



Steve Rubenfaer began collecting stamps about seven years ago. Today he is recognized as one of the best young collectors in the nation.

DICK KELLEY/staff photographer

Young collector takes stamp show on the road

By Roger Hart
staff writer

STEVE RUBENFAER of West Bloomfield began a love affair with stamp collecting seven years ago.

Today, at 14, he's probably the most successful young stamp dealer in the nation.

He began collecting after he stumbled across an old stamp collection belonging to his father, Dr. Leon Rubenfaer.

"He gave me his duplicates and bought me an album," Rubenfaer said. "I have loved the hobby ever since."

His hobby turned into a business when he began dealing in stamps two years ago.

And he often takes his business on the road. This week, for example, he'll be one of 65 dealers participating in Stampshow '82 in Milwaukee.

In fact, Rubenfaer is the youngest dealer ever to participate in this yearly gathering of philatelic enthusiasts.

Stampshow '82 is an exhibition in conjunction with the 96th meeting of the American Philatelic Society.

While Rubenfaer has participated in at least 40 local stamp shows in the greater Detroit metropolitan area, this is his first time at an APS Stampshow.

"BEING AN APS member for over two years, I always wanted to attend Stampshow as a visitor, but was never able. When I heard about Stampshow '82 taking place in Milwaukee, I knew it was within a close enough driving range that I could ask my dad to take me to it. I then thought, 'Wouldn't that be something if I could attend as a dealer?'" And now I am," he said.

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Although he collects general stamps from around the world, he specializes in the United States, Canada, Australia and used Scandinavian stamps. His stock includes a full range of world-wide stamps, including U.S. singles and plate blocks, Canada, British, Europe and all other foreign stamps and covers (envelopes with canceled stamps on them).

Despite his age, Rubenfaer said he really hasn't had many problems in dealing stamps.

"In the beginning, some people tried to take advantage of me because of my age," he said. "But after a while, most of the dealers around the area got to know who I was, and I haven't had any problems since."

"At first, some people were a little leary of me because of my being a minor, I am not obligated to honor contracts. But the people know me now, and they know I am not out to beat them out of anything," he said.

Rubenfaer will be a 10th-grade student at Cranbrook this fall, but he finds no conflicts between his schoolwork and his stamp business.

"IF I DO HAVE homework, or have to study for a test, it always comes before working on stamps. Over the weekends, if I have a show, I try to finish my homework on Saturday, or I bring it to the show. I don't have to spend any time with the stamps if I don't want to. But I have been spending a lot of time in preparation for the Milwaukee show," he said.

Robert DeVoss, director of conventions/education for the

APS, said having a dealer of Rubenfaer's age is something new for the society.

"We have never had a dealer as young as Rubenfaer, and it is really quite rare to have someone of his age have the business knowledge it takes to be a successful dealer," DeVoss said.

"We're very impressed with his business savvy, and his ability to deal with the customers. Stamps are a fluctuating commodity and a dealer has to be able to sell his ideas and opinions on the value of the stamps to the person that is buying. Rubenfaer does this very well," he added.

Rubenfaer's stamp work involves breaking up sets to sell them as singles and pricing various stamps.

"His stamp collection just got bigger and bigger, and it has never interfered with his schoolwork. I think he has learned a lot about different countries because so much of the country's histories are depicted on the stamps," said his mother Karen, a law student at the University of Detroit.

RUBENFAER HAS has ambitious plans for his stamp business.

"I would like to continue to build my business and hopefully use it to help support me through college. I plan to be a doctor and hope to always have my business on the side and possibly turn it into a full-time business when I retire. However, I love stamps so much that I might make it into a full-time business," Rubenfaer said.

Anyone wishing to contact Rubenfaer can write at: Steve Rubenfaer Stamps, Inc., P.O. Box 3006, Farmington Hills 48018.

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— Steve Rubenfaer

Doug Ross: No regrets

By Jackie Klein
staff writer



Doug Ross

State Sen. Doug Ross is philosophical about losing his bid for U.S. Congress in Michigan's 17th District.

