

A Collector Looks at the Rotary Stamps

A presstime report on the commemorative issues.

By **BURLEIGH E. JACOBS**



Author Jacobs, a Rotarian of Milwaukee, Wis., was president of the American Philatelic Society for 1954-55. He is shown with some of his Rotary stamps.

WELL OVER 150 million postage stamps honoring Rotary International have been issued by 23 countries, and the end is still not in sight! The stamps are still on sale at many post-office windows, and it is reported that five countries—Costa Rica, El Salvador, Greece, Guatemala and Paraguay—will shortly issue Rotary stamps.

What has been the impact of these millions of Rotary stamps?

As a stamp-collecting Rotarian, I feel that the impact has really been threefold: first, on the stamp-collecting fraternity; second, on Rotarians all over the world; and, third, on the general public, those millions of men and women who have licked these stamps and put them on their daily mail.

As for the impact of the Rotary stamps on the stamp collector, I have been in an unusually fortunate position to observe what has been happening. I have just completed my term as president of the American Philatelic Society, my country's oldest and largest organization of stamp collectors, and have travelled the U. S. and Europe in the past few months seeing and speaking to both Rotarians and stamp collectors.

There is already a considerable group of stamp collectors specializing in Rotary issues. That is, they are attempting to complete their collections of all regularly issued Rotary commemoratives. Some of them also are endeavoring to get all the errors and minor varieties which have occurred in the printing of these stamps. These specialists in the Rotary issues are often, though not always, Rotarians themselves who were stamp collectors before the 1955 Rotary stamps began to appear. Many other Rotar-

ians have become intrigued with the hobby of philately because of these new issues, and of course there are many collectors who have no Rotary affiliation, collectors who have become interested in the stamps and have decided to collect these issues. [See pages 14-15.—Eds.]

Very often these collectors do not just assemble a collection of the stamps, but delve into the background of the stamps, and this usually includes research into the history, the aims, and the success of the Rotary movement. To serve the needs of these collectors, at least two commercial stamp-album publishing houses have published special albums for the Rotary stamps, which provide spaces for the stamps already issued or promised, and also have made available blank pages with borders to match for the mounting of newly issued stamps and covers with Rotary first-day cancellations, or other special items. Other collectors have made up their own special albums from blank pages, and lettered on them the information which they wished to present about the stamps. Rotary issues will be included in the printed stamp albums of the future under their proper countries as a matter of course. And the authoritative stamp catalogue publishers in various countries are already carrying listings of the Rotary stamps with illustrations and pertinent data.

THE collecting of commemorative stamps honoring Rotary International did not begin with the 1955 issues. Three countries have previously issued stamps to honor Rotary International Conventions. Austria was the first nation to honor Rotary philatelically with an overprinted issue of six values in 1931. These stamps, which originally cost 57 cents, are now selling at about \$15 a set. In 1940 Cuba released a 2-centavo value, worth today 10 to 15 cents. Brazil in 1948 issued two stamps—1.20 and 3.80 cruzeiro airmails—which are selling at about twice their face value. [See page 58.—Eds.]

Since the value of stamps is an important part of collecting, there is considerable conjecture today as to what the value of the 1955 Rotary issues will be several years hence. As in any form of investment or speculation, one would need a crystal ball to answer this question. However, as a general rule, stamps increase in value with the years, since they are governed by the law of supply and demand.

The demand for Rotary stamps will be determined by the stamp collectors of the future. There is no reason why this demand should not continue rela-