Introduction

Fish and game philately lost one of its most prominent collectors during September of 1994. Elmore Vanderford passed away in his sleep at his long-time residence in Sacramento California. Known better as E. L. Vanderford or simply “Van” in philatelic circles, he had suffered from a variety of illnesses in recent years, including a chronic heart condition and asthma. These robbed him of much of his energy and time. For this reason he recently was unable to keep up the voluminous correspondence that had maintained faithfully for over 30 years. Although alternating between good days and bad, he was able to derive a great deal of enjoyment and personal satisfaction from the fish and game renaissance of the 1990s. For this, the author will be forever grateful.

Van started to collect stamps in 1922, at age nine. The following year he bought his first hunting license and began a lifelong pursuit of duck hunting (see Figure 1a). When California issued it’s first (now legendary) “BOY” hunting licenses in 1928, Van was the right age to qualify. Van’s carefully preserved, unfolded license is the finest recorded used example of this rare fish and game artifact (see Figure 1b).

![Figure 1A. At age 10, Van bought his first California hunting license.](image1a.png)

![Figure 1B. At age 15, Van received one of the short-lived Boy hunting licenses.](image1b.png)
It seems natural that one day his two great passions would become inextricably combined in the form of fish and game stamp collecting. For many years Van was a general collector of U.S. and British stamps. Eventually, he became interested in U.S. revenue stamps and joined the American Revenue Association. Through the ARA, he made contact with Frank Applegate and Bert Hubbard. Applegate and Hubbard were the two most influential state revenue dealers on the west coast. Applegate was one of the first dealers to specialize in fish and game stamps (see Figure 3a and b).

**FIGURE 3A.** FRANK APPLEGATE WAS ONE OF THE FIRST STAMP DEALERS TO SPECIALIZE IN FISH AND GAME STAMPS. TWO ADS APPLEGATE RAN IN PHILATELIC PUBLICATIONS ARE SHOWN HERE AND IN THE ILLUSTRATION BELOW.
FIGURE 3B. ENLARGEMENT OF APPLEGATE'S AD SUGGESTING COLLECTORS ADD OTHER FISH AND GAME STAMPS TO THEIR FEDERAL DUCK STAMPS – AND THAT IS WHAT VAN AND CHOSE TO DO.
Applegate and Hubbard introduced Van to state revenues, which at the time included the Kansas quail stamps and Virginia big game, National Forest and elk stamps. Being an avid hunter, Van immediately took a keen interest in the hunting license stamps and he began to buy these from them for his fledgling collection.

Three of Van’s earliest hunting stamp purchases turned out to be rarities over time. It is believed that the 1938-39 Virginia National Forest stamps that were issued to hunters were serial numbered (as all used copies on or off license are numbered). Most of the stamps surviving today are likely unused remainders as they lack the number. In 1940, Kansas printed and issued their quail stamps as single stamp booklet panes with a tab at the left. They ran out of stamps at the end of the season and sold a small number of stamps to hunters and collectors from a proof sheet of ten. Van was fortunate to acquire this variety, probably from dealer Frank Applegate. The Virginia elk was one of my favorite stamps in his collection. It is unusually well centered and has huge margins (see Figure 4a, b and c).

![Figure 4A. Unused numbered 1938-39 Virginia National Forest.](image)

![Figure 4B. 1939-40 Kansas Quail from proof sheet of ten.](image)

![Figure 4C. 1946-47 Virginia Resident Elk.](image)
Collecting Fish and Game Stamps

Elmore’s wife, Jane, shared in her husband’s hobbies. She hunted ducks, loved to fish and also had a topical collection of fish stamps. In 1948 Michigan issued the first pictorial fishing stamps in the U.S. Van, having learned of these stamps and thinking they would make a nice gift for his wife, began to buy one for her each year directly from the state agency (see Figure 5). Van grew to like the fishing stamps himself and soon developed an interest in collecting fish and game stamps in general. It was not long before he was more involved in them than Jane was.

