

Ask Andy

'Philately' Meaning Baffles

Andy sends a complete, 20-volume set of the World Book Encyclopedia to Meyer Wolman, age 12, Cleveland, Ohio, for his question: Why is stamp collecting called philately?

Stamp collecting started around 1840, soon after the first postage stamps were invented. The ladies of Victorian England were charmed by the pretty scraps of paper with their romantic histories of world travel. At first, collecting stamps was just a fad and people called it timbromania. The word philately was invented when the fad developed into a serious hobby.

Philately is coined from two Greek words and usually the origin of a word gives a clue to its meaning. But this one is baffling. The Greek words from which philately is coined mean someone-who-loves-tax-free-things — or in other words, someone who hates taxes. It is hard to see how this word applies to an earnest collector of government postage stamps.

In the early days of postal service, the postage rate was paid by the person who received the letter. This was changed when the postage stamp was invented in 1840. The cost of mailing was then paid by the sender and the little stamp on the letter was proof that the cost of mailing, or tax for mailing, had been paid. The person who received the letter got a tax free stamp because the tax had already been paid.

Philatelist is a very grand sounding word for a person who collects postage stamps. It was invented by a Frenchman in 1865, just grand name for themselves. For stamp collecting started as a merry fad and people made fun of the ladies who collected enough stamps to paper their dressing rooms.

People called these ardent collectors timbromaniacs — and any kind of maniac, of course, is someone with a mania. The first stamps bore pictures of Queen Victoria and it was said that the stamp faddists were more eager than King Henry VIII to collect queen's heads. Timbre is the French word for postage stamp and timbromania meant a mania for postage stamps.

The timbromaniacs did not care what kind of stamps they collected, so long as they had a lot of them. But the stamp-saving craze developed into a serious hobby and collectors became choosy about their stamps. The rare ones, the beautiful ones and the unusual ones became valuable and today, there are philatelists who have stamp collections worth many thousands of dollars.

A certain stamp printed in 1856 is the only one of its kind in the world and valued at \$150,000. In 1918, a few American air mail stamps were printed with an airplane upside down. They sold for 24 cents, but because of the upside down error, they are now worth \$4,000 apiece — to a philatelist.

Andy sends a Hammond's Nature Atlas of America to Sharon Freedman, age 13, of Portland, Me., for her question:

What does air contain?

The gases of the air are mixed together like assorted grains of colored sands. The proportion of gases is more or less the same wherever we sample the air at the surface of the earth. Almost 100 per cent of the sample will be three gases. Nitrogen makes up about 78 per cent of the air, oxygen about 21 per cent and argon gas accounts for about one per cent.

Six other gases are present in amounts less than one tenth of one per cent. They are carbon dioxide, hydrogen, neon, helium, krypton and xenon. A sample of air also contains some water vapor, dust, pollen, soot and salty sea spray — though these items cannot be given a percentage among the normal gases of the air.

Andy awards each day a full set of the World Book Encyclopedia for the first question he selects to answer. When a second question is answered a large world globe or atlas is awarded. Questions are accepted from teen-age or less-than-teen-age readers. They should be addressed to the Register-Guard, 975 High St. Eugene. Andy prefers that questions be written on postcards rather than in letter form for postage stamps.

Mighty River Marks Vital Asian Border

WASHINGTON — The Mekong River has been a tremendous natural force for centuries. It now is a prime strategic boundary as well.

The Mekong rises in the forbidding Tibetan highlands and runs southward for 2,800 miles, cutting through the troubled Southeast Asian peninsula, the National Geographic Society says.

The mighty river separates Laos from Burma, forms most of the Lao border with Thailand, then snakes through Cambodia and South Viet Nam to empty finally into the South China Sea.

United States strategy in Southeast Asia is based on the Mekong line. American troops have been stationed in Thailand to prevent Communist guerrillas from pushing across the vital river.

The mysterious upper reaches of the Mekong lie in the land of the legendary Abominable Snowman. The river rises high in the Tangla Range and tumbles through jagged gorges.

