

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Mark Maestrone

SPI Membership Challenge

Among the items included with this issue of the journal is something worth its weight in gold. Can you guess what it is?

No, it's not the SPI Membership Handbook, although that is certainly a valuable reference.

The SPI Auction Booklet, perhaps? Nope, that's not it either.

It's that single sheet of folded paper with the words "For the Olympic and Sports Collector" on the front – the SPI Membership Application!

Why, you may ask, is this so valuable? Simple. By increasing our membership, we keep per person production costs down, which means fewer dues increases. This also frees up capital for more handbooks, monographs, and special benefits for the members. And with a larger membership there is more participation which translates into new writers with a broader variety of collecting interests. Who knows, we might even uncover some new first-time exhibitors.

So here's my challenge to each and every member of SPI: between now and June 1 I would like to see you recruit at least one new member. He or she could be a past member who let their membership lapse (check the Membership Handbook) or a brand new collector of sports or the Olympics. Maybe it's the guy you just sold some Olympic stamps to on eBay? Or perhaps it's the gal sitting next to you at the local stamp show or club meeting. There is nothing like the personal approach to corral new members.

I believe that with a little effort on every member's part we can dramatically grow our society.

Or to take a page from the new man in the White House: *Yes We Can!*

SESCAL 2009

Our 2009 SPI Convention is just around the corner. This year we'll be holding our get-together at the SESCAL

exhibition from October 9-11 at the Radisson Hotel at Los Angeles International Airport.

The show theme is the 25th Anniversary of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. In addition to a special postmark for the event, we hope to have some interesting speakers and programs. And of course there will be plenty of enlightening sport and Olympic exhibits to peruse and dealers to visit.

Many who attended our last gathering at SESCAL back in 2003 greatly enjoyed our SPI outing to the Magic Castle and have suggested we return. The Magic Castle is a famous Hollywood landmark and "showplace for some of the greatest magicians from around the globe". As a member-only club we must be invited. Fortunately, Norm Jacobs is well-acquainted with a Castle member who is happy to host our visit. We do, however, need an idea of how many will attend. The cost per person: there is a \$25 entrance fee, plus \$20-50 for dinner (depending on what you order). Business attire is required (men: coats and ties; women: cocktail dresses/pant suits). If you think you'd like to attend, please let me know.

Joan Bleakley (1932-2009)

Longtime SPI member and one of my closest friends, Joan Bleakley, passed away on February 7 after a lengthy illness. Not only was she a co-author with me of the *Olympians On Stamps* handbook, but a philatelic mentor who helped me and many others to get our feet wet in exhibiting.

A tireless worker, she devoted many hours to helping in the planning of Olymphilex 1996 in Atlanta as well as with the preparation of thousands of envelopes of stamps for the youth area.

While best known in thematic exhibiting circles for her "Frog and Toad Trivia," she also had a wonderful volleyball exhibit that competed internationally. Joan was also an excellent APS and ATA judge.

Joan's wry wit, sunny disposition, and guiding hand will be greatly missed.

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