FIGURE 5. THE EXACT STAMP THAT VAN GAVE HIS WIFE JANE IN 1948. THIS BEAUTIFUL MICHIGAN TROUT STAMP INSPIRED VAN TO MOVE PAST COLLECTING JUST HUNTING STAMPS.
He began a practice of purchasing at least one or two examples of each stamp from various conservation agencies while they were still valid. This meant paying full face value. However, Van knew that (for various reasons) occasionally there were no remainders made available to collectors at a reduced fee following the season. As he learned of increasing numbers of state and local governments that issued stamps, he took on a series of “ordering partners” to help him with this task. Were it not for Van and his ordering partners, examples of many of the rarer fish and game stamps would not exist today—especially in unused condition (see Figure 6a, b and c).

**FIGURE 6A.** IN THE CASE OF THE 1963 CROW CREEK SMALL GAME STAMP, NOT EVEN ANOTHER USED EXAMPLE HAS BEEN RECORDED IN OVER 50 YEARS.

**FIGURE 6B.** 1966 MARION COUNTY DUCK. VAN PURCHASED THE ONLY UNUSED EXAMPLE FOR 50 CENTS DURING THE SEASON.

**FIGURE 6C.** 1970-71 MONTANA NR BIRD. $25.00 MUST HAVE HURT IN 1971.
n the 1950s Van began to correspond with other collectors which he contacted through The American Revenuer. These included John Bobo, Charles Herman, Joseph Janousek, Morton Dean Joyce and John Theil. These pioneer collectors enjoyed sharing information and trading stamps among themselves. All the while, Van was becoming more infatuated with the hobby—and more knowledgeable. The thing that appealed to him the most was the “thrill of the hunt” for new and elusive items. Joseph Janousek in particular would have a big influence on Van’s life (see Figure 7).

FIGURE 7. JOSEPH JANOUSEK WAS A KEY FIGURE IN VAN’S LIFE.
In April of 1959, Joseph Janousek started writing a regular column in The American Revenuer. In his column, Janousek attempted to list all of the fish and game stamps that had been issued up until that time. This was a significant event in Van’s life for two reasons. First, Janousek enlisted the assistance of several fellow collectors, including Van. This had the effect of getting Van more involved in organized philately. Second, and far more important, it would later serve as the inspiration for Van to compile his own Handbook of Fish and Game Stamps – essentially an update of Janousek’s work and the accomplishment that Van is most remembered for in philatelic circles (see Figure 8).

**FIGURE 8. JANOUSEK’S WORK SERVED AS THE INSPIRATION FOR VAN.**
Getting Involved With the SRS Newsletter

The State Revenue Society began publication of the SRS Newsletter in 1959. The newsletter always contained a great deal of information about fish and game stamps due in part to the fact that many SRS members (including editor David C. Strock) were interested in these stamps. Although Van did not contribute original articles in the beginning, many issues of the newsletter contained his additions and corrections to articles and news releases which had previously appeared. Van was becoming recognized by revenue collectors as an authority in the fish and game field (see Figure 9).

In the early 1960s Joseph Janousek passed away and Van helped his wife sell the collection he had formed. Van was able to add several major rarities to his own growing collection at this time. Most notable were the 1956 Delaware non-resident trout stamp (see Figure 10) and the Puerto Rico hunting license and validation stamp dating from the 1950s (see Figure 11). Both items were the only recorded examples and had been written up by Janousek in his State Game Hunting and Fishing Revenue Stamps column which was published in The American Revenuer.
Delaware began issuing resident trout stamps in 1956. It is believed that Delaware also experimented with the idea of requiring non-resident anglers to purchase a separate stamp at a higher fee in 1956 (perhaps by cutting up a pane of proofs for unlike the resident stamps, the non-resident stamp is imperforate). In his column, Janousek reported that only three non-resident stamps were sold, which included one he had purchased for his own collection (see Figure 10). Delaware apparently decided against the idea and did not begin to print and issue separate non-resident stamps on a regular basis until 1972. The Janousek stamp reached legendary status during Van’s lifetime and is probably the most iconic of all U.S. fishing stamps today.
Janousek also reported in his column that Puerto Rico first started using the license and stamp system in 1951. The license allowed the holder to hunt for all game for which there was a season, including waterfowl. The current $10 Internal Revenue stamp was used to validate the license, which also served as a permit to carry firearms. The stamp was torn in half, with the bottom portion being affixed to the license and the top affixed to the license application. For his column, Janousek sketched a drawing of the missing top portion and used it for an illustration (see Figure 11a). For over thirty years, the Janousek/Vanderford/Torre license was the only example recorded (see Figure 11b). Then in the 1990s, waterfowl stamp collector Jeannette Rudy acquired a second example. The Rudy license is now in the Csaplar collection, along with several others from a collector’s fantasy flea market find in 2015 (this will be the subject of a future blog post).
The Handbook of Fish and Game Stamps

