

A Blast From the Past

by David Weststrate

Philately is the collection and study of postage stamps; one who does this act is known as a philatelist. OK I'll admit it I've been one of these people for my entire adult life. Yes some tend to be stuffy, boring, and several other terms that might apply; thus it is my wish to show the hobby and myself in a whole new light, even if I might need to exaggerate and tell a story. I hope you will enjoy reading my tale of intrigue and high adventure in the world of brightly colored little pieces of paper.

I'm sorry to state that my memory has now become quite clouded, but I will attempt to write of the events to the best of my recollection, or at least as well as possible for someone who collected stamps during the age of ROCK'N'ROLL. Rock On Philatelists!



It all started by receiving a reply from an ad I had placed in hopes of locating stamp collections for sale. The letter arrived from Mexico written by a Miss Susan Little. With great interest I read that she owned a valuable collection of early Mexico material; including an exhibition quality collection of Oaxaca Eagles from the 1860's. I replied making arrangements for a meeting as soon

as possible.

Miss Little insisted that we meet in a bar just over the U.S./Mexico border. She was very clear that the collection was not to leave her possession until paid for in full.

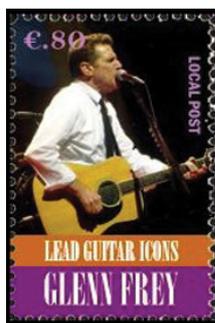
Though details were scarce, I knew that IN A LITTLE CAFÉ ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BORDER, there was a collection for sale THAT WOULD MAKE MY MOUTH WATER.



Arriving in the sleepy little border town slightly after dark, I immediately sought out the only hotel. While checking in the thought of the EAGLES kept going through my mind. The hotel clerk said, "WELCOME TO THE HOTEL CALIFORNIA". The place was badly run down and looked as though people



who checked in never left. The wine list was quite poor but there was no other option.



I left my bags in the hotel room and set off to locate where the meeting was arranged. Within minutes I entered the smoke filled room of The Café. Wishing to get accustomed to the place I went to the bar and ordered a drink. The joint was packed with a group of American tourists, their bus driver had Jay written on his jacket. Over in a corner a band attempted to play modern songs with the help of their lead guitarist.

There she was, I had spotted Miss Susan Little. By her description it was hard to mistake her as SHE WORE BLUE VELVET, BLUER THAN VELVET WERE HER EYES. As I approached her table the band went into its rendition of Elton John's hit "Crocodile Rock": "I REMEMBER WHEN ROCK WAS YOUNG; ME AND SUZIE HAD SO MUCH FUN".



THEN THE MUSIC STOPPED, WHEN I LOOKED THE CAFÉ WAS EMPTY. THEN I HEARD THE GUITAR PLAYER SAY, "GRINGO MAN YOU'RE IN TROUBLE PLENTY". Jay and the Americans high tailed it out of there at the first sign of trouble.

HE STOOD SIX FOOT FIVE, AND WAS BROAD AT THE HIP, AND EVERYONE KNEW YOU DIDN'T GIVE NO LIP TO BIG JUAN. Yes, it was Big Juan. I had thought of him only as a legend, but standing in front of me was the owner of Big Juan's Stamp, Taco, and Tackle Shop. I knew at once that he was also after Miss Little's collection, willing to stop at nothing to get it.

As I said, THE CAFÉ WAS EMPTY, without any backup I had no choice but to DROP MY DRINK FROM MY HAND, AND THROUGH THE WINDOW I RAN.

Limping away I remembered the words told me by an old stamp dealer many years ago. "Dave, as a philatelist, ONLY THE STRONG SURVIVE, ONLY THE STRONG SURVIVE, YOU'VE GOT TO BE STRONG, YOU'VE GOT TO HOLD ON".

Ashamed, I stopped running and thought of how I might never again have an opportunity to buy such a collection. At best it might be another FOUR SEASONS before such a deal would appear; it was time to WALK LIKE A MAN.

