

Your Postal Podcast 29th Edition Transcript

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Richard Watkins: Welcome to Your Postal Podcast. This is Richard Watkins with the Postal Service's Office of Corporate Communications. In this edition, you'll hear about one of John Lennon's very first albums, and how it might have helped him imagine a life outside of Liverpool. And, because October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we'll talk with a postmaster who not only sells a great number of Breast Cancer Research stamps, but who also has a personal connection to the cause.

A new album by John Lennon has recently been put on display -- but this one's a little different. It's a stamp album. David Rupert explains....

John Lennon Stamp Collection Segment

David Rupert: This month would have marked the 70th birthday of John Lennon, one of the founding members of the Beatles.

One little-known fact about Lennon was his early passion for stamp collecting.

The Smithsonian Institute has gained access to his stamp collection. And the album currently can be viewed at the National Postal Museum in Washington, D.C.

Young Lennon accumulated most of the stamps from the age of nine on through his early teen years.

I spoke with National Postal Museum Conservator Linda Edquist about the collection.

Linda Edquist: It was a childhood interest. None of these stamps in this album have really any value whatsoever. But it does say who he was communicating with, what he was interested in. It has a lot of stamps that came from family members that were living different places.

Rupert: It seems that Lennon was quite fascinated with stamp collecting, until he found another hobby.

Edquist: His cousin told us that after he gave John Lennon the album and they worked on it together, that he could have become a stamp collector, if it hadn't been for the fact that at one point, he picked up the guitar. Stanley Parks said that after John picked up the guitar, he put down his stamp album.

Rupert: There's no really single valuable stamp in the collection, but on the inside cover is a fascinating tidbit for Beatles fans.

Edquist: The opening cover is very meaningful. Because it has his name. John Lennon, 251 Menlove Avenue, Woolton, Liverpool. It looks like a child who is really working on his cursive writing.

Rupert: There is a little bit of the 60s rebellion evident in the young Liverpool lad.

Edquist: On the side there's a stamp celebrating, "postage stamps 1840-1940" and it has a picture of Queen Victoria and King George, and what he's done, he's painted a beard on them in pen. So in a way, he's kind of defaced them.

Rupert: In the movie *A Hard Days Night*, Lennon even mentions his stamp collection; see if you can find it.

Edquist: I want to invite everyone to come visit us in Washington, D.C. The Smithsonian National Postal Museum is your museum. We are here to tell your story. We aren't just about stamps. We also talk about all the people who make it possible for us to get our mail.

Rupert: Can't make it to D.C.? You can view the entire 546-stamp collection online at <http://postalmuseum.si.edu/lennon>.

Breast Cancer Research Segment

Watkins: Since its 1998 inception, more than 894 million Breast Cancer Research semi-postal stamps have been sold, which has raised more than \$70 million for research. Lisa Nystuen has the story of a small town postmaster who encourages her customers to make a big difference.

Lisa Nystuen: For the past several years, Ellington, Missouri, Postmaster Marla Shipman has been a top seller of Breast Cancer Research stamps. Given that Ellington, Missouri, has a population of about 1,000 people, that's quite an accomplishment. Shipman said she became interested in promoting BCR stamp sales after she learned that relatives of several coworkers had been diagnosed with breast cancer.

Marla Shipman: My manager of postal operations' wife was diagnosed with breast cancer, and my niece in the same year. And I just had a...I guess you'd say a really deep desire to want to help people knowing that what research can mean for an illness like this, and my community, they have just supported me wholeheartedly ever since.

Nystuen: And just two years ago, Shipman discovered an even more personal reason to support the Breast Cancer stamp cause.

Shipman: I was thinking about all the stories, people coming in and telling me about their breast cancer, about their family member or whatever. I thought, hmm...I better do this myself. So, I called my doctor and made an appointment, and in 2008 I was diagnosed with breast cancer myself.

Nystuen: Shipman said that she now sees the millions of dollars raised in support of breast cancer research with a whole new perspective.

Shipman: I can't begin to tell you how much I appreciate what research has done. Because I didn't lose hardly any sick leave, due to the new research. It was really great for me. All I had to have was the radiation treatment. There's just no way to express the gratitude I have to my community for the way they have supported us -- it's amazing.

Watkins: And now, here's a brief roundup of Postal Service headlines. On September 30th, the Postal Regulatory Commission denied the Postal Service's request for an exigent or emergency increase to First-Class postage prices. Postmaster General Jack Potter responded to the decision by saying the Postal Service was disappointed with the decision, but encouraged by the commission's acknowledgment of the larger financial risk we face through the mandated prefunding of Retiree Health Benefits.

Mr. Potter said the Postal Service repeatedly has sought a deferral of this mandated \$5.5 billion payment to minimize the risk of defaulting on its financial obligations in Fiscal Year 2011. "Unfortunately," the Postmaster General said, "no legislative action has been taken at this time."

A week before the PRC decision was announced, Mr. Potter released a statement supporting legislation introduced by Delaware Senator Tom Carper, calling it a "roadmap to recovery" for the Postal Service.

"The Postal Operations Sustainment and Transformation, or POST Act of 2010 is creative in that it alleviates our retiree health benefit burden while bringing resolution to the pension overpayment dilemma we've faced," Mr. Potter said. "It's my hope that this legislation will enjoy broad support in the Congress," he concluded.

In other news, the holiday season is fast approaching, and it's time to start getting cards and packages ready for shipping to our military personnel around the world. Recommended holiday mailing dates are now posted online at usps.com/news. Suggested dates for shipping Parcel Post to military addresses come in early November. But Priority Mail shipping deadlines for APO/FPO addresses come in early December -- and don't forget, there's a two-dollar postage discount when shipping the Priority Mail Large Flat Rate Box to those serving our country overseas.

Watkins: Thank you for listening to Your Postal Podcast. Now we'd like to hear from you. Please send your feedback and story ideas to YourPostalPodcast@usps.com. A production of USPS Western Area Corporate Communications, Copyright 2010, All Rights Reserved.