

Blood Transfusion and Philately

Encouraging the Post Office to Honor Blood Donors

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BLOOD is so often lifesaving that organized programs to recruit blood donors and blood donations can be found practically everywhere in the world. In the United States an estimated 5.5 to 6.0 million units of blood are transfused annually.

The needs for whole blood, plasma, and red blood cell suspensions for medical and surgical conditions continue to mount yearly. More uses are being found for blood components such as antihemophilic factor, fibrinogen, gamma globulins, and platelet concentrates. Open-heart surgery requires large numbers of donors for its operations. Leukocyte transfusions are one of the latest developments.

Considerations of this sort, conjoined with a mutual interest in philately, have prompted us to look at how stamps have been used to promote blood transfusion in various parts of the world. The long-range purpose of this effort (in addition to satisfying our hobby instincts) was to see whether a constructive program could be stimulated in the United States—a program which would use the great publicity value of commemorative stamps for promoting blood-donor recruitment.

There is precedent for the United States Post Office to support health-related activities. Recent years have witnessed the Red Cross issue (1952); Pure Food and Drug Laws (1956); Polio (1957); Dental Health (1959); Nursing (1961); Malaria Eradication (1962); Red Cross Centenary (1963); Mayo Brothers (1964); Crusade Against Cancer (1965).

A survey of standard references reveals that 39 stamps related either to promoting interest in blood donations or to honor blood donors have been thus far issued, by 22 different postal administrations. About two-thirds have been either semipostal or postal tax stamps; the remainder have been commemoratives. To learn more about how these stamps were received and used we wrote to

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(The code numbers for the illustrated stamps refer to Scott's Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue, any recent edition.)

A three-page article on "Stamps Against Cancer" was published in the May 1964 issue of *CLINICAL PEDIATRICS* and was reprinted widely. The reprints were used to help persuade the Post Office Department to issue the anti-cancer commemorative, which appeared in 1965.

Here is the start of another publicity campaign, directed this time toward promotion of a blood-transfusion commemorative stamp for the United States.

each of the 22 postal administrations and have received replies from 13.

Semipostal Stamps

Semipostal stamps have never been issued by the United States, Great Britain, or Canada, and hence may be unfamiliar to the residents of these countries. The typical semipostal stamp (Fig. 1) displays a pair of values (for example, 30c + 10c). The figure on the left indicates the regular postage value of the stamp; that on the right, the surplus or "surcharge" which is to be given to some specific activity, usually a charity. Antituberculosis facilities, flood victims, wounded soldiers, orphanages, child health projects, and international philatelic exhibitions have received support from the sale of such stamps. The single activity for which semipostal stamps are issued most frequently is the Red Cross (Red Crescent in Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkey).

Belgium holds the record for total semipostal stamps, having issued over 800 thus far. Belgium has used the surtax from these stamps to give support, in addition to previously mentioned uses, to aid refugees of the Congo, to train athletes for Olympic Games, to maintain an International Student Center, to erect Protestant churches, to support Antarctic expeditions, to endow the General Patton Memorial Committee, to aid displaced persons, to establish a monument to political prisoners, to promote tourism, and many other projects.

As another example, 90 per cent of the surcharge for the Swiss *pro patria* stamps of 1963 (Fig. 1)

BLOOD TRANSFUSION AND PHILATELY

went to the National Day Collection for the promotion of sick-nursing; the remaining 10 per cent was given to the Swiss Agency for Refugee Aid, which used it for the care of needy displaced persons living in Switzerland.

Occasionally, semipostal stamps do not have the two figures of value within their designs. To purchase them one has to pay a premium over the indicated denomination. Austria once issued a set of these stamps, which were sold at ten times their face value; the excess funds were given to needy musicians.

The sale of semipostal stamps can be very profitable. Finland reported that 5,200,000 old Finnish marks were realized by the sale of three stamps, including the one depicted in Figure 2. Switzerland obtained 1,542,617 Swiss francs from the sale of five *pro patria* stamps issued in 1963, and Belgium raised 1,427,637 francs from a series of six stamps issued to commemorate the centenary of the International Red Cross idea—three of these stamps illustrated an allegory of blood transfusion. The total number sold of any one issue of semipostal stamps has varied from 300,000 for one stamp issued by Afghanistan to 17,455,702 for a *pro patria* group of five issued by Switzerland.

Postal Tax Stamps

Postal tax stamps are similar to semipostal stamps, except that their use becomes mandatory by law during certain specified times. The local government states that every item of first-class mail deposited for handling during a certain period (days to weeks) must carry one of the postal tax stamps, in addition to the regular postage fee. Turkey used to issue many such stamps for purposes such as child welfare and national defense (Fig. 3), but discontinued the practice in 1958. Yugoslavia has used postal tax stamps to raise money for its national Red Cross (Fig. 4).