In the mid 1960s Dr. Kenneth Pruess, a serious collector of fish and game stamps, became the editor of the SRS Newsletter. He realized that Van had developed a tremendous amount of specialized knowledge — knowledge that should be published for the benefit of others. Pruess was able to persuade Van to undertake the considerable task (even then) of writing a comprehensive handbook on fish and game stamps. For over six years Van worked on this project. As each new section was completed Pruess would publish it in the SRS newsletter. By 1968 Van was given the title of Assistant Editor (Fish and Game) for the SRS. When all of the state and local governments that had issued stamps were covered, the sections were updated and in 1973 published by the SRS as The Handbook of Fish and Game Stamps [by] E. L. Vanderford (see Figure 12).
This tremendous effort on Van’s part was important to the hobby’s development for many reasons. First, the regular publication of in-depth information about fish and game stamps over six-plus years resulted in a sizable contingent of what are now known as “old time” collectors. Many of these collectors would later get other collectors started and so on. Second, in an attempt to publish the most accurate and comprehensive information possible, Van expanded his network of correspondents. Consisting of license agents, license section supervisors and collectors from every stamp-issuing state, this network developed an unprecedented body of information about fish and game stamps. This information all filtered through Van to others, first via the SRS Newsletter and eventually his handbook. Finally, the handbook was a substantial philatelic work providing credibility and stability to this non-traditional collecting area. It served as the hobby’s bible for nearly 20 years and is still a valuable reference today. Upon completion of the handbook, Van was elected to the SRS Board of Governors.

In the early 1970s Van made three important acquisitions that left him with the finest collection of fish and game stamps at that time. He purchased the collection of the late Mrs. Robert Powell of Iowa, the 1938 Pymatuning Lake waterfowl stamp and the 1973 Colorado North Central Goose stamp.

Mrs. Powell was a remarkable person. An attorney by trade, she was an avid sportswoman, a champion trapshooter and a wildlife artist of considerable merit. Her original artwork is featured on the album pages of her collection (see Figures 13a and b). Above all, she loved fish and game stamps. She did a fair amount of research which she published in the SRS Newsletter and on the exhibit pages of her collection. Her exhibit of fish and game stamps won at least one blue ribbon taking “First — U.S. Non-Postage” at WATEX in 1969 (see Figure 13c). In Van’s own estimation, Mrs. Powell’s collection exceeded his own at the time of her death.

FIGURE 13A. NEBRASKA PHEASANT AND QUAIL ALBUM PAGE WITH MRS. POWELL’S ARTWORK OF A QUAIL IN FLIGHT AND PHEASANT HUNTERS.
FIGURE 13B. CROW CREEK ALBUM PAGE WITH MRS. POWELL’S ARTWORK OF A SIOUX BRAVE. MRS. POWELL WAS ONE OF ONLY A HANDFUL OF COLLECTORS IN THE 1960S TO WRITE TO THE TRIBES AND PURCHASE AN EXAMPLE OF THEIR STAMPS.

FIGURE 13C. ONE OF THE BLUE RIBBONS THAT VAN ACQUIRED ALONG WITH HER COLLECTION.
Two things distinguished Mrs. Powell’s collection from Van’s. First, she was a person of considerable wealth and could buy whatever she wanted. This often included high face value fish and game stamps which Van and other collectors could not reasonably afford. Second, Powell was one of the first fish and game collectors who desired to obtain both an unused example plus one on license showing the usage. Van was never very interested in saving stamps on license and this was always the major weakness of his collection. After buying the Powell collection intact, he sold or traded off nearly all of the licenses. These included some great rarities such as a pair of California 1958 inland fishing stamps with “Indian” No Fee overprint (see Figure 14). It should be noted that while Van chose not to keep them himself he was in fact the original source for many of the important licenses in collections today. (Even Mrs. Powell obtained many of her best licenses from Van prior to her death.)

