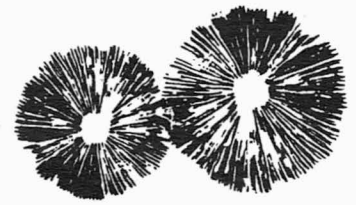


SPORE PRINTS



BULLETIN OF THE PUGET SOUND MYCOLOGICAL SOCIETY

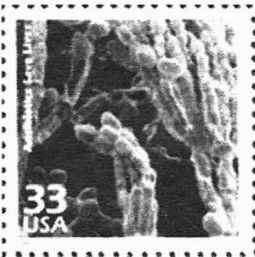
Number 358

January 2000

FIRST US STAMP FEATURING A FUNGUS AS THE MAIN ILLUSTRATION

Brian Luther

On February 18, 1999, the US Postal Service issued a set of fifteen 33¢ stamps in their Celebrate the Century series for the 1940s. (Each decade since 1900 is getting its own special 15 commemorative stamps.) One of these stamps shows an SEM (scanning electron microscope) view of a species of *Penicillium* with conidiophores and spores. This is the very first postage stamp ever issued by the US with a fungus as the main illustration! It is labeled Antibiotics Save Lives. These are gummed stamps (not self-stick) with information about the stamp printed on the back of each stamp. Individual stamps cannot be ordered. They can be ordered from the Postal Service in the following formats only: as the above souvenir sheet with 15 different stamps (\$4.95), as an FDC (first day cover—full pane for \$6.95), as an uncut Press Sheet of four panes (\$19.80), as a Commemorative Panel (\$12.95), or as an Heirloom Book (\$34.95). I don't have a current Scott catalog number for this stamp, but a color picture of it can be seen on-line at <http://www.stampsonline.com>



SEM view of *Penicillium*

Two previous US stamps have fungi on them, but they are not the main illustration, rather what we call "MIDs" in mycophilately, which means that they have mushrooms or fungi in the design, border, or background of the stamp. Both are part of a sheet of 50 different animal stamps issued 6/13/87. The first of these two MIDs is Scott Catalog No. 2297, in which the main illustration is an Eastern Chipmunk, showing two *Naematoloma*



2297 Two sporocarps of *Naematoloma sublateritium* in lower right hand corner, growing from the wood that the chipmunk is on.

sublateritium sporocarps on wood. The second is Scott Catalog No. 2335, in which the main illustration is a Red Fox, showing two different polypores on the log below the fox.



2335 Four polypore sporocarps on log. One species right of stick (with one sporocarp) and another species (with three sporocarps) to the left. Many generic possibilities here. There also could be small red mushrooms on the ground around the log, discernible only under a lens or higher magnification.

I had hoped to show the stamps in full color, but the logistics of that happening in *Spore Prints* didn't work out. I've been collecting, studying, and researching mushroom/fungus illustrated stamps (mycophilately) and old postcards with fungi (mycodeltiology) for more than 20 years, so for more information about the foregoing stamps, or any of the hundreds of mushroom stamps issued by other countries worldwide, feel free to contact me via phone (206 522-1051) or e-mail (a2zluther@sprintmail.com).

A TWIST OF FATE

George Thompson

Potomac Sporophore, September 1999

His name was Fleming, and he was a poor Scottish farmer. One day, while trying to make a living for his family, he heard a cry for help coming from a nearby bog. He dropped his tools and ran to the bog. There, mired to his waist in black muck, was a terrified boy, screaming and struggling to free himself. Farmer Fleming saved the lad from what could have been a slow and terrifying death.

The next day, a fancy carriage pulled up to the Scotsman's sparse surroundings. An elegantly dressed nobleman stepped out and introduced himself.

"I want to repay you," said the nobleman. "You saved my son's life."

"No, I can't accept payment for what I did," the Scottish farmer replied, waving off the offer.

At that moment, the farmer's own son came to the door of the family hovel.

