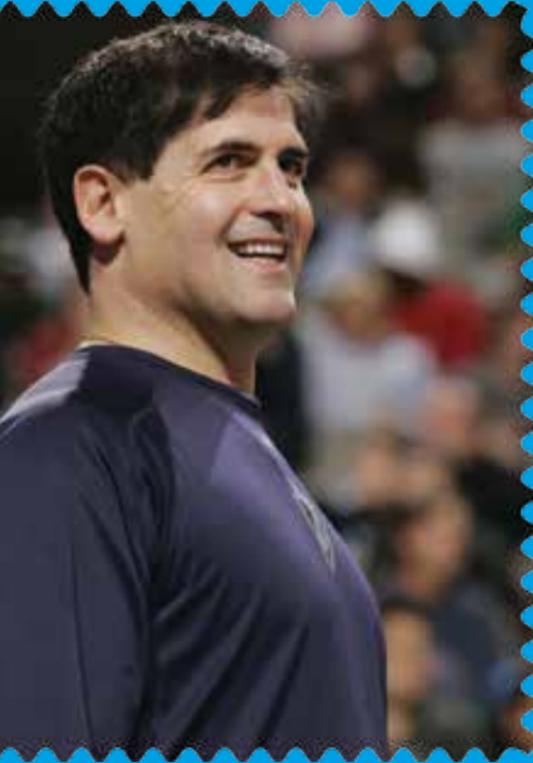


Mark Cuban on STAMPS:



Mark Cuban once remarked to Daymond John on an episode of "Shark Tank" that stamp collecting helped him put himself through college.

If Mark Cuban – star of ABC's "Shark Tank", owner of NBA champions the Dallas Mavericks, and arguably the most famous entrepreneur in America – thinks stamps are cool, then maybe he can help kids see that too.

We asked Mr. Cuban to share his story of stamps with us.

Q: As an entrepreneur and as an individual you have always challenged convention and changed how people think. The US Postal Service seeks to revitalize and energize stamps and stamp collecting in the minds of young people. Can you tell us a little bit about your history with stamps?

A: I first became interested in stamps when I was about 12 years old. My mom had an album of old foreign stamps that she started collecting when she was young – I still have that album today! I was intrigued by all of the history represented in each stamp, and I saw images of foreign countries

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that made me want to learn more about them. So my mom got me hooked.

A big advantage for a kid who collected stamps was that they weren't very expensive. I went to the post office. I went to stamp stores. I bought packages of stamps from vendors I found in the back of magazines – wherever I could find them. I spent hours sorting through the stamps and it was a really fun way to connect to, and learn history.

Q: Can you share any “stamp stories” – any particularly interesting story behind a stamp you discovered?

A: I remember being fascinated by the idea that I could find stamps from the 1800’s that I could afford! It was incredible to me that I could physically hold something that was so old, and

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yet it could be bought on a kid’s allowance.

I liked to find the rarest stamps that I could afford, even if they weren’t particularly old.

I once received a box of more than 100 letters that told the story of a family’s history. Not only did these letters include stamps from that period in time, they

included letters from Walter Camp – known as the “Founder of American Football” and a founder of the NCAA. What a thrill that was! You never know what piece of history you will discover in stamps!

Q: *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand is one of the most important books you’ve read. Rand was also a stamp collector who said, “*The pursuit of the unique, the unusual, the different, the rare is the motive power of stamp collecting.*” As one highly motivated by challenge, does stamp collecting hold this allure for you as well?

A: Of course. I think every stamp collector is in search of the undiscovered gem. That is one of the beauties of collecting ... I loved searching for stamps. It’s the hunt. It’s the reward of discovery!

Q: Are you still collecting? Are there any stamps that you wish you still had?

A: I wish I had every stamp I ever owned! But I bought, sold and traded so many that the experience taught me as much about business

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as any class I have ever taken.

So while I miss them, it was well worth it.

I am not as active a collector as I used to be. But once a stamp collector, always a stamp collector and I love to bring out some of my albums and show my stamps to my kids, who are now 5, 8 and 11.

Encouraging kids to collect stamps allows them to visually experience in a stamp what might take them weeks to learn from a textbook. I just think stamp collecting is a timeless hobby that anyone of any age can have fun with.

Q: Can you weigh in on the hobby of stamp collecting today? How do you think the hobby can survive in our digital age?

A: Stamps create a connection to history and to the world that you can touch and feel. Anyone can look something up on his or her phone, but stamps create a tangible connection that elicits a more visceral response.

How can you not be fascinated by the many beautiful stamps of the United States? They are markers of our culture and they reflect the many things that make us uniquely American. You can see how we have evolved as a nation, not only in music and art, but also in sports, business and more. Plus stamps can introduce you to people in history who you may not have been aware of before. Sorting through a pile of stamps presents opportunities to learn and ask questions you wouldn't otherwise know to ask.

Q: As the new face of the US Postal Service's educational initiative, how useful do you believe stamps are as educational tools? What information have you learned from owning or researching a stamp?

A: I think stamps can teach so much, particularly in history and geography. Stamps illustrate important moments in history in any country in

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the world. Every single country announced its independence by issuing stamps. Like the United States, nations everywhere declare who and what in their history is momentous on a stamp. By collecting stamps, you not only get to touch and feel and connect to other countries, you get a better understanding of how those countries see themselves.

As a kid, my little stamp albums taught me about kings, presidents, wars, battles, you name it. And just as important, this was something I could do on my own. I could find a stamp, do some investigating, and discover the entire story behind it. It was a connection to history that I don't think I would have been able to get excited about in any other way.

Stamps can be used in classrooms to get kids excited about traveling and seeing the world. Stamps can open their eyes to life beyond our own United States. I think it makes perfect sense to include stamps whenever curriculum includes the study of history and geography.

Q: Is there one thing about stamps that you think others may not be aware of?

A: Collecting stamps is an amazing way to start to understand business. Each stamp has its own level of scarcity, of demand, of price, and as a collector you have to make decisions on when to keep a stamp, trade or sell it, and when to invest in a new stamp for your collection. I learned so much about business and the laws of supply and demand when I was still in middle school that business came easily to me when I got to college and beyond. If you think you can learn a lot about business from "Shark Tank", you can learn just as much from stamp collecting!

Q: The 2013-14 commemorative stamp programs include culturally significant American subjects, among them Harvey Milk, the first gay civil rights crusader on a stamp, 20th century music icons Jimmy Hendrix and Janis Joplin, and sesquicentennial commemorations of pivotal Civil War battles. Who or what would you like to see on a stamp?

A: Wow, that's a great question. It is such an honor to be on a stamp. I would love to see the titans of technology memorialized on stamps. Most are still alive, so it's too early, but I would love to see what that series of stamps would look like!

Q: Will you encourage your kids to collect?

A: I really hope my kids get into stamps. It teaches so many lessons. Learning how to collect stamps is easily one of the best introductions to business available to kids. Add to that all that can be learned from each stamp and you have a powerful combination, one that I certainly have and will continue to share with my family.



USPS Community Connection is a member of the Stamp Education Alliance, in partnership with Smithsonian's National Postal Museum and the American Philatelic Society.