![Figure 14](image)

**FIGURE 14. ONE OF THE GREAT RARITIES OF FISH AND GAME STAMPS, VAN SOLD THIS LICENSE TO THE ADVANCED COLLECTOR SYLVIA TOMPKINS SHORTLY AFTER ACQUIRING THE POWELL COLLECTION.**

With the Powell collection came a large number of duplicates, for not only did Van already have most of the individual stamps, but Mrs. Powell collected multiples as well. Van was always somewhat of a dealer, though frequently helping collectors to add to their collections as little or no financial gain for himself. His attitude changed after purchasing the Powell collection. From this point on he began to think more in terms of making a modest profit. It may surprise many collectors to know that Van eventually built up quite a stamp business. There is no question that he amassed one of the largest stocks of fish and game stamps of all time. He ran a variety of ads to sell these stamps in hunting and fishing magazines, but operated fairly low key in philatelic circles.
Pymatuning!

The early 1970s was when Van acquired the two crown jewels of his collection. The 1938 Pymatuning Lake waterfowl stamp was the earliest state issued waterfowl stamp on record and the only recorded example. Discovered by Terry Hines over thirty years after it was issued, this stamp received a great amount of publicity in philatelic publications. For many years it remained the only Pymatuning waterfowl stamp known to collectors. Van obtained the stamp from Hines in a trade for several federal duck stamps he was missing (see Figure 15). Over time, several other Pymatuning waterfowl and fishing stamps have been discovered. However, the 1938 waterfowl stamp remains unique and this has earned it the nickname “the British Guiana of the waterfowl stamp hobby”.

By Terence Hines

The 1938 Pymatuning Lake duck stamp is one of the rarest of all state issued duck stamps. Only one copy is known to exist. The Scott federal/state duck stamp catalog lists another Pymatuning stamp from a later year and this, too, may be unique. Pymatuning Lake is a reservoir on the Ohio Pennsylvania border.

I discovered the 1938 stamp in Washington, D.C. in May 1971. My sophomore year at Duke University had just ended and I was flying back from Durham, N.C., to my parents’ home in Hanover, N.H. I spent the day visiting friends and sight-seeing in Washington. It was, as I recall, a lovely, warm, sunny day. I happened to pass a small stamp shop and, of course, went in and asked if they had any back of the book type of material. I do not remember either the name or address of the shop. I was handed a cigar box full of miscellaneous revenue and cinderella material. In this mess I noticed an odd hunting stamp with no state name, but a familiar state seal. I paid 25 cents for the stamp and left.

When I got home I unpacked and found the stamp. A brief check in the back issues of the State Revenue Newsletter and relevant catalogs showed that it had not been previously reported. So I sent it to E. L. Vanderford, even then the acknowledged dean of state hunting and fishing stamp collectors. He had never seen the stamp before and offered me several mint federal duck stamps that I needed in trade. I was happy to accept the trade.

(Editor’s Note: To date, no additional copies of the 1938 Pymatuning Lake duck stamp have been found. The stamp is in the David Torre collection that will be exhibited at the APS StampShow in Oakland, Calif., August 27-30. According to Torre, at least five other varieties of Pymatuning hunting and fishing stamps are known.)

FIGURE 15. TERRY HINES HISTORIC ARTICLE (ABOVE) AND VAN’S FAVORITE STAMP, THE 1938 PYMATUNING FOR WATERFOWL HUNTING.
Acting on a tip from Ken Pruess, Van was able to obtain an unused example of Colorado’s 1973 North Central Goose stamp. Collectors were unaware of this stamp and the copy Van obtained from a license supervisor following the season is one of two examples recorded in unused condition (see Figure 16). Van ways favored waterfowl stamps in general because of his love of duck hunting; the Pymatuning and Colorado Goose stamps were two of his most prized possessions until he allowed me to acquire them in 1991.

