

## Only 'Hindenburg' crash cover to Mexico headed to auction in New York in 2002

By Rob Haeseler

A *Hindenburg* crash cover that for 64 years has served as a grim reminder of a family tragedy and one of the worst aviation disasters is going to the auction block.

Illustrated in color with this article, the postal artifact will be hammered down by William R. Weiss Jr. at the Collectors Club of New York in February.

The cover was salvaged from the wreckage of the German zeppelin at Lakehurst, N.J., after its hydrogen gas cells exploded and burned while landing on May 6, 1937.

Examined in *Linn's* offices, the cover still imparts from its flame-licked edges the acrid scent of smoke that decades of storage in a safe have not eradicated.

Thirty-five passengers and

crew members perished, including the man who addressed and mailed the cover. His teenage daughter also perished.

Sixty-two other people survived, including the man's wife, who threw their two young sons to safety as the airship plunged to earth.

Of 17,609 pieces of mail carried on the *Hindenburg*, only 367 survived, according to *Hindenburg Crash Mail: The Search Goes On*, written and published by Arthur Falk in 1976.

The family of Hermann and Matilde Doehner, traveling from Germany to Mexico with a transatlantic crossing in the world's most modern and luxurious airship, was never to be the same.

So strong are the memories of that day that Werner Doehner, one of the rescued

sons, has erected a wall of silence around himself.

"Sorry to have to say he now refuses any and all interviews on anything having to do with the *Hindenburg* or anything that tries to make money out of the disaster," his son, Bernard, told *Linn's*.

Bernard Doehner said his father most recently had a bad experience while posing for some anniversary footage about the tragedy.

In the final seconds of the disaster, Werner, age 6, and his brother Walter, 8, were thrown by their mother from the promenade windows of the *Hindenburg* into the arms of ground crewmen.

Their 16-year-old sister Irene made it out but later died from her burns. Their father did not escape.

At least two pieces of *Hindenburg* mail are credited to

Hermann Doehner.

He addressed the cover to himself with the Mexico City address, and it was canceled aboard the airship May 5, the day before the ill-fated landing. It is expected to realize between \$20,000 and \$25,000.

The second piece is a black-and-white photo postcard of the *Hindenburg* addressed by Hermann Doehner to Germany. The recipient is believed to have been a business associate who later returned the card to the three surviving members of the Doehner family — Matilde and her two boys. Shown on page 15, the postcard is valued at \$5,000 to \$7,500 by Weiss.

The Doehner cover is the only piece of *Hindenburg* crash mail that was sent to Mexico. It is also one of the most complete of the *Hindenburg* crash covers.

The price record for a crash cover is held by a *Hindenburg* cover that was auctioned by Corinphila in Switzerland May 18-21, 2001. It realized



Of 17,609 pieces of mail carried by the *Hindenburg*, only 367 survived. The existence of this crash cover was documented in 1937, but its whereabouts was unknown until recently. The cover and a postcard were mailed by Hermann Doehner, who was killed with his teenage daughter in the aviation disaster. Doehner's wife and two small sons survived the crash. The two items will be auctioned by William R. Weiss Jr. in February in Manhattan at the Collectors Club of New York. 85,000 Swiss francs, or \$48,500.

Until Werner Doehner recently parted with the cover and the postcard, precipitating their journey to the auction block, their whereabouts

was unknown. Like the other pieces of crash mail, the cover's survival was carefully documented by United States Post Office Department officials in (Please turn to page 14)

## British stamps to picture Kipling's 'Just So Stories'

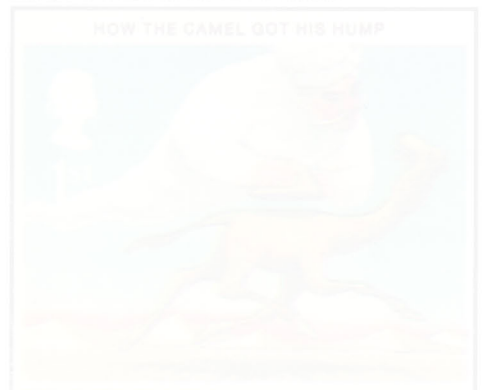
Ten new self-adhesive booklet stamps from Great Britain will celebrate the 100th anniversary of Rudyard Kipling's classic *Just So Stories*.

