

UNIQUE COLLECTION HIDDEN IN NEWLY-BUILT FLAT

Kappel: pennant collector Willi registered in the Guinness Book of Records – nobody has such a collection of international airline pennants



Wilfried Uhlig living in the Fritz-Heckert-Gebiet has 1034 pennants of international airlines in his collection. His wife Christine supports his passion. –FOTO: HOLGER LORENZ

HOLGER LORENZ

They have been always present in the old cinema films produced at an airport: the airline pennants. Whether of Lufthansa, Pan America, Sabena, Iberia, KLM or Western Airlines – they looked good, but you could never buy them and there have been only a few of them. They were exclusively for offices and foreign representatives of the airlines.

It is an interesting story how much hard work, persistence and persuasiveness Wilfried Uhlig needed in 44 Years to collect amazing 1034 pennants. But even more incredible is the look of his flat in the Fritz-Heckert-Gebiet. All the rooms are full of model planes, pennants, flags, strange planes – souvenirs and a thoroughly sorted collection of 45,000 postcards of plane types.

Pennant collector Willi was 14 years old, when he got his first pennant in 1959. “It was of the Spanish Airline Iberia,” he mentioned. In these days he was generally interested in flying - without the pennant mania.

“The orientation to these pennants came later, when I already had collected too much about flying, so that I had to make a decision.”

He got his passion implanted by his father, who described him every aeroplane in the sky and took him to the airports. In the 1960s he learned how to glide at the airport of Karl-Marx-Stadt: “It was beautiful, but not enough.” Then he went to the army and became a technician for aircrafts. In 1975 he went back to his civil life and is working as a supervisor since. Together with his wife Christine, known as Mick, he started building up his collection systematically. “Without Mick I wouldn’t have made it,” Wilfried Uhlig pointed out. And indeed Mick often knows faster and more exactly where something is in the flat and when a pennant was bought. She accompanies him to exchange markets in Munich, Stuttgart, Berlin-Schönefeld or to the biggest in Frankfurt/Main.

She writes and updates the archive lists, she sews the pennants into airtight plastic bags and as a house wife she is satisfied with a little space for her cloths and her dishes.

Mick and Willi seldom get a new Pennant at the exchange markets. But they like to swap pennants they have twice for “expensive” and original model planes of the airlines.

Every year the collector still writes letters to the airlines in the world and asks for the small donation of a pennant. “It works better, if you see a pennant somewhere. So you can ask an airline for a special one, explain where it is, how it looks like and why you like to have it,” says the passionate collector.

“Additionally you send them pictures of your collection and newspaper cuttings of you.” Lately Willi can present a registration in the Guinness Book of Records, too. When he applied for this registration, he only had 850 table flags and pennants. After the investigation for this registration he now knows that he is the only man in the world to collect table flags of airlines – so he won’t find an exchange partner in the future.

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