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s Van continued to be very active. He kept up correspondence, sold and traded stamps to other collectors and shared his vast knowledge. He had several more major articles published in the SRS Newsletter during this time, most notable being his “Check List of State and Locally Issued Migratory Waterfowl Hunting License Stamps” in 1977.

In 1979 he began an important correspondence with Don Terrell. At the time, Don was an intermediate collector of waterfowl stamps and an avid duck hunter. The two became close friends. Van inspired Don to write a column about fish and game stamps in Sporting Classics magazine simply titled “Stamps”. The column ran for many years in the 1980s and resulted in hundreds of new collectors (see Figures 17a, d and c). The column initially focussed on state waterfowl stamps, then evolved to include all fish and game stamps.
FIGURE 17B. DON'S FIRST ARTICLE FOCUSED ON PICTORIAL WATERFOWL STAMPS.
FIGURE 17C. DON WENT ON TO INFORM READERS ABOUT THE NON PICTORIAL WATERFOWLS AND VAN’S HANDBOOK.
Although nearing 70 years of age, Van still loved to hunt ducks. Much of his correspondence at this time was filled with hunting stories. The following is an excerpt from a letter to Don Terrell dated January 24, 1980 (reproduced with Don’s consent):

“Did have one freakish but red hot shoot Dec. 30th. My partner and I worked like beavers for six hours on a Friday afternoon putting out 6 doz. duck decoys, 2 doz. honker decoys and 5 large white swan like decoys as attractors. It was a pond of about 1000 acres of cultivated peat land which had been deliberately flooded to improve the soil. The only meaner stuff to try to walk in is quick sand. It’s impossible to walk at all without a two inch round pole for support and even then you fall down every now and then. The secret to success is to fall forward on your knees so the water doesn’t go over your waders. Anyway, Saturday’s shoot was a bust—only one crippled ‘Can’ which even a big stray lab couldn’t retrieve—also a bust in as much as I broke the magazine spring retainer latch on my Rem. 58 Sportsman. My buddy has a house full of guns but I did a double take Sunday morning when he brought out a battered old Rem. pump gun and said ‘here use this, its the tightest shooting gun in the house.’ From appearances I would be ashamed to offer it for sale in a flea market but we have hunted together for well over 40 years and I knew he wouldn’t slip me a ‘moldy fig.’”

“Just as we left about 4 AM it started to rain and the wind started to come up. Before we got there we had a miniature hurricane on our hands—including rain by the buckets full. Upon arrival it was immediately apparent our hard work of two days before (and decoys) were blown all over hell and there was no way we could possible use the site.”

“We waited it out in the car until it started to lighten up when we noticed about 2000 swans in one corner of the pond and every duck in sight fighting the gale wind to pitch in near them. We worked our way around the swans so as not to alarm them and got 150 yards or so downwind of them. There was no cover to hide in but a drag line had cleaned out a ditch and we spread out about 100 yards apart and lay down against some small piles the bucket had dumped. It was miserable as hell lying there on my back but my favorite shot is one almost straight overhead.”

“Those pintails — almost all drakes — just kept on coming and it was over all too quickly (7 bird limit here). They were all about 50-55 yards high — a little farther than I like to shoot 2 3/4” shells but my friend wasn’t lying about that old Rem — I never had a single cripple. I just lay there on my back and marked where they fell. That Rem. looked like hell but it sure threw a tight pattern.

“Well to stamps…”

A Lasting Inspiration

In the early 1980s, Van began to liquidate his stock. In so doing, helping many new fish and game dealers, including David Curtis and Barry Porter, to get started. These dealers all helped to popularize the hobby. The January-February 1983 issue of the SRS Newsletter contained yet another valuable article by Van. It was titled “Some Additional State Duck Stamp Observations.”

