

Eulogy (one of four) delivered at funeral of Harry Philip Edwards, March 28, 2015, at the Masonic Home, Charlton, Massachusetts, by David A. Libby

Harry was the kind of guy you thought would always be around. He was kind of an institution. We went back so far, I can't even remember the time I first met him, though with his prodigious memory, Harry might well have.

I know it was at the Boston Philatelic Society, around 1976, when I joined--and where Harry was already a long-time member. I only came to know him as a Brother Mason after I was raised in 1979. Harry was a Past Master of St. John's Lodge, Boston, and served 5 separate terms as Master of Hesperia Lodge, between 1973 and 1994, when he was awarded the Joseph Warren Distinguished Service Medal--a very high Masonic honor indeed.

When I notified the American Philatelic Society of his passing, they told me he was a 70-year member. I have not been able to find the Boston Philatelic Society records that go back to when he joined the BPS, but from his stories he must have been a member by World War II and probably earlier, and he knew some of the founders of our 124-year old club.

To merely say that Harry was a stamp collector would be to understate the passion and vigor with which he pursued our hobby. It was one of the great loves of his life, which those who don't have the collecting gene won't understand, but those of us who share it, completely get.

He had a particular interest in Guatemala, and was a founder of the International Society of Guatemala Collectors. I have a picture of him, with the founding group, from the late 1940s in the first handbook published by that group.

As a busy lawyer--who was known for his absolute integrity--Harry could not always make our Boston club meetings, but we always saw him at our holiday dinner party events every December, and that's where we met his beloved Silvia, whom we loved as well. When it became difficult for Harry to drive after dark, I started picking up him and Silvia, and bringing them to our club parties and annual meeting dinners.

Also back in the 1990s, because he could no longer get to other club meetings, I started bringing Harry to meetings of the Philatelic Group of Boston, which actually meets in Weston. Every 3rd Wednesday I'd go to Lexington, ring their doorbell, and when Silvia answered, I'd ask her if Harry could come out and play.

The Philatelic Group meetings included a dinner and a presentations on arcane postal history topics, often by prominent scholars and exhibitors. Harry enjoyed these, and often added comments or questions from his own vast philatelic and historical knowledge, but what I think he really loved, was that members who were dealers were allowed to display and sell their wares at the meetings. I don't think

Harry ever left one of those meetings without some new treasure, and when I informed the group that Harry would no longer be coming with me because of his move to Charlton, I thought his favorite cover dealer might cry.

Stamps helped keep Harry going after he lost Silvia, when he really needed to keep himself occupied. He acquired odd lots of bulk stamps from auctions, and whenever I visited him here, he'd be sorting them. These were just ordinary common stamps, and would never be mounted in his collections, but thanks to him, some educational stamp programs for school groups and scouts will be well supplied for a while.

As I said, Harry was like an institution--but he was also my good friend, and I will miss him. Farewell my Brother.

My uncle bought his first stamp from a classmate in 5th grade. That would be around 1927. From then on he was a collector. Harry had an almost encyclopedic knowledge of western history, music and culture. When he looked at a stamp from a particular date the historical picture came alive through the stamp and others he owned from the country and the era. In his hand was something that a different world that read different books and listened to different music had bought and used. By collecting he felt linked to that past world and culture. In his book collection were a number of histories of Guatemala and specialty stamp books for the country. Harry never traveled to Central America. I did for business between the early 90s and 2006 so we had a chance to discuss his detailed knowledge of history of the region and my life experiences of the the people and the current culture. In the last 6 years Harry's love for stamps was a key ingredient in keeping him alive and mentally vital. Even golf has its limits as age rolls on but up until his last weeks of life Harry looked forward to his evenings, sitting at his table with a tray of unsorted stamps in front of him, tweezers and magnifying glass in hand.

David Libby was a good friend to Harry and the recipient of Harry's collection. Harry did not care about the monetary value of his collection. It had meaning in itself beyond the worth of any individual stamp. He saw it as a reflection of his life in a way and he wanted to pass them on to someone who also shared the same outlook. Dave and I packed up approx. 40 storage boxes of stamps from Harry's collection. Dave, who is in his 70s told me that he will spend much of the rest of his life going through them!

Thanks,

David Bruce Edwards