



Did You Know?



January 1993

The foreign postal rates also go up on the 1st February without a reduction for CEPT countries, SFr.1 for Europe and Mediterranean, SFr.1.80 for the rest for 'A' post; B post is 80c and 90c. The inland registration is now SFr.4, A post included. The additional fee for foreign registration remains at SFr.2.50 so is less than the internal rate for most cases.

On the 1st June 1983 the Austrians issued their first FRAMA ATMs with a prominent line of black bars along the left-hand edge, 'perf' 14 exactly. Certainly a forerunner of the new Swiss system, but they used it for facing letters instead of phosphor; here it is used for sorting the A and B post (see Fig.1).



Fig.1

The new 60c postcard will be sold only loose over the counter, as the vending machines cannot be modified, and therefore no booklets need be made up. There are two lines of vertical dots, that on the right has 'perf' 16, i.e., that of the 60c 'B' stamp, while that on the left has 13.5, about that of the PTT printed stamps (see Fig.2). The 'A' stamp has 18.



Figure.2

About 20 million postcards are issued by the PTT each year, but 19.5 million get used for the various competitions arranged by advertising agencies.

In Genoa at the GENOVA 92 exhibition a meeting of the FIP, ASCAT, IFSDA and the UPU decided that phone-cards have nothing to do with philately. Therefore I cannot tell you that the PTT Museum has . . .

In 1945, just before the end of WWII, leading Swiss philatelists founded the 'Consilium Philateliae Helveticae' with membership by invitation only. This club has now been revitalised to promote philatelic literature and research, but the membership is still limited to 40 distinguished philatelists. The committee is formed of Vollmeier, Grand, Guggisberg, Guinand, Dahinden, Hertsch and Sieber.

In 1991 only the Austrians noted the death of Rudolf I of Habsburg on 15th July 1291 with a special cancel and yet this triggered off the Swiss Confederation in August of that year.

The Philatelic Society of Neuchâtel has issued a very useful 36-page A5 booklet "Tell père, Tell fils" in French and German, written by Dr Bernard Morand on his researches in this field. (Copy in HPS library.)

The K cancel 1630 Bulle (K 1306) was so liked by the town authorities that they got PTT permission to use the design to create a completely new type of cancel for their red franking machine. Due to the smaller diameter and central date, the layout is not as good as with the K canceller, but it might be the start of a new line to collect (see Figs. 3 and 4).



Fig.3




Fig.4




Did You Know?




February 1993


-  At the end of 1942 no less than 165 stamps of various sorts (according to a NZZ correspondent) were invalidated, the whole Tell family in fact.


-  The latest issue of ZACK, the magazine for the youth sections, mentions that in 1995 at the 'Basler Taube 95' exhibition the Foreign Rates booklet will be issued, following the tremendous success of the Inland Rates booklet. The same issue, 4/92, is devoted to a study of the Tell issues in a very interesting way.
An annual subscription costs SFr.14 for four issues, in German, French and Italian.

-  26 postal administrations have formed a new group 'PostEurop' seated in Brussels (does this replace CEPT?). Perhaps they can lower the number of stamps being issued!


-  The left hand line of dots on the 60c 'stamp' of the new postcard, with a 'perf' of 13.5, is in fact a simulated row of teeth, because the PTT have told me that the electronic eye reads not only the coding dots on the new 60 and 80c stamps, but also the perforations on the left. This is to make sure that it is reading a stamp and not some irrelevant marks. Therefore the postcard stamp must have 'teeth'.

-  With the 33% increase in the cost of a registered letter from SFr.3 to 4 on 1.2.93, the maximum compensation goes up from SFr.300 to 450, an increase of 50%

-  The old SLM locomotives found in the jungles of Vietnam were brought back to Switzerland last year for the new Furka steam railway. They will be rebuilt by a loco yard of the old DDR Reichsbahn, but only two of the four can be saved.

-  My local letter box used to have a last evening collection of 8.30pm. Now it is 8.00pm., but a sticker informs me that this guarantees delivery the next working day anywhere in Switzerland, and it seems to work too.

-  In the latest SBZ there is an interesting article on the UPU stamp issue of 1900. Pierre Guinand asks me to ask members for any new discoveries they might have made as he is revising the Gees booklet on this issue.

