

A STAMP FOR STAEHLE

Art lovers as well as pet lovers agree: it's about time the post office came up with a stamp honoring the illustrator Albert Staehle.

by Maynard Good Stoddard

Butch didn't have the regal bearing or the stamina of Lassie. Butch couldn't perform the tricks that made Benji a movie hero. Butch was a cocker spaniel whose one talent was sitting—while his master, Albert Staehle, the renowned illustrator, made him famous as America's pinup pooch, aided by his appearance on 25 covers of *The Saturday Evening Post*. In the process, Butch came to personify the love animal owners feel for their pets.

Today, President Bush, whose love for his own pooch, Millie, has been documented on previous *Post* pages, is recommending a commemorative stamp to honor Albert Staehle. Should the Postmaster General be persuaded, art lovers as well as pet lovers will agree: it's about time! To date, Norman Rockwell, a contemporary of Staehle's, is the only



Butch the pinup pooch debuted on the *Post's* cover chewing up a book of rationing stamps.



By using live animal models for realism and focusing on the animals' expressions, the late Albert Staehle became one of America's most popular illustrators.

American illustrator whose art has honored U.S. stamps.

Albert Staehle's art influenced everything from Borden's "Elsie the Cow" to Esso Oil's "Tiger in the Tank," and Staehle was also the creator of "Smokey the Bear." But his widest audience was *Post* readers who fell in love with "Cover Boy Butch." For who could resist the soulful eyes of this six-week-old black-and-white cocker puppy Staehle had found in a pet store window?

Whoever came up with the idea of a doggie on the cover was anywhere but in the doghouse after February 1944, when the first Butch cover appeared. It showed Butch chewing up a book of wartime rationing stamps. Not only did the magazine sell out quickly, but mail poured in defending the mischievous puppy. Some readers even sent rationing stamps to replace those the puppy had destroyed. Butch continued to endear himself to *Post* buyers until the end of the decade.

After Butch went blind at age 12, he and his offspring Butch, Jr., helped raise money for blind charities. They acquired additional fame when a New York TV station filmed Butch, Jr., leading Butch by his leash on one of their daily walks. Butch was also awarded a medal of honor by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for helping raise money for orphaned animals.

No doubt about it—Albert Staehle and Butch put a lasting stamp on animal art in America. If you would like to see Butch or his artist master honored on a postage stamp, you can lend your support by writing to: The Citizen's Stamp Advisory Committee, c/o Stamp Development Branch, U.S. Postal Service, Washington, D.C. 20260. ✱