

LINN'S STAMP NEWS

MOST INFLUENTIAL PHILATELISTS AND THEIR EPIC STAMP STORIES :: 2022



Epic stamps stories

Jay Bigalke | Linn's and Scott catalogs editor-in-chief



"Going beyond the ordinary scope of philately is exactly what the 2022 *Linn's Stamp News Most Influential Philatelists* special issue did to make the stamp collecting hobby epic."

Epic.

Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines it as "extending beyond the usual or ordinary especially in size or scope."

Going beyond the ordinary scope of philately is exactly what the 2022 *Linn's Stamp News Most Influential Philatelists* special issue did to make the stamp collecting hobby epic.

This issue recognizes 76 individuals, in 73 profiles, who have had an impact on the hobby in the past couple of decades. Those selected were from a list of approximately 175 individuals worldwide whom *Linn's* editorial team envisioned for this recognition.

Those recognized include collectors, dealers, auctioneers and individuals who are professionally involved in hobby organizations and postal administrations.

It is important for me also to note that some of the individuals selected, just a few, decided that they did not want to be featured in this publication for various reasons.

The general concept for this publication was championed by Amos Media Co.'s chairman Rick Amos. His comments on this special edition are found on page 8 of this issue.

What a challenge it was for us to only select the 76 individuals for this publication. There were definitely a few sleepless nights while working on the final list.

I am thrilled, though, to present this special edition for the *Linn's* readership. I would like to thank author Jeff Stage of Syracuse, N.Y., whom I tasked with writing all of the profiles.

To add a twist to the issue, and to make sure each profile didn't read like a biography, we leaned

heavily on those selected to tell us an epic story.

And, wow. That's what we got.

Please see page 110 of this issue for Jeff's comments on his experiences doing the interviews for this issue.

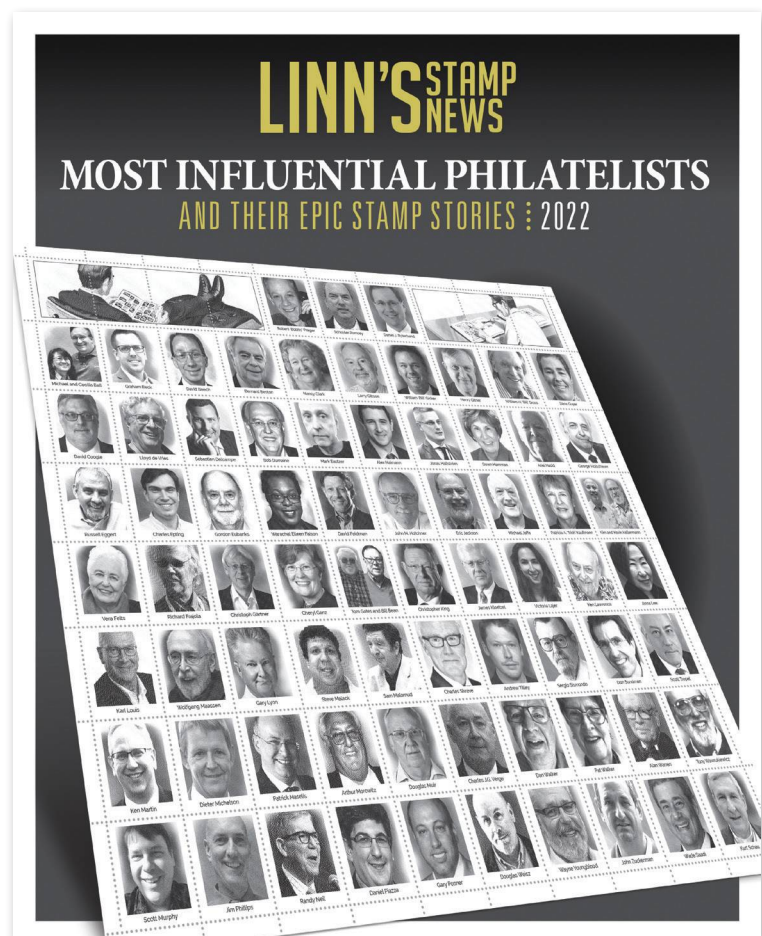
Jeff did a great job with these interviews and went above and beyond the task put in front of him.

What was also fun for me was getting to read these profiles first. One story jumped out at me as I heard it a number of years ago while sitting next to the individual at a stamp show banquet. I remember thinking at the time that I hope that gets recorded sometime, and now that story is told here.

And speaking of stories, for many of us, our personal epic stories may have started at a desk or table with a stamp album and stamps. And then evolved to sitting back and browsing the pages of a catalog dreaming up the plan of how to start collecting. That's why we selected images of those two activities to be shown on the contents pages.

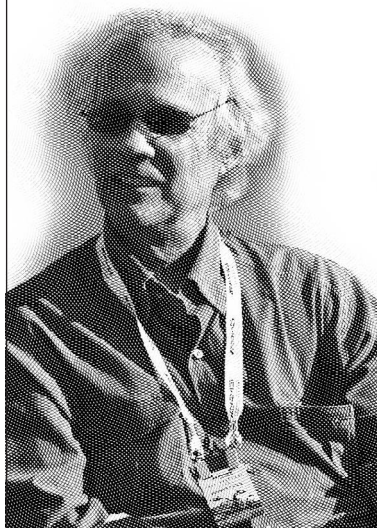
These illustrations helped give the appearance of souvenir sheets of stamps with all of the honorees depicted on the four-page spread.

