

# In My Opinion: A Challenge to All Collectors

by Karl P. Wysotski

If the truth be known, most of us have failed to encourage our children to collect stamps. For many years now, technology has offered young people numerous choices on how to spend their free time and stamp collecting is not a popular choice.

Generally speaking, today's adult collectors collected stamps when they were young. The stamp collecting seed was planted at an early age. Sometime during adolescence they put their stamp hobby aside, only to resume collecting many years later when they had more time, the interest, and money for the hobby. I, for one, am part of this group.

All of us can help this hobby survive by exposing today's children to the joys of collecting stamps. How you ask? Let me tell you my story and then challenge you to do the same.

About three years ago three of my granddaughters came out to our country home for a weekend. We woke up on Saturday morning to a heavy rain and three disappointed girls



who were looking forward to playing outside. A thought crossed my mind that this would be a good time to plant the stamp collecting seed and see what happened. I gave each of the girls (7-year-old twins and their 9-year-old sister) an empty stock book and a pair of tongs. Then I brought out three stock books filled with common but colorful stamps. The instructions were simple. Go through the stock books and take whatever you like and place them in your own album. In no time each of the girls started removing stamps that caught their eye. Flowers, insects, frogs, animals, birds, whales, Disney, dinosaurs — the list went on and on.

They were actually excited as they added to their collection. After they exhausted the three books, they asked for more. Luckily I had many more books to show them and so the hunt continued. It seemed like no time had passed before their grandmother was calling them for lunch. They couldn't eat fast enough in order to get back to their stamps. The sun came out and it didn't matter. All afternoon they collected stamps. At one point I overheard Julia ask her twin sister Jade if she could have a certain stamp. Jade replied "What will you give me for it? I'll sell it to you." How fast they learn, and so the trading began.

I couldn't help to think back to when I tried to get my children to collect stamps. The older two showed no interest whatsoever. My last chance was with my youngest son, James, so one Christmas I gave him a Canada album and a bag of Canadian stamps. World wide collecting with the older two was a complete failure. James showed a spark of interest during the Christmas holidays and then the album went into hiding. The following October James gave the album

and stamps to his older brother David as a birthday gift. And yes, on the following Christmas morning the album reappeared in a different box and was given back to James. This album has been going back and forth in my family for well over twenty-five years. It's become a family joke!

Sunday morning the girls continued the search until I ran out of stamps. Then they arranged and rearranged their collections. When their parents



Above: The granddaughters: Julia, Jade, and Adria.  
Right: The author.

arrived, my grandchildren couldn't wait to show them their treasures. I must admit that I had tears in my eyes several times as I watched them enjoy my hobby.

Now when I attend club meetings and stamp shows I'm constantly on the lookout for examples of the topical stamps that my grandchildren collect. Yes, I'm adding to their collection as often as possible. It gives me joy to see their eyes light up when I bring over an envelope full of stamps. Over the past few years I have taken my grandchildren to a local stamp show and a club meeting. They had the greatest time going through numerous worldwide ten-cent dealer stock books and selecting their favorite stamps. Naturally, granddad paid for their stamps!

Let's not kid ourselves; I know that their stock book will eventually be put away along with other "growing up" treasures. However, I do believe that they will always cherish this book because it is filled with stamps that are meaningful to them and also because it will remind them of bonding with their grandfather.

Long after I'm gone, I hope that my grandchildren will pick up the hobby the way we did when we had the time and the interest. The seed was planted and it just needs time to mature. My challenge to all of you is to do what I did. Approach your grandchildren or your nieces and nephews, or even your neighbor's children. Give them a stock book

and let them fill it with your surplus stamps. If you do not have extra stamps, then go out and buy a bag full at the next stamp show or club meeting. Do your part and give this hobby a future. When I'm done my seven grandchildren will each have a stamp album filled with meaningful treasures. Someday they will share it with their children, and the hobby will go on.

It would be great if every member of the APS encouraged four or five children to cherish stamps by starting them off with a stock book and topical stamps of their choice. As a result, there would be almost two hundred thousand children with a meaningful treasure that could well form the beginning of a future stamp collector. Nice thought.

Do your part.

### **The Author**

**Karl P. Wysotski is a retired high school teacher who has been collecting stamps for more than forty years. Currently he has a major interest in topical collecting, namely bird stamps, especially those he can use in a stamp exhibit. For the past ten years he has been co-president of the Kawartha Stamp Club in Peterborough, Ontario. Three years ago he wrote an article about the growth of the Kawartha Club for the *AP* titled "A Success Story" (January 2011, page 22). At that time the club was just shy of eighty members; today the membership stands at 103.**