"Is that your son?" the nobleman asked.

"Yes," the farmer replied proudly.

"I'll make you a deal. Let me take him and give him a good education. If the lad is anything like his father, he'll grow to be a man you can be proud of."

And that he did. In time, Farmer Fleming's son graduated from St. Mary's Hospital Medical School in London, and went on to become known throughout the world as the noted Sir Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of penicillin.

Years afterward, the nobleman's son was stricken with pneumonia. What saved him was penicillin.

The name of the nobleman was Lord Randolph Churchill. His son's name was Sir Winston Churchill.

We regret to report the death of long-time PSMS member W.L. (Bill) Sheridan. Although he had been unable to walk for many years, he maintained his membership and interest in the Society. He will be remembered as a retired member of the US Forest Service and very knowledgeable in the field of mycology.

Spore Prints

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PUGET SOUND MYCOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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CALENDAR

- Jan. 11 Membership meeting, 7:30 PM, CUH
Jan. 17 Board meeting, 7:30 PM, CUH Board Room
Jan. 21 *Spore Prints* deadline

DUCKS DONE IN BY FUNGUS

Tom Spears

The Ottawa Citizen, February 2, 1999
via *The Arizona Fun-Gi*, Summer 1999

from the *Spore Print*, May 1999, Los Angeles Myco. Soc.

Bird lovers poisoned one-tenth of a flock of ducks wintering at Billings Bridge, killing as many as 27 ducks with kindness and moldy food. Autopsies at the Ontario Veterinary College in Guelph show the birds died of pneumonia, caused by "massive" infections of a fungus called *Aspergillus* that attacks birds' lungs. "That's the same fungus that grows at the back of your fridge," said Ken Ross of the Canadian Wildlife Service. "It's the stuff that makes moldy bread turn green."



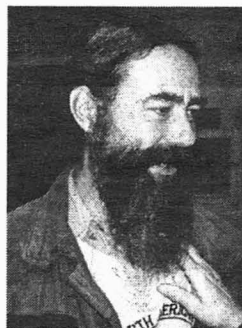
Normally well fed birds can fight off the fungus, and it only kills weakened or starving birds whose immune systems are in bad shape. "But this time the amount of mold was too massive," he said. The surviving ducks in the flock of between 200 and 300 are all right, Ross said.

The moldy food was given to them by well meaning people, not their natural bottom of the river diet of plants and snails.

Ross said mold is also a common problem at bird feeders, where a batch of seed may get wet, then freeze and thaw repeatedly. "The difference is that with feeders the birds fly away somewhere to die. You don't find them with their feet in the air beside the feeder."

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Tuesday, January 11, at 7:30 PM at the Center for Urban Horticulture, 3501 NE 41st Street, Seattle



Our speaker for January will be Paul Kroeger of Vancouver, B.C., who will talk about "Fungus in Human Affairs."

Long active in the Vancouver Mycological Society, Paul is once again their president, has edited their newsletter, has been their foray chair and exhibit chair, and chaired the North American Mycological Society's foray that was hosted by VMS at Whistler in 1990. He is also currently president of the Pacific North-

west Key Council and chair of the Lower Mainland Group of the Sierra Club of Canada.

For many years, Paul has worked for the preservation of Meager Hot Springs near Pemberton, B.C., and was a founder of the Meager Creek Wilderness Society. An environmental activist, he was the subject of a memorable political cartoon after his discovery of the rare *Tricholoma apium* stopped logging at Mt. Elphinstone, B.C. Subsequently the area was set aside for a provincial park

Paul has worked as a mycological and botanical consultant for Canadian forestry projects. He also teaches mushroom classes at the University of British Columbia. He published a new mushroom species, *Melanotus textilis*, with Scott Redhead and is one of the authors of an article about *Amanita smithiana* that appeared in *Clinical Toxicology*. Listening to him is always a pleasure, and January's meeting should be a real treat.

