



From The ATA Central Office

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MARY ANN ASPINWALL OWENS (1929-2005)

Mary Ann Aspinwall Owens died November 21, 2005, after a prolonged illness. She was born on June 23, 1929, in Waukesha, Wisconsin, and was one of the founders of the Waukesha County Philatelic Society. Mary Ann commenced thematic collecting and exhibiting in the mid-1960s. Her award-winning exhibit on The Elephant was first shown internationally in 1971 and went on to win a Vermeil at STOCKHOLMIA 1974, a Gold at AMERIPEX 1986, and a Large Gold at HAFNIA 1987. This was followed by her exhibit on the Beautiful Blue Danube which received international Golds at AUSIPEX 1987, CAPEX 1987, and PRAGA 1988.

Mary Ann was named as U.S. commissioner to THEMABELGA 1975, the first thematic exhibition under FIP patronage held in Brussels, Belgium, December 13-22, 1975. To promote participation, she published a series of detailed articles in four 1975 issues of Topical Time providing guidance for exhibitors. This resulted in her being selected as the U.S. representative on the FIP Thematic Commission, a position she held for more than a decade.

An ATA Life member, Mary Ann received the ATA Distinguished Topical Philatelist award in 1969, and served as ATA national secretary 1976-1979. She was selected in 1991 to receive the American Philatelic Society John F. Luff award for outstanding service to philately, and in 1993 she was honored by signing the British "Royal Roll of Distinguished Philatelists" which entitled her to use the distinction of "RDP."

She served from 1993 to 1997 on the American Philatelic Society board of directors. She then filed as a candidate as APS president but deteriorating health forced her to step down as a candidate before the election. She also served for a time as vice-president of the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors, and secretary of the American Philatelic Society Writers Unit.

Mary Ann's longest series of Topical Time articles called "Finding the Common Denominator" was introduced in the March-April 1999 issue. This popular puzzle continued for five years concluding in the March-April 2004 issue.

Mary Ann's many other exhibits included All About Umbrellas which won the Reserve Grand at NTSS 2000; a 2001 gold-winning display exhibit entitled The Aspinwall Connection which represented her growing interest in genealogy; and a single-frame exhibit on The Badger which was published in its entirety in the November-December 2003 issue of Topical Time. Her last of many overseas trips was to the Pacific Explorer international exhibition in Sydney, Australia, April 21-24, 2005, where she won a Large Silver for her exhibit Ladybeetle, Ladybird, Ladybug.

History will probably record Mary Ann's major philatelic achievement as her appointment in 1979 as a member of the USPS Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee. At a 1998 retirement banquet, the U.S. Postal Service presented her with a certificate reading in part: "Mary Ann Aspinwall Owens has been instrumental in guiding and elevating the standards and quality of the U.S. stamp program which will stand as a lasting tribute to her."

"Philately and ATA has lost a great champion," according to former ATA executive director Donald W. Smith whose remembrance represents the entire ATA membership. "Her endeavors for philately have been tremendous and she will be impossible to replace."

NOTE: this tribute was composed by George Griffenhagen – American Topical Association.