

J. R. W. Purves of Australia

Recipient of 1960 A. F. Lichtenstein Memorial Award



The unanimous selection of the Board of Governors of the Collectors Club at its January, 1960 meeting for the 1960 *Alfred F. Lichtenstein Memorial Award* for "Distinguished Service to Philately" was *James Richard William (Bill) Purves of Melbourne, Australia*. This outstanding philatelic honor was established in 1952 and has been awarded annually. Thus there have been nine awards. The selection of "Bill" Purves marks the second time that this has been outside of America.

Mr. Purves' byline has appeared several times in this magazine within the last five years. It is now fitting to devote some space to the career of this dedicated philatelist. ("Bill" Purves maintains he is the originator of this sobriquet.)

The Purves family settled in Melbourne, Australia in 1838, just one year after that city was founded. "Bill" was born in 1903. He was

educated at Geelong Grammar School and then went on to Trinity College, University of Melbourne, graduating as a Master of Law. He entered the firm of Purves & Purves, now being the senior partner. This law office represents some of Australia's large corporations. One of its clients, The Victoria Racing Club, received much of Mr. Purves' personal attention, because of his interest in horseracing. In 1958 he prepared The Victoria Race Club's case for a hearing before the Royal Commission, that had been appointed to determine if "off-track betting" should be legalized. Subsequently, the Royal Commission reported favorably, and legislative approval is expected within the next three to four months. (The Mayor of New York City might be well advised to retain "Bill" Purves' legal services in his current campaign for off-track betting.) He is one of the two Australian Directors of the world-famous travel agency, Thomas Cook & Co., Ltd.

The 1960 recipient of this award is married and has two daughters, aged 14 and 16. Neither his wife nor his daughters are interested in philately, which meets with Bill Purves' approval. He associates his success in philately to his wife's tolerance, accompanied by her more or less complete lack of understanding of stamps. He believes that the more wives know about stamps collecting, the less their husbands seem to enjoy it.

Before discussing his philatelic career, it should be mentioned that Mr. Purves has several other hobbies. He is a great sports enthusiast, besides enjoying horseracing. He is an ardent golfer, and is a keen spectator at cricket and tennis matches. He also enjoys travelling.

His great philatelic career is exceptional for the following reason. He has given devoted service both as a student and an organizer. Generally most prominent philatelists concentrate upon one or the other, seldom both. Probably "Bill" Purves' greatest accomplishment as a worker was his untiring efforts to finance a clubhouse for The Royal Philatelic Society of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia. He worked on this over many years, and his labors saw success in March, 1957 when this society opened its three-story building (see *THE COLLECTORS CLUB PHILATELIST* Vol. 36, page 125 et seq.) This stands as an outstanding achievement because we know of only three other philatelic clubs owning their own buildings. One is in London, England, another in Los Angeles, California and, of course, this club. But cities such as London, New York and Los Angeles are far larger than any in Australia, so that one can properly appreciate this Melbourne accomplishment. Incidentally, Mr. Purves has been a Member of the Council of The Royal Philatelic Society of Victoria for over thirty

years and has also served as its President.

Great philatelic honors have come to Mr. Purves from his own country, England and the United States. He has been a Fellow of The Royal Philatelic Society, London since 1929. He was elected to the British "Roll of Distinguished Philatelists" in 1937. He received The Royal Philatelic Society of London's *Tapling Medal* in 1938 and its *Crawford Medal* in 1953. In 1955, he received THE COLLECTORS CLUB PHILATELIST MEDAL for the best article this magazine published that year. His own country has awarded him the J. H. Smyth Medal in 1937 and the David Hill Medal in 1958.

J. R. W. Purves is known to many in The Collectors Club, having been a member since 1929. He visited here twice, in 1947 and 1956, when he served both CIPEX and FIPEX as an International Judge. International jury service often has been his. He served in London in 1950 and will repeat this year in July. He was Chairman of the Board of Judges in Melbourne in 1950, Auckland, New Zealand in 1955, Adelaide (1955) and Sydney, Australia last year.

As for his collecting interests, they are extremely wide. His prime one, however, relates to the early issues of his native land such as Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Queensland. Also he collected Fiji, Scandinavia and other European countries. He has smaller collections of Hawaii, Confederate States of America, Haiti and China. He started as a youth, gaining his first award in 1922, when his general collection won the Junior Class prize at the National Exhibition in Melbourne, Australia. From here on, he has exhibited widely, winning high awards at famous past international philatelic exhibitions such as Vienna, Paris, Prague and Stockholm.

In the last twenty years, "Bill" Purves has devoted his efforts to what he calls "philatelic science." His interest has gone deeply into the printing and production methods of early postage stamps. Most all of his research work has been published in magazines, and he has also written some of the finest philatelic handbooks that appeared within the past two decades. He most important work, "The Half-Lengths of Victoria," was published by The Royal Philatelic Society, London in 1953. His two books, "The Postage Stamps of Fiji 1878-1902" and "The Emblems of Victoria," are internationally recognized.

Mr. Purves was the prime mover in the creation of the magazine, "Philately from Australia," to which he has contributed articles, editorials, book reviews and much else. The complete list of his writings and the magazines, in which they appeared, would overtax these space requirements.

In reference to the vast amount of Purves writings, mention should be made that they have not only been on plating and scientific philatelic research, but much has been done on postal history, specifically with that of Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and Fiji. Although "Bill" does not necessarily boast of it, he has a topical collection (rather "thematic," to use the English term) solely for his own amusement and relaxation.

So much for a rather condensed catalog of his career. Those, who know J. R. W. Purves, have found a delightful companion. He is not a reticent conversationalist, but one can spend hours with him and never be bored. He has a fine sense of humor, a wonderful trait that too many serious philatelists unfortunately lack. With his legal experience, keen interest in sports and travel, philately never monopolizes the conversation. One appealing matter about this man is that he seldom speaks of the past or what he has achieved. Rather he enthuses about the philatelic work he is presently undertaking, or his plans for the future such as the coming publication of "The Queen-on-Throne" stamps of Victoria, as well as the 1 Sh. Octagonal issue of 1854-65 and "The Bearded Oval" and "Laureated" stamps from 1860 on of the same country. But these Victoria works are not all. He is now studying the 1899-1912 Pictorials of Tasmania and Chile's 1915-34 issues, and a Haiti article is scheduled for this magazine this year.

It is hoped that the presentation of *The 1960 Alfred F. Lichtenstein Memorial Medal* may be made in London, England next July during the International Philatelic Exhibition. If this materializes, it will mark the first presentation outside of the United States.

(H. M. G.)