I had convinced myself to return and once again try for the stamps. To my delight Big Juan was gone, Miss Little explained that he had COME A LITTLE BIT CLOSER but she had refused his offers in hopes that I would return. Seductively she slid her stacked volumes in my direction. Touching them I felt their warmth caused by the clutching of them to her bosom.

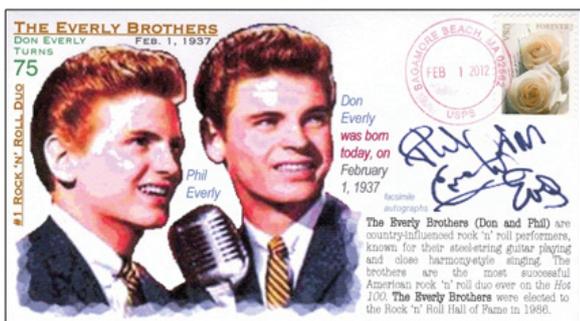
Settling into a seat next to her a sharp pain sent tremors into my groin. I had forgotten to replace the lethal tipped stamp tongs into their protective case before sliding them into my pocket.

With trembling hands I slowly opened the first album's cover. My head started to spin; before I became too enthralled, going too far, I made an attempt to get Miss Little to commit to a monetary value for the entire collection. All she would say is, "MONEY MAKES THE WORLD GO AROUND".



With such a CABARET response I knew she was waiting for me to make the first move. I couldn't GET NO SATISFACTION. Her refusal to quote an asking price was STONE firm.

I delved into the books, trying to arrive at some sort of fair



market value. To my surprise Miss Little had fallen asleep, apparently due to her lack of interest. Turning another page I saw them. I shouted, "WAKE UP LITTLE SUSIE, WAKE UP!"

EVERLY BROTHER in the place looked up to see what was causing the commotion. Blurry eyed, she asked, "What's wrong, why did you

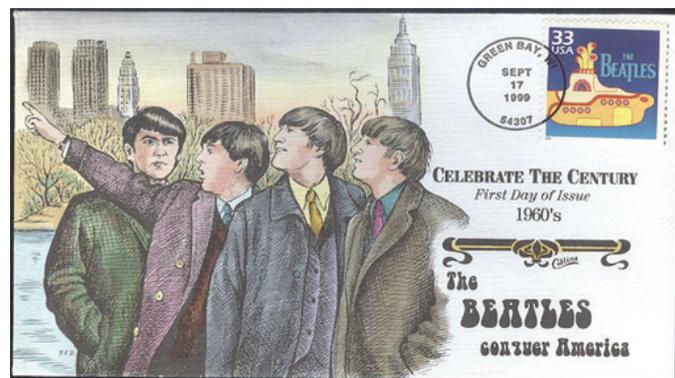


wake me up?" Then I pointed out holes in the album pages along with mutilated stamps. My worse fear was confirmed when four Hairy Cellar



Beetles* scurried across the album's page.

She attempted to divert my attention by whispering in my ear, "I WANT TO HOLD YOUR HAND." Her ploy didn't work, I knew these were the very same long haired pests who had invaded North America by way of Europe in the 1960s.



She pleaded, stating that she hadn't known about THE BEATLES. The pieces of the puzzle came together fast when she started to tell her secretes, admitting that the collection was not hers. She had only been working as a front for Big Juan in an attempt to sell the pest infested collection to some unsuspect-ing collector.



As I left Miss Little shouted to me, "What I am I to do with these EAGLES now?"

Looking over my shoulder into her LYIN EYES I said, "FRANKLY MY DEAR, I DON'T GIVE A DAMN".



*Hairy Cellar Beetles have the scientific name *Mycetaea hirta*. Their description is that they have long erect hairs and shallow round punctures on their heads. Hairy Cellar Beetles were first found in Europe where they lived in wine cellars, later they emigrated to North America. (HONESTLY).