

Randy Neil, a lifelong native of Kansas City, is nothing if not a cheerleader for the hobby. A man of seemingly boundless enthusiasm and energy, he has played the role of innovator and booster throughout his 70 years in philately, particularly in exhibiting and publishing. He conceived, co-founded and led the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors in 1986, spearheading efforts to revitalize and revolutionize the field of exhibiting in the United States and effectively inventing the idea of the international single-frame exhibit.

Neil also founded not one but two of the leading stamp publications in the U.S. today, *American Stamp Collector and Dealer* and *Kelleher's Stamp Collector's Quarterly*.

On top of this, his research and exhibit-building on the U.S. 2¢ red-brown of 1883-87 (Scott 210) established that “serious” philatelic work could be done with a cheap stamp. Neil is one of the few American collectors to have won Grand Awards in national competitions for both stamp and literature exhibits. He has held a number of offices including president of the A.P.S. and is a 2021 signatory of the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists.

In a January phone interview, Neil recalled his philatelic beginnings. “When I was in fifth grade, I was given a stamp collecting kit for Christmas. I ignored it. Summertime rolled around and my mother got it out of my closet and opened it herself.”

Intrigued by his mother’s co-opting of his gift, he found his interest awoken. His father ended up buying another kit for him and took him to visit all four of the stamp stores in Kansas City—in one day. The first stamp Neil remembers buying was a jumbo-sized commemorative from Ecuador. At one of the stores, he met the three philatelists who would become his mentors: Tom Alexander, David Beals and Creighton Hart.

In 1955, egged on by a school rival, young Neil hopped a train to New York to attend Fipex, the international exhibition at the now-demolished Coliseum. At the behest of Jacques Minkus, who was in charge of the youth section, Neil had entered his first exhibit: a one-page display of the 7¢ Liberty series stamp of 1954.

Neil began writing a youth column for the *Weekly Philatelic Gossip* in 1956, as well as a column for *First Days*, the journal of the American First Day Cover Society. After attending the University of Kansas’ journalism school, he joined the organization of the new Kansas City Chiefs and started their cheerleading program, eventually writing the *Official Cheerleaders Handbook*, a bestselling textbook. Neil’s career also included stints at CBS and as founder of the non-profit National Film Society.

With his firm, Neil Print Media, he remains active publishing the Kelleher’s quarterly, and is currently working on an exhibit of postal history related to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.