-  I have been asked what 'CFC' actually stands for; it is Culler-Facer-Canceller. **C**ulling removes the items the machine cannot handle as they are too thick or too big. **F**acing turns and twists the letters so that they all face the same way for **C**ancelling and for reading in the coding machines, and are so bundled for delivery after sorting. As the new machines in the Zürich Sihlpost can now also **D**ivide 'A' from 'B' mail I will suggest to the PTT that they call these machines 'CFCD'. CFC is a British term but is used in many countries including the PTT.



Did You Know?



March 1993

- ☞ Seldom has a new issue been so heavily criticised as the three stamps for the 16th March commemorating 150 years of Swiss (and Continental) stamps. Graphically 'correct', but meaningless. A great opportunity missed, but a nice first-day cancel. See also the cancellation used by the German 'Helvetia' Study Circle



- ☞ The two definitives issued on the same day are, as the rest of the series, just not typically Swiss. The horses will grace foreign mail to Europe, and the howling dog will announce the arrival of letters in medium size covers (B5 to B4) internal B mail.

The third set, issued on the same day, is more Swiss in character and typically average, and therefore acceptable to collectors here.

- ☞ The 60c Paracelsus is historically interesting, however the PTT got the place of birth wrong. He was born illegitimately in Egg, about 6 km from Einsiedeln.



K 1226

This is mentioned in Dr Schlunegger's "*Die Motive der Schweiz Werbedatumstempel*" Volume 4, as the K cancel for Egg (Ecke = corner) shows Paracelsus. See the illustration of K 1226.

- ☞ Rumours, more rife than ripe, hint at a combination in some way of the PTT printing works in Bern and the Courvoisier works in La Chaux-de-Fonds, caused by falling orders and profits. This would end 60 years of 'partnership' for Swiss stamps.
- ☞ To help towards the millions needed to balance the books the PTT will no longer give numbers to the new K cancels nor to the publicity slogans in the PTA (official gazette). Apparently such work is being given to the 11 district HPOs.

To maintain some sort of order the SVP will carry on with the present numbering for their catalogues, but some discrepancies can be expected, with repaired or re-issued cancels.

- ☞ It seems that the PTT are also saving money by using hardly any ink in their cancelling machines. New issue secretaries are going crazy. Why collect cancellations if you can't read the date? But the PTT will not guarantee the quality of machine cancellations.
- ☞ Even though the number of letters handled per day is dropping steadily, the PTT has announced a new plan for the mechanised handling of practically all mail. In addition to Zürich, two further centres are planned for Bern and Lausanne, by expanding the present installations. We will see, as they are now well on the way to coding nearly all letters down to the number of the postman's round.

- ☞ The special 60c stamp for the WIBRA exhibition - Winterthur from 5th to 9th May - shows the 'Hohentweil', the fastest motor ship on the Lake of Constance. A good-looking stamp.



For this exhibition there will be the usual catalogue of the 400 exhibitors and their 2230 frames, and a book covering all imaginable cancellations used in Winterthur for nearly 200 years.



Did You Know?



April 1993

- ☞ Because of my sudden decision to visit Stampex it was not possible for me to show a prototype 'de Coppet' flexible handstamp to more than a handful of members, by courtesy of Heinz Katcher at his stand. Perhaps I can bring it again next year.
- ☞ The editor of the SBZ has asked all philatelists who are not satisfied with the three new stamps for 150 years of Swiss Stamps to let the PTT know this so that in 1995 the same debacle does not happen with the Basel Dove. Strong words from a conservative corner.
- ☞ Because of the traditional friendly rivalry between the towns of Basel and Zürich, this time it should be a 3rd year student of the Zürich School of Graphic Arts who designs the Basel stamp!
- ☞ For the WIBRA the more traditional stamp is being issued, for the first time, by three countries simultaneously. See the respective first-day cancels shown here, and note that



the German one will be dutifully applied in Berlin. Bregenz is at least on the Bodensee, as it used to be called in the Räto-Romansch language.



