

METER STAMP SOCIETY

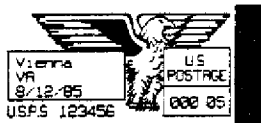
BULLETIN

No. 193

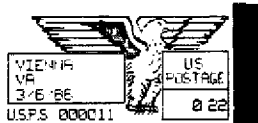
SUMMER

1986

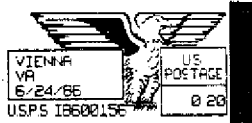
INTERMEC PVI



first version



second version



third version

The Intermec Postage Validation Imprinter (PVI) machines now undergoing tests at the Vienna, VA post office have exhibited the following surprises in the few months they have been in use:

1. Although the official first day was January 2, 1986, they were available for use as early as July 31, 1985.

2. The machines are essentially computers with a specially designed printing mechanism attached. Because what prints out is determined only by what the software tells the machine to print, the meter number for these machines is no more permanent than the date. In fact there have been two meter number series changes already, and it is probable more will come as software modifications are made during the course of the test.

3. There are four meters involved in the test. Before the Jan. 2 first day all four had the same meter number -- 123456. On that day the numbers were changed to 000009 through 000012. When asked why the meter numbers started with 9 and not 1, Ms. Fay Potter, Window Clerk at Vienna, VA, provided the following information. What we see as meter numbers are essentially inventory numbers. The four customer display machines were numbered 1 through 4, the four clerk display machines 5 through 8, the four Postage Validation Imprinters 9 through 12 and the four receipt printers 13 through 16.

4. Sometime in March or April the number series was changed again during a software modification. The new numbers, current as of this writing, are 18600155-158. However, by the time you read this these numbers may be obsolete as another software change is expected to be installed in late July/early August.

Unlike the five city test in 1985/1985 of the Friden Alcatel PVI, this test is to continue for an undetermined length of time.

When the machines were changed from 123456 to 000009-12 a change in the figure of value was also made from 000.00 to 0.00.

We thank Ms. Potter for her consideration and generosity in providing information on the Vienna test to your editor. (Ed.)

TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF FRAMA AUTOMATS

The following article was written by guest writer and British stamp dealer, Eric Elias. Mr. Elias is a prominent philatelic writer as well as dealer and writes regularly for Australian Stamp News and occasionally for Stamps (Great Britain) and Linns. We are pleased to publish this article which, besides noting the tenth anniversary of the first Frama automat, describes in detail some recent issues from around the world. (Ed.)

It is amazing that so much is happening in a philatelic area which is this year celebrating only its tenth anniversary. It was in August 1976 that the first four prototype Frama automat machines were tried out in Switzerland. In spite of the great collector interest in these issues, with some exceptions the various postal administrations are only now beginning to address this interest. Many still announce new automats with minimal publicity as will be seen in the paragraphs below.

Belgium - Early in January the Belgian Post Office announced a stamp issue for 27 January reproducing the 25 centime stamp issued in 1886 by the Belgian Congo. This stamp was issued to honor the centenary of the first Congo stamp. Mention was made of a philatelic exhibition inside the Brussels main Post Office from 17-23 March with displays amounting to 150 frames assembled from the Postal Museum and other sources. Two items of postal stationery were also released, and finally, with no further detail, we are told an automat meter will also be put into service. So there we have it! - another commemorative Frama with scant advance warning. Belgium has so far already issued two commemorative Framas. The first one was in 1982 at BELGICA. The other was at RELIFIL in 1985.

Holland - For several years Holland has been experimenting with Frama Post Office counter machines (operated by PO staff) as indeed have the USA (Intermec and Friden Alcatel Postage Validation Imprinters [PVIs] very similar in operation to the Frama PO counter machines - Ed.) on a limited basis. According to data received from D. W. van der Putten, approximately 125 new machines will be brought into use in Holland from 27 January on. Philatelic service is not available from the Dutch Philatelic Bureau for these items.

