

A. F. LICHTENSTEIN MEMORIAL AWARD

John J. Britt 1961 Recipient



The Alfred F. Lichtenstein Memorial Award began in 1952 and in the relatively short period of ten years has established itself as the outstanding philatelic award in America. It is given yearly to a philatelist, who in the opinion of the Board of Governors of the Collectors Club, has performed "distinguished service to philately." As proof of the aforementioned statement about the quality of this award, a recital of the names of ten first recipients will bear this out. They were as follows:

- 1952 Theodore E. Steinway, New York, N.Y.
- 1953 Dr. Clarence W. Hennan, Chicago, Ill.
- 1954 Dr. Carroll Chase, Amherst, N.H.
- 1955 August Dietz, Sr., Richmond, Va.
- 1956 Sir John Wilson, London, England
- 1957 Harry L. Lindquist, New York, N.Y.
- 1958 Winthrop S. Boggs, E. Orange, N.J.
- 1959 Lt. Gen. Cornelius W. Wickersham, Cedarhurst, N.Y.
- 1960 J. R. W. Purves, Melbourne, Australia

The first three on the above list are deceased.

At the January 1961 meeting of the Board of Governors of the Collectors Club here at 22 East 35 Street, New York City, by unanimous vote *John J. Britt* was selected the 1961 recipient. As in the past years it has been customary to have in this magazine a sketch of the career of the Lichtenstein Memorial Award winner in the same number when the announcement of this award is made. The following autobiographical details were supplied by *John J. Britt* and are published substantially as written. (*H. M. G.*)

When *John J. Britt* rediscovered philately in 1940, after his early childhood stamp collecting days, it literally opened up a whole new world of activity for him. From then on, philately became a way of life for him, and he evolved a philosophy of giving of himself, his talents and his money. A philatelic commitment to him was a sacred duty to be performed well and to try to have the results always to the credit of philately. In return for services rendered, philately lavished her affections on him and many were the honors and titles she bestowed.

In 1946 when he was introduced to organized philately, he became a dedicated servant, devoting himself to the advancement of the best interests of philately wherever and whenever he was called upon to be of service. *John J. Britt's* reputation in philately is based upon these varied services which ranged from speaking at philatelic meetings, judging national stamp exhibitions, acting as master of ceremonies at banquets, in short — organization work.

While it is true that his major accomplishments in philately were enacted for and on behalf of the Collectors Club of New York, he also contributed in many ways to other philatelic organizations. He holds memberships in many national societies as well as numerous specialized groups and local clubs. He is especially proud of his membership in the *Collectors Club*, the *Philatelic Foundation*, the *Aero Philatelists*, the *Association for Stamp Exhibitions* and of being a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society, London.

Regarding his stamp collecting activities, John J. Britt ran the usual gamut from world-wide general one-of-a-kind stamp collecting, to favorite countries and finally in 1946 he chose air mail stamps as his forte. He collects these mint, used, on covers and also includes the semi-official air mails and rockets. At the suggestion of his good friend, *Henry M. Goodkind*, he began specializing in air mail Essays and Proofs in 1946 and this trend has prevailed until the present time. This collection has been shown in competitive philatelic exhibitions and has won many top awards. In International exhibitions it was awarded a silver medal both at CIPEX 1947 and CAPEX 1951. In national competition it received various trophies, among which were Stampex 1949, American Philatelic Congress convention 1950, Essay Proof Society 1951, S. P. A. 1952 and Sepad 1954. The collection has since been withdrawn from active competition, now being shown only on a non-competitive basis.

John J. Britt's participation in organized philately began in 1946, when the late Richard S. Bohn founded Aero Philatelists and sponsored him as its first president. This gave him his first opportunity to serve philately on a nationwide scale, and he began to build the membership of Aero Philatelists which reached its highest point in 1947, under his guidance. Mr. Britt held this office for six consecutive years and upon his relinquishing this post in 1952, he was feted at the organization's annual banquet and presented with a handsome watch by the membership which was inscribed, "To John J. Britt, President 1946-1952, As a Token of Our Deep Affection and Esteem." After his retirement as president, he has remained as a member of the Board of Directors and up to the present day is still a member of that body and takes an active interest in all matters pertaining to Aero Philatelists.