- ☞ The Philatelic Bureau in Zürich could not cancel FDCs with the special cancel '8000 Zürich' for the special 150 years stamps and so raised a few traditionalist eyebrows, but it is a lovely first-day cancel, even if applied only in Bern.
- ☞ No less than 22 stamps will be issued at the WIBRA, 16 by the three countries concerned, and six by the UN on the 7th May. What a lovely time we could have if all the stamps could be cancelled with any of the first-day cancels available!
- ☞ The four Pro Patria stamps to be issued on the 5th May bring us back to classical Swiss philately, with the second series of Swiss Folk Art begun last year. (See article in the April Newsletter)
- ☞ The pair of 'Europa' stamps on contemporary architecture are remarkable for being designed by a prominent Swiss architect, and that the 60c value shows a building in France.
- ☞ It will be interesting to see how many of the new PTT souvenirs, at SFr.13 will be bought, as they contain not only a set of mint blocks of four of each of the three 150 years stamps, but also a non-postal vignette showing the three stamp designs without the value and 'Helvetia' areas, in a booklet having four issues, i.e., in each of the four usual languages (without Romansch!).
- ☞ In the March edition of BBZ, Hans Hunziker writes about the only known 3.75c postage stamp, a 5c Strubel with one quarter cut out. The new tariff of 1.7.1862 allowed a reduction for 20 or more letters given in at the same time, but it was left to the individual Postal Region, or even the postmaster to fix the discount!
- ☞ From the 17th March until 26th September the PTT Museum is showing an important exhibition on many aspects of '150 Years Swiss Stamps', not only the best examples of the Zürich and Geneva stamps, but also little-known experiments with alternatives to stamps. Well worth a visit.



Did You Know?



📖 May 1993

☞ In March the PTT produced a so-called 'button set' for the new postal rates of 1st February, namely the ATM stamps for 60, 80 & 100c, but today all 1200 Frama vending machines have the ten-button system where everything is possible, if you know how. However, no FDCs were available, perhaps too late.

☞ At the WIBRA one can have a three-country joint issue cover on the Swiss envelope; certainly a first for Switzerland (perhaps for the world?). Another triple is being planned apparently for next year with France and Belgium.



☞ More importantly at the WIBRA a comprehensive handbook "*The Postmarks of Winterthur*" is on sale for SFr.25, in German, 130 pages. Not only the ordinary datestamps, but also machine cancels, registration labels, franks and many more, are covered in full.

☞ In the April edition of BBZ Max Hertsch appealed to anyone having any of the 1919 'Kriegswirtschaft' overprints in a circle to let him know, as a new, un-sharp lettered version has been found which might turn out to be a dangerous fake.

☞ Under mysterious circumstances quite a large number of unaddressed K-cancelled covers of the late forties and the fifties have appeared with a date invariably earlier than the official PTT first day. Some show slight differences in the design to the issued cancels, so it is thought that these must be trials sent by the engraver to the PTT for final approval, or copies kept by the maker for reference purposes.

☞ Thanks to Bernard Hoddinott we know that two TPOs will be withdrawn on the 22nd May (summer timetable), Solothurn-Bern and Yverdon-Ste-Croix. The latter line was opened on the 17/18th November 1893 and so many letters were handed in that on the 10th December a request was made for a TPO datestamp. Who has examples of all three types listed in the Zumstein-Müller?

☞ At the end of April three POs on the Rigi: Kulm, Klösterli and Staffel, will close. The post will be cancelled in Goldau with a new K-cancel '6410 Rigi' which will also have a new slogan, having the same picture and text. So ends an era.

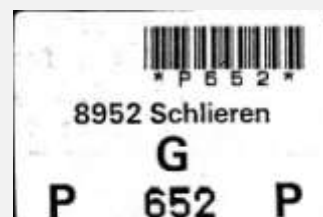
Königin der Berge 1800 m ü.M.



☞ Grenada, that land of snow and ice, has issued a \$3 stamp showing a Bernhardiner dog complete with brandy cask, but with the title 'Parsenn Switzerland'. Did the artist get mixed up with a 'Royal' skiing from Klosters? Anyway, it goes straight into my 'Lost Dogs' collection.

☞ When I saw the self-adhesive registered parcel label shown right, I thought that the PTT were about to catch up with a modern barcode numbering system, i.e., machine readable, but I was soon put right with the information that this was a private barcode, in black.

The 'PP' in green indicates bulk payment, for a minimum of 20 parcels at the same time. The 'G' denotes 'Grossist' with more than 10 000 parcels per year and a good discount.





Did You Know?



