

President's Report to the BRITISH COLUMBIA PHILATELIC SOCIETY

-- Annual General Meeting, 12 March 2008 ~

IN THE LAST YEAR, the British Columbia Philatelic Society has seen several changes of both a positive and a negative nature.

At a time when stamp clubs all over North America are failing due to attrition and general lack of interest among collectors in joining clubs, we have managed to attract a few new members. However, we appear to have lost some members as well. Our current membership stands at 79, compared to 96 at the end of 2007. Treasurer Mike Strachan will comment on membership matters in his report; he will also explain that while our Society is in excellent financial shape at this time, we face some financial challenges.

Early in 2007, the resignation of newsletter editor Clive Bellian led to the appointment of a new editor, Keith Lowe, who with his son, Patrik, is one of our new members. Two other members volunteered to become editor if we could not find someone else, but Keith came forward to volunteer without conditions. He has a background in journalism, and has now produced two handsome newsletters in color.

Not only has our newsletter benefitted from technological advances, but so have our programs. Since the last AGM, we have made two significant purchases — a digital projector and a large projection screen. Derren Carman undertook the search for the projector, and Mike Strachan and Fritz Graf helped to mount the screen at the church after I had purchased it at the Future Shop.

Another improvement to our meeting space came when we arranged to rent a second storage cabinet from the West Burnaby United Church. The second cabinet has greatly eased storage problems and improved accessibility to our philatelic library. Derren Carman, Chair of the Library Committee, will give his report later on.

We continued to enjoy the opportunity to purchase stamps from the circuit books of the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada, thanks to the unceasing efforts of Leslie S.S. Upton. Leslie will be providing a report on the circuit books later in this meeting.

There is no need to review individually the many programs that we enjoyed from presenters from our own club as well as guest speakers. Topics ranged widely through the world of philately provided us with many opportunities to meet our mandate: "To educate and publicize the hobby of philately to as wide an audience as possible, to recruit new members, and to form bonds with collectors and clubs throughout North America and abroad."

In June, VANPEX 2007 took place at a new venue, the Richmond Curling Club. It was an unprecedented success, and several of our own members are to be congratulated for their impressive awards. Unfortunately, VANPEX 2007 may well have been the last VANPEX to take place in the foreseeable future, a situation which I will discuss in the VANPEX report.

One major activity this year, suggested and planned by Jim Miller, assisted by myself and Tim Woodland, was the mailing of a questionnaire to all members in hopes that the Society could get some guidance for the future. A surprising 50% of members responded to the questionnaire. Some of the highlights:

- Many members expressed complete satisfaction with the operation of the club, and there were no major complaints. It therefore seems that we are on the right path.
- Several members suggested that we try to have at least one daytime meeting a month; it is obvious that many members do not wish to travel to meetings at night or in inclement weather. As a result, members voted to cancel the first Wednesday evening meeting of each month and replace it with a Monday daytime meeting on the previous Monday. This change in schedule has been approved by the church and will take effect on Monday, 5 May 2008. There will be no meeting on Wednesday, May 7. A detailed schedule of upcoming meetings will always be available on the club's web site.
- Several members expressed interest in a "Muffin Break Club"-style meeting based on the successful one in Victoria. The club executive believes that such meetings cannot be undertaken by the Society, but hopes that it would be best planned by any member as a private initiative. The Society would of course assist in helping to promote such a club.
- One anonymous respondent wrote that he would be glad to volunteer for a job, but did not specify just what job that was. None of the other 49 respondents volunteered.

Looking ahead, we are planning a meeting to address possible changes to our Constitution, which has not been updated for several years and no longer reflects conditions as they actually are in our club. That meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 23, 2008. Depending on the outcome of the election tonight, we may have to look at reorganizing the executive to meet the changing needs of the Society.

Our Society faces some considerable challenges in the coming years; while it seems that philately as a hobby is in good health, stamp clubs themselves are not. Most of them struggle to gain new members, and face increasing attrition rates. Society itself seems to be becoming more insular and less willing to participate in social

activities. In the end, we members of the BC Philatelic Society must decide whether our club is worth the effort required to keep it not just viable, but worthwhile for all members. In effect, everyone must become a volunteer to the extent that he or she is able.

This is the fifth year in which I have served on the executive of the BC Philatelic Society, two years as Vice President under Roger Packer, and three years as President. I hope that the changes in which I have had a hand will continue to benefit the Society. I do not plan to stand for re-election. However, I do intend to continue to the best of my ability as webmaster and as coordinator of our programs.

Being President of the BC Phil has been a privilege and an opportunity for many valuable lessons in philately and in life. I would like to thank the many members who have offered their friendship and support throughout my tenure as both Vice President and President.

Bob Ingraham,
President