Royal Mail (the stamps and mail-delivery division of Consignia, the British post office) will issue the stamps Jan. 15, 2002.

The stamps are nondenominated with the inscription "1st" in place of the denomination, indicating that they pay the first-class domestic rate (currently 27 pence). Each stamp portrays one of Kipling's timeless children's tales, as illustrated by Izhar Cohen.

The *Just So Stories* set is the second in an ongoing series of British self-adhesive stamps portraying animals. The first set in the series, featuring photographs of cats and dogs, was released Feb. 13, 2001 (Scott 1953-62a). Birds will follow in 2003.

Kipling, an English writer who lived 1865-1936, received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1907. Many of his stories and books, such as *Kim*, were about his life in India.



One of Britain's *Just So Stories* stamps shows how the camel got its hump. The other designs in the set are shown on page 2.

He also lived in the United States for a short time, 1892-96. During this period, he wrote one of his best-known books for children, *The Jungle Book*.

His *Just So Stories*, published in 1902, answered questions, such as "How did the camel get his hump?" and "How did the leopard get his spots?"

Kipling had used the imagined answers to such questions to entertain his daughter Josephine (Effie).

The stories, drawn from many cultures, are full of jokes, subtexts and exotic references, but whether she heard them at bedtime or on the long sea voyages to Africa and India, Effie insisted on them being told "just so."

She died from pneumonia at age 6 in 1899, almost three years before the stories were first published in one volume, featuring Kipling's own illustrations.

The stories presented Royal Mail with the opportunity to feature on its stamps exotic animals not indigenous to the United Kingdom.

The first stamp in the upper-left-hand corner of the booklet pane pictures a fish talking to a whale who is lying in bed.

This stamp represents the story "How the Whale Got His Throat."

The next stamp features the tale "How the Camel Got His Hump." The design, shown here, depicts the Djinn, who is in charge of all deserts, putting a hump on the camel because he said "hump" once too often.

The third stamp shows "How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin." At one time, the rhinoceros had smooth skin but that was before he took and ate the cake baked by the Parsee man.

Then, one hot day, when the rhino removed his skin to sunbathing in the sea, the Parsee put cake crumbs in it. After he put the skin back (Please turn to page 2)

## Fulfillment center reopens

The United States Postal Service's Stamp Fulfillment Services center in Kansas City, Mo., reopened for business Nov. 14.

Online ordering services from the USPS Postal Store web site also are restored.

The mail-order center, which fills mail orders for stamps from collectors and the general public, closed Oct. 31 after swabs from two trash

bags in the first-day-canceling area tested positive for anthrax.

The contaminated mail was sent to the center on Oct. 19 from the Washington, D.C., Brentwood facility.

Azeezally Jaffer, Postal Service vice president for public affairs and communications, said, "Remediation at this facility [Kansas City] has been completed, and no other evi-

dence of contamination has been found."

No one at the Kansas City fulfillment facility tested positive for anthrax.

All postal employees hospitalized elsewhere for anthrax have been treated and released, the Postal Service said.

This story was posted to *Linn's* Internet web site, at www.linns.com, on Thursday, Nov. 15, in the morning. ■

## U.S. envelopes back on sale Nov. 9

Effective Nov. 9, the United States Postal Service returned postal envelopes to sale at post offices across the country.

The sale of the envelopes was halted in late October (*Linn's*, Nov. 19, page 2) to study the design and construction of the envelopes.

The envelopes went off sale presumably because the 34¢ Federal Eagle envelope issued Jan. 7, 2001, was used to mail four letters that were known to contain anthrax.

In reporting that the envelopes were once again available, the USPS said: "The Postal Service has completed its review of the design and

composition of its stamped envelopes. The results indicate that they are consistent with industry standards and are completely safe.

"The temporary suspension of stamped envelopes for sale at post offices and other postal retail locations was lifted effective Nov. 9.

"However, the suspension

of stamped envelope sales at vending machines will continue until further notice.

"Customers who have purchased personalized stamped envelopes or nonpersonalized stamped envelopes are reminded that they are perfectly safe. The Postal Service apologizes for any inconvenience this may have caused." ■

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# Informal get-togethers forge new friendships

Years ago, when a group of collectors met in an out-of-town stamp show, the members were usually invited to the home of a fellow collector for follow-up sessions on their

## The Insider

By Les Winick

specialty. I recall that the Space Unit, of which I am a member, met in Houston in 1992. We were all invited to a member's home for pizza.