June 1993

- ☞ The five-day WIBRA has been a great success. The well-lit main hall was always busy, in particular the dealers' stands on the circumference, but more than the usual number of



philatelic programs by IBM/Lindner were being demonstrated.

exhibits actually being looked at. In the Junior hall, the 20 or so computers were in constant use, a simple philatelic game could win an FDC per point, but also the current



TRILATERALE 93
3. Gemeinschaftsausstellung
Österreich, Deutschland, Schweiz

- ☞ A de Coppet flexible handstamp was on show with other cancellers made by Güller & Sons. The handstamp was not engraved; a real Razor Blade canceller would have been a sensation.

- ☞ A small sensation was provided by the PTT in that the 'R' of the special WIBRA registration label was black instead of the usual red. Then the black 'R' has been found on Last Day Covers from Sfazu (near Poschiavo), so we phoned the printer, Schmelzi AG of Grenchen, and discovered that this was a 1992 PTT decision, which results in no saving at all as the printing is continuous. Curious, see illustration left.



- ☞ Also at the WIBRA, Zumstein put on sale their book written by Hans F Hunziker RDP on the 'Winterthur' stamp of 1850, in German, very well illustrated, 48 pages, many in colour, SFr.48.

- ☞ Josef Schalch has brought out a second edition of his comprehensive ATM and SFS catalogue for Switzerland. The best there is on this subject, in German, SFr.13.

- ☞ The 12 new SFS machines put in service this year have reverted to the 4-digit value, which is reasonable, as even today not many letters need more than Fr.100 postage. Many post offices still object to handing these labels over loose, but if one persists and asks for a non-philatelic rate like 5c it works in the end. If you have already an example to hand it works wonders.

- ☞ The Federal Council has had to answer a written parliamentary question on the poor quality of the Frama ATMs, i.e., why the PTT does not have something more attractive. The answer was that the machines cannot do anything better. The trigger to the question, I think, is that several countries like Sweden have removed the Frama dispensers and replaced them with the German Klüssendorf machines.

- ☞ Bob Johnson has found a new first day of use for a de Coppet canceller, namely Bellinzona No.3.02; 1st July 1902 instead of the 2nd as noted in the Guinand Razor Blade list. Bravo.

- ☞ The first Swiss Champion was decided at the Exhibition in Buchs, which I missed, among 17 teams of 5 exhibitors each, in that the local team won, each with an entirely different subject. The next such event will be held in Bellinzona in 1994.



Did You Know?



July 1993

- ☞ The PTT, as part of the 150 years Swiss stamps celebrations, has run a complex philatelic competition for classic stamps valued at SFr.45 000. After visiting dozens of POs during 4 weeks it became clear that the same two stamps were missing from everyone's collection.

Now the PTT have had to admit, on TV, that only 2% of the 1 million sets of sheets distributed had the two missing 'stamps', so that 98% of the contestants still cannot even qualify for the main draw. Taking the easy way out the PTT blame the English firm which devised the scheme.

- ☞ Not only in Russia can one be rehabilitated today, but also in Basel, where the City Council has just rescinded the arrest order issued for their official doctor, Paracelsus, in 1528. That would have made a nice special cancellation to go with the current 60c stamp issued 500 years after his birth.
- ☞ The two new Europa stamps are not very exciting. The PTT said in their sales literature that Mario Botta, the well-known Swiss architect, had designed the stamps. As the NZZ said he had designed the buildings shown, and no word about the stamps, I asked the PTT who was right. The official answer: "that it is obvious that he designed both the buildings and stamps".

I don't think it is clear at all, why tell half the story in their otherwise excellent brochure. The 60c stamp shows a house in Villeurbanne, France. This turns out to be a district of Lyon!

- ☞ There is a very interesting exhibition in the PTT Museum on Postal Coaches. I think all possible types are on show, and an interesting book to go with it. The entrance costs SFr.2 or SFr.1 for OAPs (or in military uniform).
- ☞ I visited the exhibition in the PTT Museum on the rejected designs for the controversial '150 Years Swiss Stamps'. Of those submitted by the class mates of the winner I found none better, but among those submitted by other artists there were two trios I found to have been more classic in their approach, and therefore more acceptable to collectors. But that is only my opinion, in a minefield of conflicting views and opinions.
- ☞ The PTT is cutting back on the TPOs. There were 500 staff in 1982; now this year the number is to be cut from 400 to 360. More sorting can now be done automatically in the MLOs in the main centres, instead of on the route.

- ☞ In the March issue of the Newsletter I showed the projected cancel to be used in Germany on 1.3.93 to commemorate 150 Years Swiss Stamps, but the cancel actually used is shown here, an improvement.



