The Great Bitter Lake Association - GBLA

Dr. Adam Hafez | Adam@stampsgate.com

In June of 1967, a convoy of 14 freighters was underway in the Suez Canal, when war broke out between Israel and Egypt. The canal was officially closed, and the ships had to anchor in the Great Bitter Lake. Within three days, it became clear that the canal would be blockaded for an indefinite time due to the vessels' deliberate sinking.

The hostilities entered history books as the Six-Day War. For the ships, it meant almost eight years of forced isolation, imprisoned in the Great Bitter Lake.

In 1969 the ships were gathered into several groups to further reduce the number of crew necessary for their upkeep. Those crew that were left to maintain the vessels were rotated every three months..

A postal system evolved, and hand-crafted postage stamps became collectors' items worldwide. The Egyptian postal authority recognized the stamps, allowing their use worldwide.

In early 1975, the Suez Canal was again opened for international transport, and on 24 May 1975, the German ships Münsterland and Nordwind finally reached Hamburg port, cheered by more than 30,000 spectators. For the Münsterland, this was the end of a voyage to Australia that lasted eight years, three months, and five days.

All available stamps of all vessels. Reduced 20%

Every Sundays, everybody used to meet aboard 'Nordwind,' bring the rubber stamps along, and work together in a small 'ships cancellation office.'

On the occasion of The Summer Olympic Games in Mexico, The GBLA Olympic Games were held with 40 competitions from 28 Sep, to 12 Oct 1986. Each player received a medal, diploma and Cup.

11.10.68, GBLA Olympic Games stamp, Reduced 30%

Djakarta 500 Days in Prison, issued by Third Mate Eugeniusz in Oct, 1968. All 3 stamps printed on one sheet.

List of the 14 Ships:

SS African Glen from USA
MS Djakarta from Poland
MS Boleslaw Blarut from Poland
MS Killara from Sweden
MS Vasil Levski from Bulgaria
MS Lednice from Czechoslovakia
MV Scottish Star from Great Britain
MS Nippon from Sweden
MS Sindh from France
MS Nordwind from Germany
MS Port Invercargill from Great Britain
MS Melampus from Great Britain
MS Münsterland from Germany
MS Agapenor from Great Britain

Stamps of the GBLA were produced on board, hectographed, or crudely typographed, but there also exist more

30.9.68, cover GBLA with circle stamp "S.S. AFRICAN GLEN" cachet "FARRELL LINES INC" to Germany with Cairo Air Port CDS.