These get-togethers were a lot of fun. They gave us a chance to know each other, make new friends, see material that was not in our collections and swap or buy covers and stamps at down-to-earth prices. Although this was almost 10 years ago, I still correspond and see several of the devotees of space covers and stamps. A picture of our group back then is shown with this column.

Left to right are Dawn Petersen, Bonnie Ebrecht, Ben Ramkissoo, Dave Chudwin, Tom Steiner, Dennis Pavly, Chris Thompson, columnist Les Winick, Bob Glass, Doug Smith and Mr. and Mrs. Ed Rees.

We learned a lot about what covers were available, which astronaut was using an auto pen, which one wasn't, prices of material, the foreign mar-

ket, and more. I haven't found this fellowship at today's shows.

Going to Houston for these meetings, held in conjunction with a stamp show, was always a pleasure for several reasons, in addition to these informal meetings. Several astronauts, wives of astronauts and employees of the Manned Spacecraft Center were devoted collectors, and one or more would usually attend our sessions. The members were very careful not to intrude on the employees' privacy and asked very politely for one or two autographs.

I know that these informal meetings still go on, but the discussion now seems to center on internal politics, or potential policies of the group. If I'm wrong, please correct me.

The International Federation of Philately (FIP) is considering a proposal to create a competitive one-frame class of exhibits based on the concept formally pioneered by the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors and other groups in the United States 20 years ago. The first competitive single-frame display took place in San Diego at Ger-Am-Pex in 1982 when Fran Adams showed "Council of Europe" and "Bron-tosaurus" as single frames.

Powpex, a local Southern California show, had some single framers from 1985 to



Get-togethers were somehow better in the past, the author says in recounting an informal session that was held in 1992 at the home of a Space Unit member in Houston. From left to right are Dawn Petersen, Bonnie Ebrecht, Ben Ramkissoo, Dave Chudwin, Tom Steiner, Dennis Pavly, Chris Thompson, columnist Les Winick, Bob Glass, Doug Smith and Mr. and Mrs. Ed Rees. All of the participants have one thing in common: intense concentration.

1988 with loose verbal guidelines to the judges.

From 1989 on, a written set of guidelines was provided to the judges. In addition to Adams, the participants who helped develop those guidelines were Jim Busse, Alan Campbell, Winand Hess and Lester Lanphear. Powpex still exists, but it is a dealers' bourse with no exhibits.

The one-frame concept spread from the West Coast to the Midwest when the Scouts on Stamps Society International sponsored an exhibition

of 20 one-frame exhibits in conjunction with Compex, which was held concurrently with the World Columbian Stamp Expo 92 at Chicago.

The first national exhibition devoted entirely to single frame exhibits in the United States was held April 23-25, 1993, in Kansas City, Mo., with the cooperation of the AAPE and formal judging guidelines. Randy Neil and others involved in the show management devised the name of AmeriStamp Expo.

I was so intrigued with the

concept that I entered an exhibit in the show for competition but was outclassed in getting a top award by several much better exhibits.

The key was to select the best material from your exhibit or collection and tell the best story with it in the 16-page format of the frames. I was amazed at the high quality of many of the displays and the diversity of what can be exhibited in one frame.

Since then, many APS national shows have picked up on the concept. Beginning in

1998, the APS and the AAPE agreed that the APS winter meeting should be the show each year that emphasizes single-frame exhibits. It took the Ameristamp Expo name. Beginning in 2000, the APS winter show has also included a champion of champions competition for single-frame exhibits.

The one framers have caught on in Europe also. Amphilex 2002, to be held in Amsterdam, has added this class to its competition.

Perhaps, in a few more years, the FIP will catch up to the United States in single-frame exhibiting and will encourage both new and old exhibitors to show limited subjects. The entry fee for a one-frame exhibit would have to cover the cost of a medal. The paperwork and handling by the show committee are almost as cumbersome as for a 10-frame exhibit.

It is illegal to display the swastika in Germany, yet many stamp dealers still have Third Reich material in their inventories. The *German Postal Specialist* of July 2001 explained how the dealers get new material. The contents of a home are taken by buyers who clean out the places from attic to basement. Much of the material finds its way to flea market stamp dealers and to retail shops that specialize in used items. ■

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