I hope you enjoy this epic special edition of *Linn's*. ♦



Richard Frajola

New Mexico | Author, dealer, connector



"I love this hobby and have always felt fortunate I could earn a living doing something I love."

Richard Frajola loves stories, people and stamp collecting, especially when he can connect all three.

"I love this hobby and have always felt fortunate I could earn a living doing something I love," said Frajola, whose passion for philately and postal history is electric as he speaks one recent morning via a Zoom call.

Stamp collectors can count themselves lucky that Frajola resisted pressure to follow the family tradition. "Everyone in my family are doctors," said Frajola, who was accepted to medical school and ran a medical laboratory. "But it just wasn't for me."

As a young man, the Ohio native started crisscrossing the country, building his philatelic knowledge — especially postal history — by working for the likes of Apfelbaum in Philadelphia, Roger Koerber in Detroit and Jack Molesworth in Boston. He added his skills of research and writing to his willingness to work hard for clients, and his philatelic career was underway.

Frajola soon focused his attention on specific clients — such as Fred Mayer of Denver and Floyd Risvold of Minnesota — rather than a large swath of collectors. That kind of focus has reaped rewards, not only for Frajola, but for the philatelic community.

In 2005, Frajola worked with a couple of his clients — Steven Walske and three-time Champion of Champions exhibition winner George Kramer — to write *The Pony Express: A Postal History*. That's just a fraction of Frajola's authorship, which includes auction catalogs, articles and other books.

Some might consider Frajola's work with Risvold legendary.

"I had worked with Floyd build-

ing this fabulous collection, but a lot of people didn't understand what it was," Frajola said. By the time Risvold died in 2009 at the age of 97, collectors had figured it out. The collection sold the next year for \$7.5 million.

That wasn't the end of the Risvold connection, though. In 2018, Frajola and Walske — who purchased many items from the collection — published *Mails of the Westward Expansion, 1803-1861*. The book received the esteemed Crawford Medal from the Royal Philatelic Society London for that year's most valuable and original contribution to the study and knowledge of philately.

"This book was inspired by the research and collection of Floyd E. Risvold," the authors wrote in the preface.

In this century, Frajola wanted to expand and embellish connections among high-end collectors. Since moving to New Mexico in 1997, he's done so in various ways, including a series of in-person events and via the internet.

Seven in-person events held from 2004 to 2011, known as the Philatelic Rendezvous, offered philatelic presentations and social gatherings. Attendance grew from 30 to 70 over the years.

"They were successful because there are interesting people who are in this hobby; it's an intelligent, curious group of people who want to learn more," Frajola said.

Frajola's online site for philatelists (www.rfrajola.com) is free, open access and noncommercial ("I hate ads," Frajola says.) It receives about 30,000 hits a day.

"Some may have considered (my site) as a snob approach," Frajola said. "But it was never intended to be that way and I don't consider myself a snob. It's just a different level."

A chat board attracts a lot of questions about rates, routes and destinations, and responses come quickly from philatelists willing to help. In addition, the website includes a census of rare covers — such as those from the Pony Express and Confederate States — along with sections devoted to Sperati forgeries (another one of Frajola's specialties), books and exhibits.

"I was one of the earliest people to have digital exhibits online," Frajola said. "Online exhibiting is the wave of the future." ♦



Floyd Risvold (left), his daughter, Diane Pearson, and Richard Frajola at the 2008 Philatelic Rendezvous in Taos, N.M.

This Page is Dedicated to the People Who Most Influenced Richard Frajola's Philatelic Career



Taos Philatelic Rendezvous held September 2011 in Taos, New Mexico.

Tom Alexander
Earl PL Apfelbaum
Dr. Stan Bazilian
David Beals
William Bilden
Carl Boyles
Steve Chazen
Henry Conland
George Fisher
Dale Forster
Dr. Armando Grassi
Marc Haas
Bernard Harmer

Simmy Jacobs
Alex Juliard
Doug Kelsey
Vince King
Roger Koerber
George Kramer
Michael Laurence
William Lea, Sr.
Robson Lowe
Frederick Mayer
J. Wm. Middendorf, II
Jack Molesworth
Edwin Mueller

James Myerson
Pitt Petri
Stanley Richmond
Floyd Risvold
Carl Sachs
Oscar Salzer
Richard Schaefer
Dr. Zaven Seron
George Sloane
Olivier Stocker
Dr. Ernest Theimer
Dr. Carl Walske
Steve Walske

To learn more about some of these individuals and their influence, visit my website page: rfrajola.com/linns.htm. The rfrajola.com website has links to the board for philatelists (Philamercury.com), the Sperati.org site, 325+ online exhibits uploaded since 2006, a census site with 27,000+ covers, online books, original source material and more.