- ☞ A bit late I have found an interesting cancel and stamp of 1991 from Uruguay. The white cross is a bit small but can be forgiven.





Did You Know?



August 1993

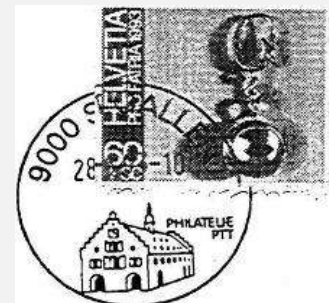
- As I write this in mid-July it is 4°C colder than it was in January: If this goes on we will have the Pro Patria stamps for Christmas, and the Pro Juventute for the 1st of August!
- The published sales of the above stamps showed a reduction, but because of the greater surcharge the net profit is still larger than before. The total stamps printed are 714m, dropped from 757m; PTT 497m and Courvoisier 217m. Nevertheless the WIFAG SSR3 printing machine has been taken out of service by the PTT leaving them with only the newest, the electronically-controlled Goebel. The co-operation with Courvoisier proceeds apace, but their last machine will not be moved from Bern.
- The number of philatelic subscribers for new issues has dropped from 194,647 to 192,129, with more than a third outside Switzerland.
- According to Markus Seitz of Luzern, the ATM specialist, the PTT will introduce a new 'picture' and/or paper this year for the Swiss Frama machines, and there might be a special 'stamp' in 1995 on the occasion of the Exhibition in Basel for 150 years Basel Dove.
- There are now 1200 Frama machines in service in Switzerland, all with the 10-button selector; i.e., the remaining old 4-button type have all been retro-fitted, as they say. Now another 800 have been ordered by the PTT. The old handle type, for 10c and 50c stamps, are being steadily withdrawn as they are not sufficiently 'vandal proof'. However, not everyone can operate these 10-button machines easily, and they can be jammed with foreign coins, not usually by accident.
- The term 'Phantom PO' has been given, by the SVP, to those places which have a pictorial K-cancel but no PO as such. The new Rigi cancels triggered this off, but before this there was the PTT Museum, the Luzern Transport Museum and others.



Now we have one for the Olympic Museum in Lausanne, K 1373, used uniquely in an MPO on the first day.



- Another 'first off' is the cachet 'St. Galler Kinderfest 1993' used with the St. Gallen Philatelic Bureau date stamp (K 1135). This procession is always subject to the weather, and in previous years had often caused confusion because the allocated MPO was not available due to a postponement, so this year's solution is a neat way out.



- Another first is the use of orange for a PTT label, and is rather special. It is to be used by the sender of a parcel if he knows that the recipient will fetch it from his PO Box at the weekend. Parcels are not usually distributed at the weekends, not even to box holders, hence the label for this new service, at no extra cost.



Did You Know?



September 1993

- ☞ I have won one of the 2000 supplementary prizes, a good rucksack, in the great PTT Stamp Album Competition (see July DYK) by sending in ten entries, without the infamous pair. The PTT added these prizes at the last minute, when the unfairness of their main draw was made clear to them. I also got nine useful FDCs for the tries.
- ☞ For SFr.29.80 you can obtain from the SBB/CFF a 3½" computer disk with their whole train and ship timetable, but excluding, so far, postal coaches and mountain cable cars. It gives instant connections, on your PC, between any two stations, including costs, time taken for up to five changes.
- ☞ Recently I had the chance to examine nearly 2000 stamped covers used in April and May. Almost a third of the stamps were damaged or poorly cancelled. Of the 115 (60c or 80c) 150 Years of Swiss Stamps found, 69 were stuck on horizontally. Of the few stamps stuck on upside down, practically all were the 10c cow. Only one cover did not have the postcode in the address. Less than 10% were 'A' mail.
- ☞ As the 'A' mail has not reached the expected 20%, i.e., only 17% generally, another rise in postal rates is to come, unless the position improves soon.
- ☞ On the 30th July another stretch of the rejuvenated Furka-Oberalp line, from Realp to the old tunnel, was re-opened with the 'virgin' SLM 1913, ex-Vietnam, steam loco 'Furkahorn'. In 1996 the whole of the old route from Realp to Gletsch to Oberwald should be in weekend service with five steam locos.
- ☞ Volume 6 of Gene Kelly's "*Fiscal Stamps of Switzerland*" is in preparation, so any examples from the Canton of Aargau should be sent direct to him.
- ☞ A comprehensive, well-illustrated booklet, 94 A5 pages in German, has been published by the Stamp Collectors Club of Liestal on the Post and Aviation History of the Basel Region, and of Liestal in particular, home of Oscar Bider and others.
- ☞ The PTT have a number of very fine posters left over from the 1991 issue of the four Pioneer Aviators. Write for a free copy while they last (Philatelie, CH-3030 Bern).

