Why Exhibit?

By Eileen Meier

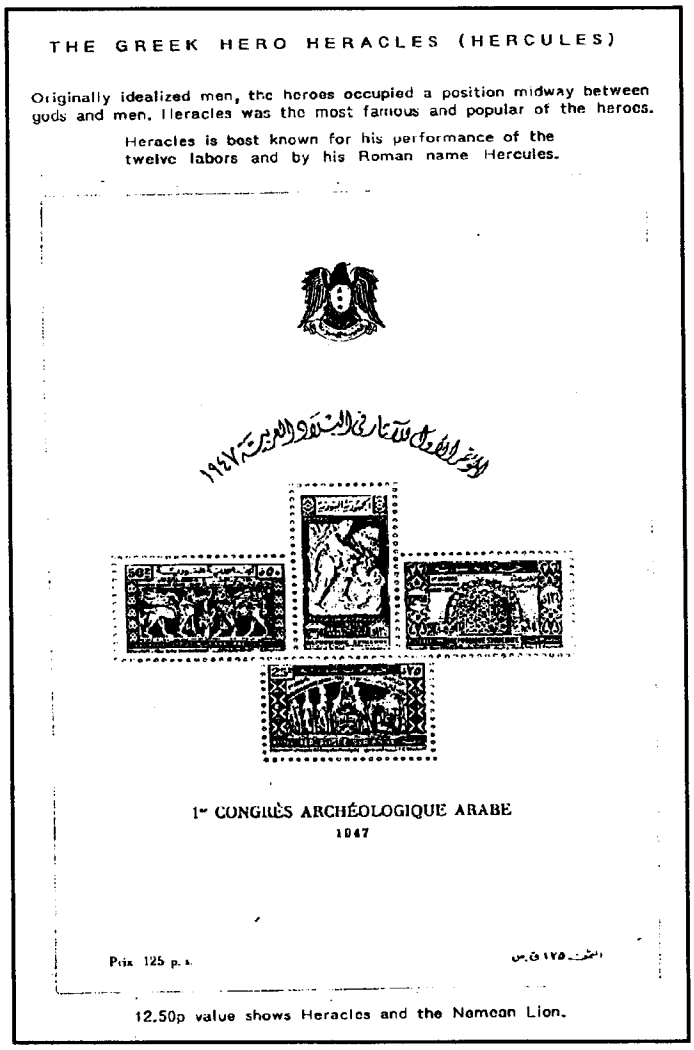
Why exhibit? you may ask an exhibitor — doesn't it involve a lot of work — a great amount of money and being subject to judge's personal bias?

I have exhibited over 30 years, 10 years in the traditional class (A Study of the 1½¢ UN 1951 Definitive Issue) and 20 years in the thematic class (The Olympian Gods). Why? I enjoy sharing my stamp collections with other collectors and learning the opinions and evaluations of my efforts by the judges.

Having a date on which an exhibit has to be ready to participate in a show forces me to work on my collection in a goal oriented manner — looking through my stock and cover books to develop a story line — studying carefully each item to determine if it is in the best possible condition and where it will fit into my plan — learning what items I may be missing that would be useful to the thematic and philatelic presentation of my knowledge of my chosen topic. Yes — it is hard work — but well worth the time and effort when one sees the finished product in the exhibit frames.

A great deal of money? It depends on the level of competition one wishes to compete at. The first level one enters is the local or regional show. Many shows have thematic and one frame exhibit classes. The open class thematic section has a minimum of 2 or 3 frames (16 x 2 = 32 pages or 16 x 3 = 48 pages) up to 10 frames (16 x 10 = 160 pages). In general one needs 3 to 5 frames to earn an award. Therefore, the open class thematic exhibit at this level requires a moderate amount of money.

To compete at the national level in an APS Champion of Champions exhibition — the next higher level requires a greater amount of money than a local or regional show. The highest level is an FIP (International Federation of Philately) exhibition which requires at least a vermeil at the national level to apply. It requires the highest financial commitment as one is competing against the most demanding standards of one's philatelic and thematic knowledge.

In my opinion the easiest path for the beginner to take to find out if exhibiting is for you is to enter a one frame (16 pages) exhibit in the nearest local show which has this class. If no show is available then one may consider entering a national show such as the National Topical Stamp Show (NTSS, was Topex) or the nearest APS C of C exhibition in your area. I prefer the ATA Convention Show NTSS as one receives a written critique and a point count for one's exhibit, so that one can improve an exhibit. The APS national level show does not issue these helpful guidelines. Both NTSS and APS National level shows have Critique Sessions where one can question the judges on how to improve and thus earn a higher award. I stronly urge both exhibitors and nonexhibitors to attend these critiques to learn why one exhibit received a higher award than another. Many shows offer sessions on how to judge the various classes — for aspiring judges. Again, these sessions are open to all who wish to attend and one can learn the thought processes of the judges.

Another way of learning how to exhibit is to attend a meeting of the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors (AAPE). Check the show's list-