The Southfield Democrat said he couldn't overcome the strong name recognition of primary election winner Saender Levin. But Ross — who in five months will give up his four-year Senate seat in District 15 — isn't ready to throw in the towel.

"First of all, I want to stress that my constituents have five more months of representation coming and I intend to serve energetically. I have some important projects to finish."

"About my defeat in the primary, my campaign involved 3,000 people. We did all the things we set out to do including an intensive door-to-door campaign."

"But it turned out that given the amount of time we had, all the campaigning and confusion, we weren't able to overcome strong, positive name recognition."

"We thought we could do it in 11 weeks. But I just wasn't able to take my message intensely enough to the voters to combat that strong name identification."

LOOKING BACK. Ross said he has no regrets about his decision to run for national office although, it means he must give up his Senate seat at year's end.

When U.S. Rep. Bill Brodhead announced this summer he wouldn't seek re-election in the 17th District, Ross said he seized the opportunity to run for the office.

"I saw the chance to take to Washington the ideas of a lot of people working with me to make my Senate seat more effective. A larger arena with more important problems to wrestle with is challenging."

"These chances come along occasionally and unpredictably. I thought I had a reasonable chance of winning. The worst regrets aren't the battles that are made and lost, but never having tried."

Ross said he'll be helping Democrats who are seeking election in November. And he's beginning to explore options. He said he's looking for opportunities to embark on a new job which will allow him to keep working on vital issues.

But in the meantime, he said, he won't be a "lame duck" senator.

One of his most important projects, Ross said, is to get state funding for senior citizen rent credits. Ross was instrumental in passing legislation providing that the state return to senior citizens any rent paid which is 40 percent over their incomes.

"I INTRODUCED the bill as a way of coping with rising rental costs without freezing rents. The legislation was passed and signed by the governor. But in this tight economy, nothing has happened. I made a pledge to help seniors with rent and I'll keep that commitment."

While in the Senate, Ross said he'll be also dealing with Michigan unemployment compensation debts.

"When my term is over, I'll be looking for ways to continue working on a plan to help Michigan make a transition from a declining industrial state to one involved in new economic activity."

"I'm interested in the nuclear disarmament movement and I can make a contribution to focus new interest in the issue and give concrete proposals to Congress."

"I have a strong interest in the Middle East and the role of the United States in a secure and permanent peace. I'm also concerned about a whole range of environmental issues."

ROSS was executive director of Michigan Common Cause and founder and director of Michigan Citizens Lobby. But, he said, he doesn't plan on getting re-involved with these consumer groups.

"I don't want to go backwards. I'm looking for imaginative challenges, new ways to get involved. What's most important to me is being at the center of the decision-making action. My own skills are best used in fighting to determine what to do as a community."

"Politics is the kind of area where you can't be afraid of taking risks or losing. Battling in the public arena is an ongoing commitment. You lose battles along the way, but nothing can keep you from entering different doors in the arena. It's fun."

The only thing certain about politics is that opportunities happen unexpectedly, Ross observed. Nobody in 1978 expected Ross to beat Daniel Cooper for the state Senate seat. But Cooper was vulnerable, Ross said.

"Just 12 weeks ago, Brodhead announced he wasn't going to run for Congress," Ross said. "Jack Faxon was in deep trouble. Nobody knows what reappointment does. You don't know your options and you try to stay in an advantageous position."

"ONE OF THE pitfalls in politics is regarding it as a personal rejection if you lose. I was endorsed by Brodhead and all the newspapers. I consider them citizens who take more time than others to carefully consider the candidates. That's reassuring."

"I had a safe Senate seat. And I knew the risks from the beginning when I decided to run for Congress. If my chances were 50-50, I had half a chance of winning. Nobody running for governor thought the odds were 50-50 that they'd lose the whole thing."

Richard Headlee's primary victory for governor and James Brickley's loss indicates alienation from the Milliken administration, Ross maintains. He considers that Reaganomics at the state level.

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