They also have a booklet in English issued at that time showing methods of stamp production and printing using illustrations from the above issue.

- ☞ Weggis was (is?) one of the most popular resorts for British holidaymakers and thousands of picture postcards were sent home. The SVP are studying the machine cancels used from 1965 to 1974, the small 22 mm diameter 'Weggis' die, have HPS members any? The illustration shows one of the slogans used.



- ☞ The famous Unspunnen stone (Z.655) was stolen on 3rd June 1984 by Jura 'Freedom Fighters', but a copy has now been made for the September 1993 games and festivities near Interlaken. The record throw of this 83.5 kg stone is only 3.93 m, excluding it from Olympic status. See the illustrations of the current slogan cancel on the back of the Newsletter last month and the special cancel (shown here) which has been produced for the 1993 Festival and in use on the 4th & 5th September.





Did You Know?



October 1993

-  Due to negligence (?) the famous 14th century wooden bridge in Luzern was partly burnt down in the early hours of the 18th August. The watch tower was undamaged, but 63 of the triangular paintings were lost. On the 26th August the PTT began offset printing of 10 million red versions of the old 1960 blue recess-printed stamp showing the tower, but for 80 + 20c for the rebuilding of the bridge by 1994. The last extensive refurbishing was in 1968/9.
-  For the 1987 floods 50 + 50c stamp, 20 million were printed, but only 8.278 million were sold. So the 25 000 red stamps sold on the day of issue, 7.9.93, in Luzern is a good omen for record sales until the 30th November when they will be withdrawn, also from Philatelic offices.
-  The classic book by Mirabaud and Reuterskiöld "*Swiss Stamps 1843-1862*" has been reprinted as a facsimile of the 1898 Paris edition, but the illustrations are in colour. In German, 295 pages, SFr.300. For the specialist.
-  The 1994 Müller catalogue has appeared with several new features. All main varieties are shown enlarged in colour, as are all illustrations, for Switzerland, UN Geneva and Liechtenstein. First-Day cancels also shown.
-  On the 2nd November 1993 new ATM paper will be introduced with a security printing in green, showing the outline of Switzerland, according to Markus Seitz. The new labels will only be available on this day in the eleven Postal Region HP0s. He reports that 2050 machines are in use today, and a further 750 will follow. His new 1994 catalogue is now out, in German, for SFr.24.
-  Phillips, the London auction house, will be handling the extensive all-world TPO collection of our deceased member, Roy Christian.
-  The 'Schweizer Briefmarken-Bourse' has appeared in a new format. It costs SFr.47 inland and SFr.55 foreign per annum, but as usual advertisements are free.
-  When Napoleon took over Switzerland in 1798 he created the Bernese Oberland as a separate Canton, but when in 1803 he gave most powers back to the Federation of Swiss Cantons, Bern retook their southern part. This did not please the Oberlanders, so the Unspunnen Games were created. So successful were they that they were repeated in 1805, but then not again until 1905.
-  The Swiss engraver and canceller supplier Güller in Hüttikon (ZH) made 1566 cancellers for the British Army, from about December 1887 until July 1915. See the illustration right.

I would be glad to have more information on these cancellers which must have had an interesting life, and, in addition, were the first digit-reel cancellers in the UK.







Did You Know?



November 1993


-  The excellent set 'Works of Art by Swiss Women' (see August issue of the Newsletter) is remarkable not only because three of the four are the first square stamps issued by Switzerland, but also because the PTT tried to get away from the older conventional 'head and shoulders' used before, say for the 1951 Johanna Spyri, and to correct the imbalance towards women on Swiss stamps and to show what they did.

The designer, Bernadette Baltis, helped select the works most suitable for stamp reproduction, successfully too. The PTT mentioned at the launching ceremony that the reproduction fees demanded also affected the decisions!



