

## John E. Lievsay 1932 – 2021

It is with great sadness that I note the death of John E. Lievsay on April 18, 2021 at the age of 89. John was one of the quiet giants of philately, who excelled at just about every aspect of the hobby. He served as President of the FCPS, and was a Board member for decades. He was equally happy handling the most significant activities, for example as co-editor/editor of our most important publications (**The Bordeaux Issue** and **Philatélie à la Française** [via the Foundation]), and writing routine minutes for the presentations at our monthly meetings in NYC. Many meeting summaries in the **Philatelist** end with JEL. He was a regular contributor to the **Philatelist**, most notably on French area forgeries and plating aspects of French issues. Beyond the FCPS he was also an active member of the Collectors Club, The Philatelic Foundation, the AIEP and the American Philatelic Society, contributing his many skills wherever needed. He was a philatelic exhibitor of note, and further served philately as a national and international judge, commissioner and expert. I think he could handle just about every philatelic endeavor. To give you a sense of the extent of John's philatelic involvement, he and his wife Jo visited the five major continents and all fifty states during the course of their philatelic activities.

What most impressed me about John was the seriousness and dedication with which he approached every activity. In the 1970's John began working on becoming a philatelic judge. I became aware of this when I arrived at the Philadelphia International Show in 1976. By chance, I met him at the entrance, and asked him about his thoughts on the show's bourse. He looked at me and said, "Bourse? Bourse? I've only been here for four days and I haven't finished with the exhibits!" At a subsequent NOJEX at which I was exhibiting, I noted that John spent all day Thursday and Friday of the show meticulously going through the exhibits, taking copious notes and assigning the award he thought the exhibit deserved. When the official awards were posted on Saturday, John walked through the exhibits with Bob Stone, discussing every exhibit and award in detail, trying to understand significant differences between his view of an exhibit and the official view. I was truly impressed and in awe of the serious self-imposed training John had set up for himself, before becoming an Apprentice Judge under the APS. At that NOJEX both the official judges and John agreed on a Silver Medal for my exhibit. As a judge, regardless if it were an FCPS Rich Exhibit, a national show or an international show, John's preparation was always meticulous and his comments at critiques right on target.

As if judging was not enough, John also served as a US Commissioner for a number of international shows. He and Ray Gaillaguet drove to the international show in Chicago in 1986, with all of the east coast exhibits in the back and trunk of the car. It was a two day journey from NYC to Chicago, so they sought a motel room that was at ground level with the car outside. John noted that neither he nor Ray slept that night, as both kept both eyes on the car outside given the value of what was inside.

John's major philatelic endeavor was plating the 25c Ceres issue of the post Franco-Prussian War period in France. This was France's workhorse issue of the period and printed in five plates each with a composition of 2 x 150 images. This is a most formidable challenge for any exhibitor, and illustrates the attention to detail that John had for philately.

The FCPS showed up in force at a national show in Quebec City in the 1980's, doing our best to make that show a success. A special Canadian judge, thoroughly familiar with French area philately, was appointed to the panel to assure the proper judging of our exhibits in the generally British-oriented Canadian environment. Unfortunately, this judge took sick just before the show opened and was confined to a hospital. The judging of our exhibits was turned over to the Chair of the panel, a Canadian

dealer who shall remain nameless. For most of us the judging proved to be the Massacre at the Quebec Hilton. John's plating exhibit got a Large Silver Medal, well below what it had been getting at US national shows. When questioned about the award, the Chair of the panel commented that he could never be sure what was going on in a plating exhibit as the material was too small to see in detail in the frames. So he just gave these exhibits Large Silvers and was done with them. In more recent times John's exhibit reached the international Large Gold level of award. My Guadeloupe Postal History exhibit also got a Large Silver, even though it had just received a Gold at a recent international show. Queried on this award, the same judge commented that my Guadeloupe covers were all cheap and common. Ruth and Gardner Brown also got a Large Silver for their exhibit on the Aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War. This had been a Gold Medal exhibit in the states, and Ruth and Gardner had written the book on this topic which the FCPS published. Queried on the Brown exhibit, the same judge commented that he was a British Area Specialist, and knew little about French area material, so he gave it a Large Silver. Ruth asked if he wanted a tour of the exhibit after the critique, and he said no, he was a British specialist and did not want to clutter his mind with irrelevant French area material. It was a quiet dinner that evening.

In more recent times John was commissioner at a number of international shows, with his wonderful wife Jo serving as an associate. In addition to his usual activities as an exhibitor, judge and expert at these shows, John, along with Jo, would make it a point to collect the ephemera of the show, and both would present it at one of our FCPS monthly meetings. I never realized that there was so much of this material at international shows, and it presents a whole area of collecting of which I was unaware. As a wearer of so many philatelic hats, it was appropriate that John received the 1999 Luff Award from the APS for Exceptional Contributions to Philately.

Of course, it was my good fortune to know John and have his support in areas of which I was not aware until much later. He brought me to the Board of the FCPS, which resulted in my Presidency in the early 80's. He did the same with respect to the Board of the Collectors Club in the 90's, which again resulted in my Presidency during 2013-2014. He gave me the opportunity for my first serious effort at writing, with a chapter on Guadeloupe postal history in the **Philatélie à la Française** volume which he orchestrated with the Foundation. This also resulted in an evening's symposium on French area philately sponsored by the Foundation. John was always available with helpful comments and reviews of my exhibits as they were in development. In fact, he was a charter member of a Quintet of Judges who started a special summer program for exhibitors at the Collectors Club. We would present exhibits while we were still in the write-up process, and the judges would give us a preview of how they might be received in a real exhibit. One summer I presented my one frame exhibit on the use of postage due stamps for local mail on the island of Reunion for three weeks in 1901 because of a shortage of the Group Type issue. The five judges (John, Bob Odenweller, Tom Mazza, Steve Reinhard and Mark Banchik) gave me two and half pages of suggestions on how to organize and improve this exhibit. I redid the one frame entirely based on these comments, and won a One Frame Grand Award at the next BALPEX and a One Frame Champions of Champions at the APS Winter Show in 2002.

I had hoped to include a picture of John with these comments. But it seems the times we shared were all pre-iPhone, and I haven't the foggiest idea where all of the old negatives are. What are negatives, some may ask? I did find an appropriate picture in the January 1981 FCP which shows a group of FCPS members at our ASDA Show booth in the fall of the previous year. Starting at the top left we have George Guzzio, an internationally recognized Topical Collector of Penguins, Wagner and Mozart; then John; then Ray Gaillaguet, the heart of the Rhode Island Society's shows and a top collector of the Bordeaux Issue and the Sower Issues; then Bob Stone seated at the left, who was Editor of the FCP for more than twenty years and recipient of the Collectors Club Lichtenstein Medal; and Ira Zweifach who coordinated the NYC monthly meetings for thirty years and always provided a speaker and a topic for

the meetings. An amazing group of collectors who, sadly, are no longer with us, but who were among the key leaders who made the Society the wonderful group it has been. Our deepest condolences to John's wife Jo, as we remember one of the Grand Fellows of Philately.

Ed Grabowski

