

The Alfred F. Lichtenstein Memorial Award For 1973

Presented To Ernest A. Kehr



At the December 1973 meeting of the Board of Governors, Ernest A. Kehr was unanimously chosen as the 1973 recipient of the Alfred F. Lichtenstein Memorial award "for distinguished service to philately."

In the 58 years since he began collecting stamps, there has not been one phase or facet of philately which has not been promoted with dedication and enthusiasm by Ernest A. Kehr, this year's winner of the Alfred F. Lichtenstein Memorial Medal.

As a collector he filled albums with 30,000 varieties of the world's issues by correspondence and swapping before he decided to concentrate on Egyptian stamps and postal history. His first prize was a silver medal won at the National Stamp Exhibition, in Boston, in 1930. Since then his collections have taken gold and special awards for research at numerous national and international competitions.

As a philatelic writer he has been very active. Since 1929, when his first article was published by the old New York "World," Kehr has written more wordage for more different journals on more diverse philatelic subjects than any other author. His articles appeared not only in the leading philatelic journals, stamp news periodicals, metropolitan newspapers, but such distinguished general magazines as "Saturday Evening Post," "Life," "Readers Digest," "This Week," "Think" and "Colliers." His book, "Romance of Stamp Collecting," first published in 1947, set a record as a philatelic best seller, having gone through two editions, fifteen printings and still is being sold. Other lesser books intended to encourage the collection of stamps have enjoyed world-wide circulation, and his five works on specialized Egyptian subjects are regarded as definitive reference books.

As early as 1936, the late Fred Melville singled Kehr out as what he described as "the most promising philatelic writer in America." In 1950, he won the Gainza Paz Gold Medal in an international philatelic literature contest in which more than 2,500 entries of all types were judged over a three-month period by 15 members of a jury comprising professional editors and philatelists.

The promotion of philately was undertaken through other communications areas: he has written and presented more than 2,000 radio and TV programs carried by networks and independent outlets for more than 40 years. For 30, he has conducted courses in stamp collecting, especially for teachers and adult youth leaders to show how postage stamp collecting can be used as a valuable extra-curricular tool in education. The first ones were sponsored by the City College of New York, later ones, by the Philatelic Foundation in cooperation with the Collectors Club.

Kehr also has been involved with motion pictures, serving as philatelic consultant for films made in Hollywood ("Abe Lincoln in Illinois," "Man of Conquest," etc.) as well as by foreign postal administrations. His two slide-and-tape productions ("Romance of Stamp Collecting" and "Drama of Stamp Creation") have been distributed by the Philatelic Foundation to many hundreds of stamp and civic organizations and seen by thousands of non-collectors.

Kehr is proudest of his work with hospitalized servicemen. Since Pearl Harbor he has headed Stamps for the Wounded, a completely volunteer committee which collects for and distributes to war victims in VA hospitals. In that time at least 100 tons of contributed stamps, albums, catalogues and accessories have been given to bed and ambulatory patients, about 35,000 of whom started collecting as part of recreational therapy programs and now are enthusiastic about philately.

More recently he started *FREEdom STAMPS*, which distributes packets of domestic commemoratives to collectors in Afro-Asian and other lands who could not afford to buy them from dealers. More than 200,000 such packets have been given away in the last 15 years.

Few philatelists are more widely known in foreign nations, for Kehr has been a regular visitor to exhibitions and societies during his many global journeys. He has served as jury member and/or commissioner to more than 30 international shows on all continents since 1946.

His first experience with an international show came in 1936, when he was chairman of the committee that conducted lectures and programs in connection with the show at Grand Central Palace. In 1947 he was vice-chairman of CIPEX, in charge of all public relations activities.

He directed the National Stamp Show, at Rockefeller Center in 1937, and the Penny Black Centenary Stamp Show in the British Pavilion of the 1940 World's Fair. He served on the board of the Association for Stamp Exhibitions, Inc., since 1934, was its secretary for seven years and now is its vice-president.

As a philatelic purist, he spearheaded campaigns to discourage the production of adhesives aimed at muleting uninformed and gullible beginners and inexperienced collectors long before there were blacklist or black blot committees. His disclosures of facts surrounding the so-called Popes stamps of Panama, the "Humanity Island" and "Atlantis" swindle issues, led by their failure on the market.

Feeling that philatelic journalists had a responsibility in defending stampdom from exploitation by emerging nations and their commercial agents, he organized the Philatelic Press Club. With it he hoped to get his journalistic colleagues to join him in writing articles and reports that would further serious stamp collecting and study while discouraging publicity for abusive paper offered as postage stamps.

It is fitting that Kehr should have been selected to receive the Lichtenstein Medal, for he attributes his philatelic philosophy to the man in whose honor it was established. Since 1926, when he first met Alfred F. Lichtenstein, he became his protege and life-long friend. Only a few hours before Mr. Lichtenstein suffered his fatal coronary attack, Kehr had enjoyed luncheon with him. It was Mr. Lichtenstein who, with Sir John Wilson and Theodore E. Steinway, proposed him for membership in the Royal Philatelic Society, of London. Before that the young Kehr had been one of only three teenagers who ever were given junior memberships by the Collectors Club; the others were the late Louise Dale and John Steinway.

The work Kehr has accomplished to promote stamp collecting — especially as an instrument to develop international goodwill and understanding, has been recognized on a world-wide scale. For specific work in this direction, he has received such honors as knighthoods by Queen Juliana, of the Netherlands, and Grand Duchess Charlotte, of Luxembourg; Great Cross, Order of Merit, from President T. Heuss, of Germany; Finlandia Award, from President J. K. Paasikivi; Decorations from Popes Pius XII and Paul VI, plus a Papal Knighthood from Pope John XXIII. He also is an honorary life member of the Ibero-American Academy of Postal History, in Madrid.

Because of his activities he has known many of the world's greats who also were stamp collectors and enjoyed talking philately with Kehr: President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Gen. Mark Clark, Lauritz Melchior, President Ramon Magsaysay, King Carol and Fouad I. He was so intimate a friend of Cardinal Spellman, that when he decided to build his philatelic museum, he asked Kehr to serve as consultant to the architects who designed it.

Kehr presently is a governor of the Collectors Club; trustee of the Philatelic Foundation; Executive Chairman of the Philatelic Press Club; trustee and vice-president of the Cardinal Spellman Museum, and life-fellow of the R.P.S.L.