Although Van and I lived only 90 miles apart in northern California, we did not meet until 1985. By this time physical problems had started to limit the time he spent hunting and his previously unbridled enthusiasm for stamp collecting had been tempered by efforts on the part of a handful of print and duck stamp dealers to exploit the hobby for their own personal gains. A number of states had recently issued stamps which depicted waterfowl but were not required to hunt anything. Some dealers were promoting these for sale as “duck stamps.” This prompted Van’s last major philatelic article.
Filling an entire page, "State Duck Stamps near 50th Anniversary; Confusion over which are Genuine Lingers" appeared in Linn’s Stamp News on July 6, 1987. In the article Van advised collectors, “If you enjoy collecting this type of material, by all means continue, but it is wise to be aware of what you are buying.” He went on to inform readers about the important non-pictorial waterfowl stamps that were conspicuously absent from most dealer’s state duck hype during the mid-1980s.

By E.L. Vanderford

In the last several years, the genuine and pseudo state duck stamps pouring out in ever greater numbers has made collecting stamps of current issues as easy as deciding what to wear on a given day. Most of these stamps were identical in size and color, and were simply an exercise in utter futility. A number of the states had recently announced new duck stamps for 1985 or 1986, and with the United States and Canada issuing their usual crop of pictorial stamps, the demand for duck stamps was as high as it had ever been.

In the past, the public had been accustomed to a steady stream of new duck stamps. The United States had been releasing a new stamp each year since 1934, and in 1987 the state of Oregon was expected to issue its 50th duck stamp. Many of these stamps were quite distinctive, and it was easy for collectors to keep track of which states issued them and when.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, a number of states began to issue duck stamps that were almost identical to each other. These stamps often featured the same design, color scheme, and format. In some cases, the stamps were actually duplicates of each other, simply with different state names printed on them. Collectors soon found that they were being inundated with duck stamps that were almost indistinguishable from one another.

One of the earliest examples of this was the 1983 California duck stamp, which wasvirtually identical to the 1983 Oregon duck stamp. Both stamps featured a mallard duck and the state’s name in block letters. The only difference was that the California stamp had a smaller bird and was printed on a different type of paper. Collectors soon realized that they were being sold the same stamp in different states, and began to look for ways to distinguish one from the other.

Another example was the 1984 Minnesota duck stamp, which was almost identical to the 1984 Wisconsin duck stamp. Both stamps featured a mallard duck and the state’s name in block letters. The only difference was that the Minnesota stamp had a larger bird and was printed on a different type of paper. Collectors soon realized that they were being sold the same stamp in different states, and began to look for ways to distinguish one from the other.

In the late 1980s, the number of duck stamps issued by the states continued to grow, and the problem of distinguishing one from the other became even more challenging. In 1987, the state of Oregon issued its 50th duck stamp, and collectors soon realized that they were being sold the same stamp in different states, and began to look for ways to distinguish one from the other.

One of the ways that collectors began to distinguish these stamps was by examining the printing and paper characteristics. For example, the Oregon stamp was printed on a glossy paper, while the Wisconsin stamp was printed on a matte paper. Collectors also began to look for other distinguishing features, such as the quality of the printing and the type of paper used.

Another way that collectors began to distinguish these stamps was by examining the overall size and shape of the stamp. For example, the Oregon stamp was slightly larger than the Wisconsin stamp. Collectors also began to look for other distinguishing features, such as the shape and size of the stamp.

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I feel the need to point out that virtually all serious waterfowl stamp collector’s today disagree with Vanderford on one important point. We feel that if a stamp was required to hunt waterfowl it belongs in our collection – regardless if it was also required to hunt for additional types of birds or small game.

Unfortunately, from Van's point of view, the worse was yet to come. Later that year a New Hampshire “Governor’s Edition” stamp appeared on the market (see Figure 18). Van was incensed at what he figured was a “blatant attempt to rip-off unknowledgeable stamp collectors.” When he wrote to his long-time contacts at the New Hampshire Fish and Game License Section to get the facts, he was dismayed to learn they were not even aware of the stamp’s existence. With each additional governor’s edition stamp that appeared Van became more and more cynical and withdrawn. Despite this fact he kept up his correspondence and continued to share his knowledge with anyone who sought him out.

