

and heavy and it's hard sweaty work unloading and stacking it. Still—there it is, and into the shed it has to go. So, in it goes.

We are ready to get on with the digging again when we notice the boss looking hard at the plan, and also looking at the trench we have dug. Then he comes over and makes a few measurements. We know what this is—we have experienced it before. We wait.

He comes over to us. "Well I'm blowed," he says. "This is in the wrong place. This is the front of the building. We only need a six inch trench here. We're eight feet out with that."

He looks a little mournful. So do we. It's all work, but we like to feel we're getting somewhere. But we're used to that sort of thing. That mistake is made

regularly—the oldest hand in the building game can make it.

Well—we get about two sods cut out of the new trench when it's five o'clock. So away go our tools and lines, and on with our coat and scarf. And off we go.

WE cycle slowly off home, we feel all right and ready for our dinner. We pass new houses and half-finished ones and we silently criticise them as the rich roll past in their cars.

But there's only one thing—we don't ever seem to get a house built for ourselves. And, although we've had our ear close to the ground for some months we don't seem to be able to rent one either.

That's what we really want—six months off to get a house ready for ourselves.

The Great Philatelist

THE late Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, "I owe my life to my hobbies, especially stamp collecting." In a sense, then, a great many million people are debtors of philately. Even during the most unsettling times of the war, Roosevelt always spent a half-hour a day with his stamps—usually the last half-hour at night, before he switched off his light to go to sleep. It was a tranquil period. The counterpane was dotted with stamps, and the President, propped up on his pillows, lost himself in the peculiar bliss of the hobbyist as he fixed the bright trifles in his albums. "When my husband was absorbed in his stamps," Mrs. Roosevelt said not long ago, "he got a relaxation absolutely unknown, I believe, to most people. It refreshed and prepared him like nothing else for his next day's work." In Roosevelt's case, the stamp-collecting habit was without a doubt mental therapy of a high order. It also had its global repercussions. It is impossible to estimate the indirect effect on history of those daily philatelic sessions.

Handshake at Casablanca

For instance, when Roosevelt flew to the Casablanca conference, he carried with him, as he did on every trip, a large assortment of stamps. The President's stamps were always the heaviest item in his luggage, whether he was going on a fishing trip or to a Big Three conference. For this particular journey, he told his valet to pack several albums, even if they displaced a few extra changes of clothes that might be needed in the warm climate. At the conference, as everyone must recall, Roosevelt and Churchill found themselves hung up for several days because of the antagonism that developed between Giraud and de Gaulle. During the deadlock, a member of Roosevelt's party went into his room one night and found him riding his hobby with much more than his usual intensity. He was studying a 1935 issue of Argentina, a tall, skinny stamp whose motif is a pair of clasped hands. He held it up. "I suspect," said the President firmly, "that here we have the operation for Giraud and de Gaulle." The rest of the story is well known. The next day the two Frenchmen literally, and perhaps even figuratively, shook hands, and plans for the peaceful administration of North Africa were under way.

Roosevelt's philately also intervened at a meeting of the Allied Pacific War Council, which was composed of the President and the leading representatives in Washington of nations that were at war with Japan. At this meeting, which was held about a year after Pearl Harbour, Mr. Walter Nash, the New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister, proposed that our forces occupy a certain Pacific island as a stepping-stone in our drive toward Tokyo. President Roosevelt thought for a moment. "That would be all right," he said, "but Mangareva would be better." Nash said he was embarrassed to admit that he wasn't acquainted with that island, which is in the Tuamotu Archipelago, under the postal administration of Tahiti. "Oh, it's a few thousand miles from New Zealand," the President told him. "I know the place because I'm a stamp collector." It wasn't long after that that our forces moved into Mangareva.

After Roosevelt died, none of his close friends were surprised to learn that his last official act had been connected with stamps. He always believed that stamps could be an agency for international friendliness and that this potentiality had, on the whole, been overlooked. On the day of his death, in a concluding gesture of philatelic goodwill, he made arrangements with Postmaster-General Frank Walker, by long-distance telephone, to purchase the first stamp of a new issue to commemorate the United Nations Conference then being held in San Francisco. A half-hour later he was stricken. When his personal belongings at Warm Springs were gathered up, the stamps on which he worked the final morning of his life were among them. They were in envelopes and booklets, tossed into a wire basket of the sort customarily used for correspondence—a hodgepodge of recent issues of Rumania, Norway, the Philippines under Japanese occupation, and ten or twelve other countries. A number were duplicates he had placed in an envelope marked "To give away." Thrown in with the stamps, inexplicably, was the President's draft card, which was just like the ordinary draft card except for the red-white-and-blue border. Along with these items were the usual bric-a-brac of a philatelist—a magnifying glass, a pair of long scissors, a package of stamp hinges, some pads and pencils, and a number of small glassine envelopes.

—From "The New Yorker"

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