-  Mrs Baltis also designed the 1992 & 1993 Pro Juventute sets in a most satisfactory way; and the 50c 'Farmer' issue of 1990, but has now decided to drop stamp design. She received about SFr.18 000 per set of four stamps. Too low say other artists.

At this ceremony, partly in the Emma Kunz Centre in Würenlos, the PTT Director announced a change in stamp issuing policy. Instead of a rash of new values at each postal rate change they intend to have only all 10c steps to 90c, then all franc values 1 to an un-stated top value, perhaps 6, so that with only two stamps any rate can be had, at all times.

This will aid production and stock-holding, and is no doubt affected by the large number of SFS in service at parcel and letter counters, nearly 1200.

-  During a trip round the largest Swiss PO, Zürich Sihlpost, we were told, and partially shown, that one of the Japanese CFC machines is fitted with the original Austrian Schrack barcode reader for A & B segregation, while the other is now fitted with a Swiss system of identifying each stamp by optically/electronically determining its average grey tone, and so reading the total value of up to four stamps per cover.

If these tests are successful it means that no more stamps will be issued with barcodes, and that, perhaps, a world-beater system will obviate the necessity of having luminescent materials in stamps for facing as well as for segregation of A, B, foreign and other mail. However, the percentage of letters with stamps is low, below 20% and falling, therefore there is less justification for expensive machines. Let's see.

-  Charles LaBlonde, our member in Boston USA, should get a medal from the PTT. On his latest trip round the outlying POs of Canton Geneva his request for cancels for collection purposes on white cards initiated thorough cleaning of the counter cancellers, often by the boss himself. I could hardly believe my eyes!
-  A post office in Zürich has had, on its own initiative, a jigsaw puzzle made of the Züri-NABA block, 110 pieces; SFr.11 from Philatelic Bureaux.



Did You Know?



December 1993

- ☞ Within minutes of the 4:0 win over Latvia, A Ogi, the Federal President, announced at the ground in front of the TV cameras that next year a special stamp would be issued. He held up a large draft of a fairly attractive 80c special stamp to spur on the Swiss team in the USA. The fact that he is also head of the Post and Railways Dept. helped.
- ☞ From the beginning of November, 211 post offices in the St. Gallen region will sell, on an experimental basis, newspapers and magazines, a start toward privatisation? I guess a hot summer means ice cream as well!
- ☞ Against the fashion, the PTT has stated that it does not intend to sell self-adhesive stamps as this would increase the amount of paper lying around; the backing paper has to be disposed of somehow.
- ☞ At the Presidents Conference of the VSPHv the present main three officers gave notice for 1994. It will be difficult to find a new Chief President as dynamic as the present holder, Peter Christen.
- ☞ The Germans are the best foreign subscribers to the Philatelic Bureau in Bern, no less than 36 000, followed by the French with only 7000, then Italians, Dutch and Austrians. At least the number of Japanese has jumped from 130 to 132.
- ☞ The three books chosen for this year's prizes by the Fund for Furthering Philately are: the 3-volume study of the Postal History of Obwalden by Georg Landau; Dr R Hug for his satirical "Hobby oder was"; and the Swiss Aerophilatelic Society for their Handbook, editor Roland Kohl. Well done.
- ☞ The present PTT Museum exhibition for Hans Hartmann of Bern is in two parts. The first, arranged by his daughter, covers the whole breadth of 50-odd years of outstanding graphic art work in all fields. The second part, on the lower floor, covers his philatelic work. Not only did he do almost 60 first class stamps starting with the 10c 'Gardens in Luzern' (Z.316) in 1954, all the architectural series of 1960 and 1974, to the final USA/Switzerland dual issue of 1991, and many special cancellations and FDCs too. The best after Bickel. Well worth a visit.
- ☞ Since the latest TPO list was published in the August edition of the Newsletter, I have been writing to the various railways concerned for cancels, with the result that two can be removed as of 23rd May 1993. 'Spiez-Zweisimmen-Spiez' as the TPO now comes from Bern direct and uses a standard SBB 'Bahnpost-Ambulant', and 'Thun-Burgdorf-Thun'.



I noticed that the latter is not even mentioned in the Zumstein-Müller booklet, and this has led the SVP to consider introducing a new type '86 V', i.e., as '86 O' but with arabic months. Any comments? Help would also be needed to fix realistic periods of use for '86 O' and 'V'.