From 1987 to 1994 I tried to spend one day every month visiting with Van in his home. I listened to his stories about stamps and collectors and yes, duck hunting, for hours on end. For many years it felt like I was attending a class. Van was the professor and I was the student. I learned a great deal about fish and game stamps. As he had done for so many others, he succeeded in greatly elevating my level of interest and appreciation for this wonderful hobby.
Late in 1990 Jane passed away. Starting in 1991, Van sold or traded me and another collector friend most of the great rarities in his collection (see Figures 19a, b and c). These stamps helped to form the basis for my first exhibit, Classic State and Local Fish and Game Stamps. The fact that the exhibit received so much attention and praise provided Van with a final sense of philatelic accomplishment—and deservedly so.

**FIGURE 19A.** 1967 VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE HUNTING STAMP – THE FIRST U.S. MILITARY ADHESIVE.

**FIGURE 19B.** 1968-69 MONTANA NR BIRD PAIR WITH IMAGE MISSING FROM THE BOTTOM STAMP. ALTHOUGH THE ERROR STAMP HAS SOME DAMAGE ALONG THE LEFT – IT IS STILL PRETTY AMAZING.
FIGURE 19C. 1959 ROSEBUD GAME BIRD, THE FIRST STAMP ISSUED BY A TRIBAL GOVERNMENT IN THE U.S.

Van also assisted the author with several articles (notably the two part series on Honey Lake and Illinois Daily Usage stamps which appeared in The American Revenuer in March and April of 1994) providing valuable insights which could not be obtained elsewhere.

Following Van’s passing, his heirs consigned the remainder of his collection to Sam Houston Philatelics for public auction. The sale of Van’s stamps took place in two auctions roughly a year apart, on September 21, 1996 and on September 6, 1997. There were still plenty of good stamps and one great one in the auctions. When Van sold me his stamps, he allowed me to choose what I needed and then sold me everything over the course of a couple of years – except one stamp.

The 1964 Crow Creek big game stamp has everything going for it. It is historically important as one of the earliest stamps issued by a tribal government; it is attractive, being printed in black ink with a red serial number on yellow paper (see Figure 20) and to complete the trifecta – it is unique. I admired the stamp greatly and really wanted it for my exhibit.

However, Van had already sold me his two favorite stamps, the 1938 Pymatuning and the unused 1973 Colorado Goose. The Crow Creek big game stamp was his next favorite and he simply wanted to keep it. Van wanted to keep something that he cherished to enjoy toward the end of his life. I understood completely and so the stamp went to auction and ended up fetching well into five figures and setting a record for a non federal fish and game stamp at public auction.

FIGURE 20. THE 1964 CROW CREEK BIG GAME STAMP SET A RECORD AT PUBLIC AUCTION.
The auction was a wonderful opportunity to acquire a number of very scarce to rare stamps that did not require spending large sums of money. The offerings of big game and trout stamps were especially strong and I felt that the bidding did not always take into account the true difficulty of acquisition factor (see Figures 21a, b and c). Many stamps sold very reasonably and the auctions did a lot to stimulate the market for fish and game stamps.

FIGURE 21A. SURCHARGED 1957 INDIANA TROUT, TOP PLATE # SINGLE.

FIGURE 21B. 1965-66 MARYLAND BIG GAME STAMP FOR ARCHERS, A PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT STAMP AND A BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLE.

FIGURE 21C. ICONIC 1965 MICHIGAN CISCO NETTING STAMP, THE KEY TO THE SET.
In the years since Van has passed, my exhibit (featuring many stamps from his collection) was put on display at the Atlanta and Sidney Olympics, in the Smithsonian’s National Postal Museum in 1998 and won a grand award at a National show and was entered into the Champion of Champions in 2000. That same year it was featured in the Court of Honor at World Stamp Expo in Los Angeles, right next to Queen Elizabeth’s.

In recent years I have enjoyed helping other collectors to acquire some of Van’s best stamps for their own collections and exhibits (along with those from the Janousek and Powell collections that Van had previously sold or traded). It is hoped that through articles, exhibits and now the internet that Van’s legacy shall live on to inspire future collectors and exhibitors.

Elmore Vanderford was always there for fish and game stamps. It is an understatement to say that without him our hobby would be nothing like it is today.