Would members whose last names begin with the letters A-G please bring a plate of refreshments for the social hour?

AVANTI—SOUTHERN ITALY MYCOLOGICAL FORAY TRIP 1999—OR ITALY ON 200 DOLLARS A DAY

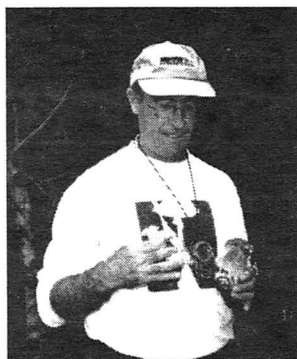
Lynn Phillips

One of the many things I've learned from Dick Sieger is that the only way to get out of helping with the annual exhibit is to get out of town. And this year, after helping with the exhibit in many ways over the past 13 years and feeling a bit burned out, I decided the best plan would be to leave the country—on a mushrooming expedition! (I of course made sure that I had delegated my chores to even more competent replacements first.) I had heard Denis Benjamin rave about his trip to Italy with a mushroom tour two years ago, hunting porcini and truffles in Tuscany and Umbria. He was planning to go with the same group this Fall, even bringing his wife, Vivien, who is not nearly as gung ho about mushroom hunting as he. That was a good enough endorsement for me. So I talked Fran Ikeda into joining me to share a room and expenses, and we got in on a cancellation. The rest of our group of 27 was made up mostly of people from the eastern US, which was nice because they were more familiar with hardwood forests like Italy has and the mushrooms that grow in them. Our leaders were a couple of Italians, one from D.C. and the other from northern Italy. This is their fifth year of leading groups as an excuse to get together for some, hopefully, quality mushroom hunting in Italy. And, for something completely different, they decided to foray on the island of Sicily and in Calabria (the "toe" of Italy's boot).

We all met up in Palermo and spent a week checking out Sicily. The autumn rains hadn't come; the weather was warm and dry, and sunny and the mushroom hunting was not good. We managed to

get out into the woods only about three times. We did find some mushrooms every time we went looking. The main edibles were *Lyophyllum decastes*, *Armillaria mellea*, *Boletus edulis*, *Tricholoma equestre*, and *Lactarius deliciosus*. We saw russulas and *Amanita muscaria*, and one day I found a huge shelf fungus, a 10+ lb. *Polyporus giganteus*, which I had hoped was a *Grifola frondosa*, growing on a beech tree. We met most of the Palermo mushroom group, at least 20 people including women and children, on our first foray, and even though most of us couldn't speak each other's language, we managed to communicate using Latin names of mushrooms, plants, and trees. The kids were fun. We sang songs and played Ping-Pong (at a restaurant in the middle of the woods where we ate the first of many huge, mushroom-laden meals), and I believe we actually found a few mushrooms.

When we weren't in the woods, we went around in the bus, sightseeing. Sicily is a beautiful, rugged island and has lots of sights to see. Over the centuries, everyone who went anywhere in the Mediterranean managed to stop and invade it. It's been occupied by the Greeks, Romans, Normans, Spanish, Moors, etc.—lots of interesting history! I had picked my share of boletes and even a few matsutake in the weeks before I left Seattle, so I was just enjoying everything. Did I mention that it was warm and sunny? But some of our people were grumbling a bit because we weren't hunting enough or finding much. The foraging mentality of our group of American mushroomers was interesting. In the towns, when we took



Denis Benjamin, with one of the few *Boletes edulis* found on the trip.

a break, people would come back with wines, cheese and olives, boar sausage, cookies—all sorts of goodies—and pass them around the bus

until they were consumed. In the woods, they would come back with chestnuts, herbs, and bits of plants to identify if we weren't finding much in the way of mushrooms.