Commemorative Stamps

In contrast to regular issue stamps, which remain on sale for a number of years, commemorative stamps represent much smaller printings and remain on sale for shorter periods (about two years in the United States). As their name indicates, these pay tribute to or honor some specific

FIG. 1. Switzerland, B327, semipostal, 1963. Postage fee 30c and surcharge 10c. Total cost of stamp 40c.



FIG. 2. Finland, B106, semipostal, 1951.



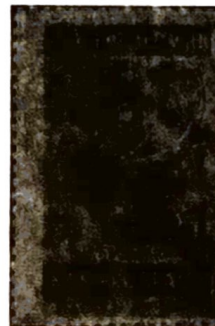
person, historic occasion, community development, or the like.

A commemorative stamp issued to honor blood donors by France in 1959 (Fig. 5) emphasized the saving of lives by the availability of blood transfusions for injuries, burns, and surgical procedures. In 1945, France had only five blood transfusion centers; but in the year this stamp was given out the number had grown to 122 centers. These were collecting some 800,000 units of blood annually, and the National Federation of Blood Donors had tripled in membership. In 1956, in Belgium, 12,999,000 stamps dedicated to honor blood donors were sold (Fig. 6). A stamp to commemorate the Third International Blood Donor Congress was issued by Monaco in 1962 (Fig. 7). The German Democratic Republic joined the parade in 1966 with a stamp to help popularize blood donations.

Exhortation

Throughout the United States, blood banks and Red Cross bleeding centers continue to wrestle daily with problems related to shortages of blood and blood products for patients who need them. Practically every one of these centers constantly is giving valuable professional energy and time to publicity and to popular education, the direct purpose being the continuing recruitment of contributions of blood.

FIG. 3. Turkey, RA219, postal tax, 1957. Note Red Crescent—equivalent of our Red Cross.



KYLE AND WOLMAN

Stamps on Blood Transfusion

Country	Scott Number	Date of Issue	Type	Denomination
<i>Prized</i> Afghanistan	B72	1964	Semipostal	1af + 50p
Albania	B30	1967	Semipostal	65 + 25q
Argentina	B18	1958	Semipostal	1p + 50p
Belgium	442	1956	Commemorative	2fr
Belgium	B641, B642, B643	1959	Semipostal	40c + 10c, 1fr + 50c, 1.50fr + 50c
Finland	B104, B105, B106	1951	Semipostal	7m + 2m, 12m + 3m, 20m + 5m
France	931	1959	Commemorative	20fr
Gabon	C54, C55; C54a, C55a	1967	Airpost	50fr, 100fr
German Democratic Republic	854	1966	Commemorative	5pf
Hungary	B144	1942	Semipostal	3f + 18f
Indonesia	B94, B95	1956	Semipostal	35s + 15s, 50s + 15s
Japan	847	1965	Commemorative	10y
Kuwait	327, 328	1966	Commemorative	4fils, 8fils
Lebanon	C376, C377	1963	Airpost	5p, 20p
Monaco	510	1962	Commemorative	1fr
Netherlands	B257	1953	Semipostal	10c + 5c
Nicaragua	C560	1965	Airpost	25c
Nigeria	148	1963	Commemorative	6d
Russia	2996, 2997	1965	Commemorative	4k, 4k
Switzerland	B327	1963	Semipostal	30c + 10c
Togo	B14	1959	Semipostal	50fr + 10fr
Togo	554, 556	1966	Commemorative	10fr, 30fr
Turkey	RA218, RA219, RA220	1957	Postal tax	25k, 75k, 150k
Yugoslavia	RA11, RA25	1953	Postal tax	2d, 2d

There are a number of national organizations whose interests encompass the broad realm of transfusions as therapeutic aids. They are the American Red Cross and its many local chapters,



FIG. 4. Yugoslavia, RA25, postal tax. Stamp was obligatory from May 7 to 13, 1961.



FIG. 5. France, 931, commemorative, 1959.



FIG. 6. Belgium, 442, commemorative, 1956.



FIG. 7. Monaco, 510, commemorative, 1962.

the National Cancer Society, the Leukemia Society, the American Heart Association, the Cooley's Anemia Blood and Research Foundation for Children, the hospital-oriented American Association of Blood Banks, and the National Hemophilia Foundation.

Wouldn't this be an excellent time for our Post Office Department to extend a friendly helping hand in this direction by the honoring of blood donors? The publicity attending a commemorative stamp or a set of stamps would be most helpful encouragement!

A commemorative postage stamp to encourage voluntary blood donation is being proposed to Postmaster General Marvin Watson by John A. Shively, M.D., President of the American Association of Blood Banks.

Readers who are in sympathy with the message of this article are urged to write to the officers of any of these various societies or to the Postmaster General, Post Office Department, Washington, D. C. 20013, and propose that positive action be taken.