Rope Bridges

Precarious rope bridges sway high above the river. To cross the ravines, a traveler sits in a sling suspended from a hollow log, which slides over the cable. The rope is greased with yak butter. "A break in transit," one observer noted, "is too unpleasant for contemplation."

In southern China, the Salween, Mekong, and Yangtze Rivers follow parallel canyons only a few dozen miles apart before fanning out to distant seas. The famed Burma Road follows the Mekong for a way before crossing on a suspension bridge.

In the wild country of Lao tribesmen, the Mekong flows past volcanic vents smoking ominously high above the current. Fishermen in dugout canoes catch the plabukan, a tasty fish that weighs as much as 130 pounds.

The Mekong bears downstream teak logs and great rafts loaded with rice. It rushes past sand bars containing gold and gravel beds that yield sapphires.

The Mekong curves sinuously among the blue and green hills heaped about Luang Prabang, Laos' royal capital. It also flows through Vientiane, the economic and administrative center of Laos, and Phnom Penh, Cambodia's trade hub and capital.

Shifting Banks

Though it slows upon entering tropical lowlands, the Mekong constantly rearranges its banks. Green fields and bamboo thickets press upon the shores. Many river dwellers live in thatched sampans.

The Mekong splits into three great arms in South Viet Nam to form a delta that is one of the world's foremost rice-producing regions. As it floods, the Mekong spreads rich silt over a vast alluvial plain.

To Your Good Health

By DR. JOSEPH G. MOLNER

Hints May Silence Snoring

Dear Dr. Molner: My husband was operated on for a deviated septum of the nose. He had it done mainly to stop his snoring and the doctor said it would. But it didn't.

I am a very light sleeper and haven't had a good night's rest for so long I can't remember. When I do sleep it's because I take a pill, and I don't want to do that all the time.

Is there anything you can suggest?—MRS. F. H.

I'm never happy about answers on snoring because, frankly, there are only limited things that I or any doctor can do about it.

Snoring is a fluttering of the soft tissues of the throat as they relax and the breath gives them noisy movement.

Since these soft tissues change position slightly as we relax into sleep, there is no way for a doctor to see them as they are under snoring conditions. And even then it might or might not be helpful.

You know how, at times, the weather whipping around a door or window will whistle when a hard wind is blowing? It's the same sort of thing. If you can luckily find the exact bit of metal which flutters, you can tighten it up and stop the noise.

But there isn't any good way of finding the exact spot. You can, of course, just replace all the weather stripping. But you can't just replace your husband's breathing apparatus.

Most doctors I know are much too smart to promise that any operation or other procedure will cure snoring. Removal of obstructions (deviated septum, polyps, sometimes tonsils, or any other factor) will, indeed,

Wise Investment

If the Indians of Manhattan Island had taken the \$24 in cash instead of trinkets and invested it at 6 per cent, compounded quarterly, theoretically their descendants today would be worth more than the assessed value—16 billion dollars—of Manhattan's land and buildings.

Birds Keep Cool

Young albatrosses on sun-baked Midway keep cool by using their feet in an unusual manner. The birds balance on their heels with webbed feet outstretched in the shade of their bodies. Breezes thus can carry away more of the body's heat.

often reduce or stop snoring but promising absolutely that it will work is unwarranted. I've noticed that most doctors carefully qualify what they say: It may probably help.

Beyond that, the "snoring problem" depends on two factors, not just one: the loudness of the snore, and the sensitivity of the listener's reception. The army has proved that a lot of weary men can sleep through a lot of snoring.

Therefore, once throat and nose passages have been cleared of obvious obstructions, my suggestions are these:

Some people find that sleeping on the back seems to encourage snoring, so learning to sleep on the side, or even such Spartan procedures as fastening a rubber ball to the back (to prevent lying on the back) may help.

Changing pillow height, or even sleeping without a pillow, may prevent or modify the snore.

Some swear by a chin strap, a simple harness to keep the mouth from dropping open.

Ear plugs for the listener, or even simple wads of cotton, often mute the racket enough to permit sleep. And that's the whole object, isn't it?