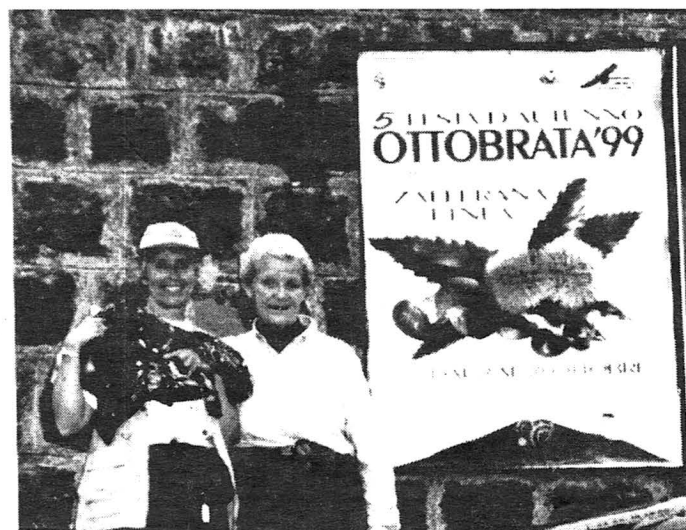
My most memorable foray of the whole trip was on the flanks of Mt. Etna, on the other side of Sicily, later in the week. The mountain was rumbling the whole time we were on it. I kept saying, "I find this very disquieting. Isn't anyone else uneasy about this?" But those East Coast guys didn't experience Mt. St. Helens and weren't concerned. Then Lina, a Sicilian mushroomer, told me (I think—she didn't actually speak English) that the mountain had belched up three feet of pumice onto a coastal town only a month before! A few days later, from the rooftop deck of our hotel, I saw a river of lava and huge sparks of exploding rocks from the crater in the pre-dawn darkness. It was time to brave Scylla and Charybdis in the Strait of Messina and head for the mainland.

In Calabria, I finally got a chance to swim in the sea, which was warm and wonderful. We had a few more mushrooming expeditions into some lovely mountain areas with beech, oak, chestnut, and pine woods. We saw wild goats across rocky cliffs and tame sheep and cows up close. My favorite mushroom there was a very sturdy and phallic looking *Lepiota procera*, which grows in local pine woods and which we named, after drinking way too much *Vino locali*, *Pinus viagris*. OK, maybe you had to have been there! In Calabria, we also toured a *Pleurotus eryngii* farm. That's a very popular cultivated mushroom in Italy. But the best thing was that we were joined by eight of the Palermo mushroom group whom we had met on our first foray. They stayed at our hotel and went out with us, foraging and eating and drinking and singing. I

love the Italians, they'll sing, especially my favorite opera arias, with very little encouragement. I was sorry when we all split up, but found more Italians to sing in other towns. At our last stop in Naples, our local mycologist was also a professional actor and singer. His best friend is a volcanologist at Mt. Vesuvius. So we got a very interesting tour of the volcano, with samples of rock from various eruptions and information about a unique lichen that grows there, and also some lovely singing!

It had been so dry around Naples that we didn't even bother going out in the woods. We had our final mushroom banquet, after two weeks of many delicious meals with lots of mushrooms and seafood and local delicacies (and a few mediocre hotel meals), and our last night of camaraderie before our group went their separate ways.

My brother had driven down from Germany to get me, and we stayed one day too long in Naples—we got rained out on the Isle of Capri. It was still raining farther north when we went through Perugia, Gubbio, and Urbino—bolete and truffle country. I was told by locals there that the season wasn't good and was over; it had been too dry and the rains came too late. The last mushrooms I saw were in the outdoor market at Heidelberg—the itty-bittiest little Pfifferlingen (*Cantharellus cibarius*) that I have ever seen, with a label on them "from USA." It was definitely time to come home!



Lynn Phillips and Fran Ikeda, with a great poster of some autumn festival of chestnuts and boletes.

