TRANSCRIPT
An Interview with Jeanette C. Rudy

Video clip: “I Collect Duck Stamps!”

00:00: I joined the Philatelic Society. And then they said, “Well what are you collecting?” Of course I wasn’t collecting anything. I just went in as a new member. And I boldly said, “I collect Duck Stamps.” Cause I had four or five, and I took those with me.

00:34: [Interviewer:] Now when you were a child, did you collect?

00:36: [Rudy:] Oh I did like all children; I sent off for these packages you know, and got back a package of maybe two-dollars, and from a catalogue advertisement.

00:51: And then they’d send in a package of a bunch of stamps, you know? Then I bought a catalogue, you know, or a folder and I began to lick them and put them on. Then I learned that you don’t lick stamps.

01:03: I went to the stamp society. I learned about stamp collecting then.

01:08: Because the others in the society… stamp society… stamp club, had their little books, you know? And they said, “We’ll when did Ducks first begin?” And I didn’t know, so I began to read. And from the library, our library over there, had some books on stamp collecting, but they didn’t have anything on Ducks.

01:39: And then I began to, I wrote to Washington. There was a little flyer that I wrote to the Duck Stamp headquarters and asked them to send me material on Duck Stamps.

01:53: And from then on I began to seriously put my stamps, not lick anything on. And when I bought my Duck Stamps I did not sign across them across the face. And I always prayed that the warden wouldn’t come by. But I had my pen real handy so I could sign it right quick. Now my husband signed his, but I didn’t sign mine.

02:17: And then I begin to find out about, uh, plate blocks. And then I begin to find out about all the other, the perforations. And then, learning from other people what to look for in errors; I didn’t know what an error was. But I had to learn what an error was in ‘other’ stamps that made me look for errors in any Duck Stamps.

02:46: But then I began to contact other people who collected Duck Stamps. I thought I was the only one that collected Duck Stamps. But there were lots of other people that collected Duck Stamps. And then we began to talk, and then I began to exhibit what few I had. And believe it or not, I even won an award; of course it was a club award. But I thought that was the greatest thing there ever was.

[Interviewer:] What was that award for?”
[Rudy:] Uh, it was for... the new, new member.

03:19: It was a novice award, for the novice exhibit. So that stimulated me, I could do better by getting more. So I really got into it. I guess it was close to, somewhere between fifty-five and sixty that my whole heart and body was into Duck Stamps. And I just put my other little plastics and things I had done to one side. But I did a lot of letter writing, did a lot of telephone calls and I went to a lot of shows. And the first thing I'd look for was Duck Stamps exhibits. They were not of genuine interest. But you've got have to have a little money too, to go along with it.

04:06: That's a terrible thing to say because so many, many people want to be collectors, and they'd like to have the good things too. Uh, but they're, you know, some people don't have the financial ability to buy them. They have to use it for the more essential things. Uh, and that's a handicap, of course. To get the rarities, uh, is the finances part. And I, I hate that.

04:44: I remember one time I exhibited, um, and a, I won't call the name of the stamp club. And I had a couple, I overheard a couple conversations about, "Well we might as well take our exhibit down; it won't look like anything next to that Mrs. Rudy's." And uh, I heard those derogatory remarks about mine was better than theirs, you know, that they could never win if I was ever going to win anything.

05:14: And do you know that from that day on I never exhibited again? I thought, "Well am I really taking away from the average person, which I thought I was an average person. And I think I am. I want to be... uh, but I can't help it, you know if things came my way. I [only] exhibit in the big, fine shows like in Washington, the Court of Honor and things like that where it is expected, I'll exhibit in that, but I don't go to small clubs and exhibit anymore because I don't want to do that to them.

06:06: Why should I negate anyone else's thrill and enthusiasm in it just because I want to be a hot shot, which is not what I want? And by doing that I think that I am maybe encouraging them to go ahead and exhibit. Whatever you may have, exhibit it. Because it's always, you know, excitable to someone, and we can't do that to other people.

End time: 06:29

Video clip: “What’s a Duck Stamp?”

00:00: [Interviewer:] Do you remember when you first began collecting?
00:04: [Rudy:] Yes I do, as if it were yesterday. I married in February of 1949 and that fall, Dan said, "How about going and getting me my duck stamp?" And I, being a nurse, a registered nurse, I had no conception (Laughs) of what a duck stamp was. And I said, "What did you say?" He said, "I need a duck stamp," I said, "Well what is that?" And he said. "Well I'm going duck hunting." I said, "Okay, I've never done that, I want to go too." He said, "You go to the post office and get me a Duck Stamp."
And that was my very first meeting of a Duck Stamp. It was the Golden Eye. And I thought it was beautiful, nice, green stamp. And I said, “Well if you’re going I want to go too.” And he said, “You don’t know how to hunt.” And I said, “But I can learn.”

[Interviewer:] What about Duck Stamps appealed to you so much?”

[Rudy:] At the beginning it was the beauty of them, the artwork was magnificent, I thought, I said, “Oh!”

Then after I began to get to be a better shot I wanted to go ducking hunting for thrill of the duck hunting. And the, I began to learn about where the ducks came from, and when, and how they knew that they were coming down at this time of year. I learned all about ducking hunting.

And then came in the conservation part of it. How they came from Canada.

And so, since then, uh, I have been privileged to have Ducks Unlimited take me to Canada and see all the potholes in the, while they were nesting and see the ducks in their nest, and been able to pick up the eggs and to, to put them to the light. Have you ever done that? To see the egg and to timetable them through the little channel, tube.

And it was, uh, then, uh, conservation came into it. I began to read the statistics about, uh, how much of the Duck Stamp went to conservation. I didn’t do that at first. It was because they were pretty. Then they became more meaningful the longer I was into it. I was into it August, for five years before I really caught on what it was really all about.

