday.

President Karl closed the meeting by reminding us that this is Rotary Magazine month and, if we haven't done so already, to check out the latest magazine as it contains some very compelling reading.

Coming Events

May 7	Calgary West International Activities and Projects
May 14	Mark Stephens – Voice of the Stampeders
May 21	Anne Price – CWRC's Integrity Award recipient
May 28	Venue transferred to the District Conference in Banff
June 4	Danielle Smith – Leader, Wildrose Alliance
June 11	Ald Rick McIver – Mayoral Candidate
June 18	Calgary Police Chief Rick Hanson
June 25	Special Club Program – Turnover Friday
June 26	President's Ball