The year of 1947 witnessed the staging of CIPEX, the Centennial International Philatelic Exhibition, held at the Grand Central Palace in New York. This event proved to be a most interesting experience for John J. Britt, as he was elected to the Board of Directors of CIPEX and soon was busily engaged in directing several different committees. He was also put on the Board of Directors of the Association for Stamp Exhibition which sponsored CIPEX and he was given the task of supervising the Information Booth where he greeted the out-of-town visitors as well as those that came from abroad. His staff was responsible for the sale of the official catalogs and the special exhibition seals.

When the National Philatelic Museum of Philadelphia opened its doors in 1948, Bernard Davis, its Director, invited John J. Britt to serve as a member of the Board of Trustees and to become the Museum's First Vice-President. He accepted both invitations, and from then on he always made the trip from New York to Philadelphia to attend all of the Trustees' meetings. He also served on the Board of Directors and as a Vice-President of the Essay Proof Society for several years. He also headed committees for the American Philatelic Society and the Society Of Philatelic Americans in various capacities.

In 1953 John J. Britt was awarded the Sepad National Merit Award for outstanding philatelic achievement. Honorary Life memberships were bestowed upon him by Aero Philatelists as well as its Chapter #5, Philadelphia,

of Aero Philatelists and the Bronx County Stamp Club. In 1959 he received the COLLECTORS CLUB MEDAL for "distinguished and devoted services" to this club.

One of Mr. Britt's most interesting philatelic experiences was being asked to serve as one of the official observers for philately in the destruction of printing plates at the request of the government of Nicaragua. This took place at the plant of the Security Banknote Company in Philadelphia, at which time approximately 400 items of printing paraphernalia such as original dies, printing plates and transfer rolls relating to the so-called "Seebeck" issues were destroyed in the presence of an invited audience. On another occasion he performed the same duties on invitation of the government of Ghana, at which time he and Mr. Goodkind represented the Collectors Club to witness the destruction of the plates used in the production of the "Black Star Line" issue of 1957. This was done at the E. A. Wright Banknote Company's plant in Philadelphia, Pa.

While John J. Britt is not considered an author, he did write several articles for the *Aero Philatelists "News"* and *"Annals,"* and in 1960 did a book review on "India Rockets" for the COLLECTORS CLUB PHILATELIST.

John J. Britt has always maintained his interest in the Association For Stamp Exhibitions and for several years prior to the Fifth International Philatelic Exhibition, FIPEX of 1956, he took an active part in the planning for this great event. He was elected a member of the Executive Committee and served as the Vice-Chairman of FIPEX. As chairman of the important Guarantee Fund Committee, he was successful in raising more money than was necessary to finance the exhibition. Besides these official capacities, he was chairman of several other committees and once again as in CIPEX 1947, he supervised the Information Booth at the Coliseum where the visitors from out-of-town and foreign countries could register and receive any assistance they required.

However, 1947 was John J. Britt's fateful year, for it was then that he was elected a member of the Collectors Club Board of Governors. From that time on his enthusiasm for all matters pertaining to the Collectors Club has never waned and his record remains an impressive one. Several years thereafter he was elected Vice-President and then served the Club as its President for two terms in 1953 and 1954. Subsequently, he was elected a Trustee and still serves the club as a member of the Board of Governors and as a Trustee. Perhaps his greatest accomplishments on behalf of the Collectors Club might be attributed to his activities for the three following: (1) In 1952 he helped in creating the *Alfred F. Lichtenstein Memorial Award* to honor the memory of this benefactor of the Collectors Club and patron of philately. He has been chairman of this important memorial award committee since its inception. (2) In 1954 he inaugurated proceedings with the cooperation of the law firm of Cadwalader, Wickersham and Taft, designed to obtain tax exemption from real estate taxes by the City of New York on our clubhouse. After several years of legal maneuvering in the highest courts of the State, the Collectors Club was adjudged an educational, literary and scientific institution and, therefore, not subject to New York City real estate taxes. This edict has saved the Club several thousands of dollars in taxes each year. (3) In 1957, shortly after the passing of Theodore E. Steinway, John J. Britt was instrumental in establishing the *Theodore E. Steinway Memorial Publications Fund*. The resolution creating this special fund as a testimonial in memory of Theodore E. Steinway, was for the avowed purpose of publishing original philatelic manuscripts of merit. Already eight handbooks have come off the press under the