New Zealand - Early in January of this year a colorful informative leaflet and order form was received from New Zealand Post and also from its British sales agent Stanley Gibbons. This is in complete contrast to the limited trial of New Zealand's first Frama automat for six weeks in 1984. This issue was not made known to the world at large and was not available through the Bureau or agencies. The new design, introduced on February 12th, 1986, was easy to obtain. This machine represents the first commercial use of a new type of Frama automat. It accepts coins of any denomination and registers the total value on a digital display. The user selects the value of label required by keying in the amount on a numeric key pad. After the label(s) is/are dispensed, any change left over remains of the display. The last bit of change is returned in the form of an additional label which can be redeemed for cash at the post office. A security underprint features the PO logo and map of New Zealand. The machine is type PG206/12. On February 12th 23 machines were inaugurated throughout the country. Further machines will be introduced progressively as they become available, but there will be no further publicity of any consequence. New Zealand Post offered FDCs of this machine and also sets of 24 values (1 thru 24 cents) for \$3.00.

This new concept in numeric keypad could mean an end to the usual three button machine and may mark a change in collecting method. Instead of a set of the three convenient 'button values' collectors may have to choose the values they want. I can suggest the following four ways to collect: corner values (.01, .02, .05, .10, .50, 1.00 etc.), min/max values (.01 and 99.99), current postage values (.22, .39 etc.), and economy value (.01). I would be interested in readers views on how they think Framas should be

collected. Already in Germany the puritanical collector has laid down certain demands, namely FDCs which are hand addressed, postally used with no illustration and bearing correct postage on one label. The cover should be sent registered or express or both. The British collector is quite content to have a pretty, illustrated souvenir FDC in pristine condition. In years to come this will change I suspect, but which way?

Portugal - There have been some changes in the location of this country's seven Frama automats which were introduced in 1981. At the end of 1985 machines 004 and 005 were removed from service. They have been reinstalled at new locations and given new dies 008 and 009. This means that the seven machines currently in use are coded 001, 002, 003, 006, 007, 008, and 009. Since December 1985 machine 008 has been functioning at Lisbon Airport. It is in a strange location - the departure lounge - which is only accessible to travellers with valid flight tickets. In other words it is on the 'wrong' side of passport control. Obviously the authorities felt there was a need for it there, especially since Lisbon is used widely as a transit stop from far flung destinations. Another odd thing about this machine was that its first day was on a Sunday. Apart from Israel I doubt whether any (western) country has in recent years released an issue of stamps on a Sunday. (Maybe that's a theme for ATA topicalists?) Perhaps the busy nature of the location justified a Sunday first day. Machine 009 was installed surprisingly at Funchal on the island of Madeira. The date was January 15th, 1986. If you see FDCs around, don't hesitate to make a purchase.

Mention was made above of commemorative Framas. An inexpensive collection of commemorative Framas can still be made since so far there have only been nine with a tenth announced. They are:

<u>Country</u>	<u>Commemoration</u>	<u>Date of Issue</u>
1. Brazil	UPU Congress	September 1979
2. Belgium	BELGICA '82	December 1982
3. Cuba	Int'l Stamp Fair, Essen	May 1984
4. Cuba	UPU Congress, Hamburg	June 1984
5. Cuba	Sindelfingen	November 1984
6. Cuba	ESPAMER '85	March 1985
7. Belgium	RELIFIL	May 1985
8. Greece	Pan Hellenic Exhibition	November 1985
9. Belgium	CONGOFIL	March 1986
10. Finland	FINLANDIA '88	October 31, 1986

(Other commemorative automats, such as the French PHILEXFRANCE and SICOB of 1982, have been issued, but they are not products of Frama machines. - Ed.)

Readers wanting a Framma new issue service can reach me at the following address: Eric Elias, Philcard International Worldwide N. I. Service, 58 Greenacres, London N3 3LN. I shall be pleased to assist readers in their hunt for Framma labels.

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THE LAKES/NV. 889

In Bulletin 192 Ernest Roscoe described the above named townmark but couldn't provide the name of the user because his impression was on a small cut. Arthur Bryan has a copy of this meter on full cover with the return address: Citibank, PO Box 6004, The Lakes, NV 89163-6004. Dave Walsh submitted another full cover with the same townmark. His however has return address: Diners Club International, PO Box 17147, Denver, CO 80217-0147. Citibank probably handles the billing for Diners Club. (ed.)