MUSHROOMS TUSCAN STYLE Jack Czarnecki

A Cook's Book of Mushrooms, via NJMAnews, July–Aug. 1999

2 TBs olive oil	1 tsp salt
½ cup onions, chopped	1 tsp sugar
½ cup broth or water	1 TBs soy sauce
8 oz fresh wild or domestic mushrooms	½ tsp dried savory
	2 tsp corn starch (optional)

Place olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add chopped onion and sauté until slightly brown. Add ½ cup water or broth, then add 8 oz. fresh wild or domestic mushrooms and cover the skillet. Summer for 30 minutes. The mushrooms will greatly reduce in size and be completely covered with liquid. Add salt, sugar, soy sauce, and dried savory and stir. Simmer another 5 minutes. If thickening is desired, stir in 2 tsp corn starch that has been dissolved in ¼ cup cold water. Blend until thickened and serve. Serves 4.

A NEW TREE OF LIFE FOR PLANTS

Fungifama, South Vancouver Is. Myco. Soc., August 1999

ST. LOUIS, MO, 9/4/99 – A five-year effort to reconstruct the evolutionary relationships among all of Earth's green plants has resulted in the most complete "tree of life" of any group of living things on the planet, a team of 200 scientists from 12 countries announced today. The team has revealed that the group traditionally thought of as "plants" is really four separate lineages, or kingdoms—green plants, brown plants, red plants, and fungi—with one kingdom, fungi, being more related to animals than to plants.

The green plant lineage is the largest of the four plant groups, comprising about 500,000 species, including all of the Earth's land plants (trees, shrubs, grasses, flowers, ferns, mosses) and some of the aquatic plants, such as green algae.

In addition to dividing life on earth into five kingdoms instead of two, the team has overturned the traditional belief that the so-called "land-plant invasion" was led by seawater plants. Instead, the research team has found that primitive freshwater plants provided the ancestral stock from which all green plants now on land are descended and that this ancestor spawned every green plant now alive on earth.

The research team is part of the Green Plant Phylogeny Research Coordination Group, funded in the United States by the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Department of Energy. The team's discoveries hold profound ethical, intellectual, ecological, and economic implications for science, medicine, industry, and society.

Further information on the team's research and references to scientific papers can be found at the following web site: <http://ucjeps.berkeley.edu/DeepGreen/DeepGreen.html>

Board Notice: A PSMS annual report and by-laws, etc., will be put out at the March banquet.

FUNGUS DUPLICATES INSULIN

George Davis

Spore-Addict, Pikes Peak Myco. Soc., July 1999, via
The Arizona Fun-Gi, Arizona Mushroom Club, Fall 1999

Diabetes is a disease that affects the way our bodies use food. Normally, during digestion, the body changes sugars, starches, and other foods into a form of sugar called glucose. The blood then carries this glucose to cells throughout the body. Insulin, a hormone normally produced by the body, is used to convert the glucose into energy as needed. In diabetes, something goes wrong with the process of turning food into energy. In one form of diabetes the pancreas cannot make insulin; in the other it does not make enough or the insulin cannot be used properly. The treatment for insulin-dependent diabetes is daily injections of insulin and a rigid diet. Injection of insulin is the only way to treat this disease at present because digestive juices break down insulin given in pill form, rendering it useless.

Researchers for Merck have found a leaf fungus in the Congo that is able to duplicate insulin's effect and survive the trip through the digestive system. The tiny molecule of this leaf fungus stimulates the individual protein and is not affected by digestive enzymes.

The leaf fungus molecules have only been tested on animals. There have been no serious side effects, and the fungus nearly duplicated insulin in the ability to suppress blood sugars. There is no projection on when human treatment will begin, but the Merck research team is confident that the molecule, or some variant of it, will be successful in treating this serious disease. This also is a clear indication of the importance of jungles and rain forests to the world.

Not being ambitious of martyrdom, even in the cause of gastronomical enterprise, especially if the instrument is to be a contemptible, rank-smelling fungus, I never eat or cook mushrooms.

—Marion Harland, *Common Sense in the Household: A Manual of Practical Housewifery*, 1873

Happy  New Year!

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