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THE LIBRARY

- Flowers and Botanical Subjects on Stamps*, Topical Handbook No. 30, by Shirley C. Tucker and Claude Weber. Edited by Sidney R. Esten. American Topical Association, Milwaukee, Wis. Courtesy of the publisher.
- So war es wirklich! Authentischer Kommentar zur ersten Zeppelinpost und ihren Falschungen* by Wolfgang Hacker. Kurt Dahmann Verlag, Berlin, Germany. Gift of Mr. Henry M. Goodkind. (German)
- The John M. Taylor Collection*. Auction Catalogues and Prices Realized. Bound Volume. Gift of Mr. Irwin Heiman.
- France and Colonies Philatelic Society Newsletter (Great Britain)*, Vol. V, No. 3-Vol. X, No. 5. 18 issues. Gift of Mr. Nathan Hals.
- Stanley Gibbons "Two Reigns" Postage Stamp Catalogue 1961*. Stanley Gibbons Ltd., London, England. Courtesy of the publisher.
- Speciale Catalogus van de Postzegels van Nederland en Overzeese Rijksdelen 1961*. Nederlandsche Vereeniging van Postzegelhandelaren, 's-Gravenhage, Netherlands. Gift of Mr. Johannes de Kruyf.
- D. S. Bolaffi's Roman States and Vatican City Postage Stamp Specialized Catalogue 1961*. Philatelic Publishing Co., Torino, Italy. Courtesy of the publisher.
- Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution 1959*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. Gift of the publisher.
- Map of the Domestic Air Mail Transportation System*. Publication of the United States Post Office Department. Gift of Mr. Franklin R. Bruns, Jr.
- Ce qu'est la Philatelie* by Roger North. Maison Arthur Maury, Paris, France. Gift of Mr. Horace E. Jones. (French)
- Die Briefmarken von Las Bela* by Hans von Rudolphi. Heft I der Schriftenreihe Neues Handbuch der Briefmarkenkunde, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Courtesy of Dr. Karl Th. Meyer. (German)
- The Bureau Specialist, Vol. 31, 1960. Bound Volume. Gift of Mr. George R. M. Ewing.
- Stamford Postal History* by W. G. Stitt Dibden and L. Tebbutt. Publication of The Postal History Society, Bath, Somerset, U. K. Courtesy of Major A. E. Hopkins.
- Postmaster Robert Morris of N. Y. being letters for the period June 11, 1847 to February 28, 1848*. Extracted with a commentary by Winthrop S. Boggs. Published by The Collectors Club, New York, N. Y.

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auspices of this fund, and the Collectors Club and American philately in general have gained in stature and prestige, as a consequence.

In conclusion, the philatelic career of John J. Britt, might very well be summed up by quoting from an article appearing in the March 1960, COLLECTORS CLUB PHILATELIST, by John R. Boker, Jr., Chairman of the Awards Committee, on the occasion of John J. Britt being awarded the Collectors Club Medal for 1959; quote, "On behalf of the Board of Governors, the Awards Committee is pleased to announce that the *Collectors Club Medal* for distinguished service to the Club has been voted to John J. Britt for his years of unselfish devotion in his many capacities as President, Member of the Board of Governors, Chairman of the Alfred F. Lichtenstein Memorial Award Committee and Theodore E. Steinway Memorial Publications Committee, fund raiser, contributor and many other duties, all freely given for the welfare of the Collectors Club. It is a record of dedicated service, seldom equalled and certainly never surpassed by any member in this club's long sixty-four years history."