End time: 02:38

Video clip: “That was the greatest moment of my whole life”

The most, I guess thrilling, what really got me going was having bought the number one stamp.

And, uh, um, the man brought it down here to my home and I said “I won’t buy it unless I see it.” And he had a six figure number on him, price. I said bring it down.

He brought it down. I didn’t know him. He didn’t know me. And I have a real close policemen friend. And I asked him, “I said I don’t know this man. He’s coming into my home.” I said, “I want you to be present, armed of course, but in civilian clothing.” I said, “I just want you to watch the deal.” And I had the newspaper people here. And I said if it’s gonna be, I’m going to… if I’m gonna be rooked, I’m going to be rooked royally.

And it all turned out to be, it was absolutely perfect. It was the stamp. He had the documentation. I was thrilled to death. And of course the newspaper people were... and of course I didn’t need my policemen. But, uh, Bob you know was quite, at first, you know he didn’t know it was intimidating to think that I had a policeman there. And I said, “Well I didn’t know who you were!”
01:30: But that, I guess, *that* was the greatest moment of my whole life, to get the number one stamp. Because I knew that I could go from there because no one else had that. And I was trying to get the things that were the rarest, uh, and to try to see to it that there are writings on the back of the stamps. I wanted everything about the writings on the back of the stamps. I wanted to know all about the gums on the back of the stamps. Some had gums; some of them did not have gums. The writings were all different. And I set them aside in there own little exhibits. And then Errors were a different collection all together.

End time: 02:08

**Video clip: “I thought, ‘I Had Arrived’”**

00:00: Then I began to get serious because I knew then that I was way behind in calling myself a collector, and I wanted to be a good collector, and I wanted to have a good exhibit. I wanted to win the big time exhibit. And I started going in and exhibiting what stamps, in what little I knew, then, to the others. I went to Denver to exhibit. I’ve been to Washington to exhibit, uh, Georgia, Alabama and certainly Kentucky and Tennessee.

00:35: In Washington, when I took it to Washington and it was exhibited next to the Queen’s exhibit, I thought, “I had arrived.” And it was spec… do you remember that Jim?

[Interviewer:] Now what year was that?

00:53: [Rudy:] In the Washington exhibit. I have the gold medal in there. Nice big gold medal that I won for my exhibit. And it was exhibited in the Court of Honor. And the Queen’s exhibit was in the Court of Honor, right next to my ducks.

01:08: See she was next to me, not I next to her. And that to me, I thought that I had really done what I had wanted to achieve, and that was make the best exhibit that I could possibly make.

End time: 01:23

**Video clip: On Being a Judge:**

00:00: Being a judge… oh it was the greatest thrill I have ever, ever known! And to be selected I think… You know Norma Opgrand, I knew who she was and I thought she was one of the greatest women ever was to have that position. And I was, you know, quite fascinated with her, and having never met her. And I never got to have the chance when I was up there to meet [her]. Then to get that telephone call, to say that this is Norma Opgrand… and I thought, “Ugh,” you know, somebody was bugging me! And I said “Yes” (Rudy asks skeptically)?

00:40: And she says, “Jeanette, we went through this procedure and we have selected you as one of our judges in this years Duck Stamp contest.” And then it came to me, “Well maybe this really was Norma.” And I said, “Oh you’re
kidding?” She said, “Oh no. Can you be in Washington at such ‘n such time?” I said “Yes, I can be there tomorrow if you want.”

01:04: And to this day Norma and I have a great, great remembrance of that first conversation. And when I was there doing the judging I was just, they don’t know but I was floating on cloud nine that whole time. I didn’t just walk; I floated all through that day. And it is a wonderful experience. And believe it or not, I have a twin sister and she was a judge, also one of the Hautmans…so we both were judges.

End time: 01:39

Video clip: *My Legacy: Jeanette C. Rudy’s Duck Stamp Legacy*

00:00: I just wanted them in something very special because they were special; and if they were to be exhibited and if I were to give them to the Smithsonian, and I thought about that long time, years before I even acted on it. Uh, because I know that without any children to pass them on to that might not have any interest to them. And I thought, “Well I have had them to myself for so many years.”

00:29: People don’t see these rarities and all these things together. You know God has been good to me, and uh, I think we all think about a legacy and this would be what I could leave for somebody else. That’s what a legacy is. And I’ve done this and enjoyed it so much and it, I hate to brag on it, but it is a fabulous collection. And I know that it is. I don’t like to brag on it, on what you do, but uh, so I still enjoy it. I still get a thrill every time I see one of those stamps.

01:13: Gosh, you know I just, somehow they say men make history and the women preserve it, and this is true. You look back at our general history; men make our history…remember the Daughters of the American Revolution? And we preserve everything. And I thought, “Well, I would like to be a history maker, too.”

01:44: And there a few women that came through, uh, during my lifetime and others like Amelia Earhart and some of these other great people are women. And the, well the first woman doctors, I thought that was the greatest thing there ever was. And I was quite interested in Florence Nightingale, the first nurse, you know, supposedly. I’ve researched her history; it’s a beautiful history. It’s a pathetic history about how nurses came about. And that’s why I did my nursing school.

02:21: But I wanted to be remembered, somehow. Not that I’m anything special. I thought, “Well everyone wants to be remembered somehow.” And ‘somehow’ is always their children. And with people without children, what are we going to do? We must find our way. Uh, you know, in the miles of life that we travel, before the end comes. You go through the woods, and you know, I look back to see if I’ve left a footprint. Sometimes I walk heavily, I think “That footprint will be there when I’m gone.”

End time: 03:01