

May I have your autograph?

by Chuck Hoey, Curator ITTF Museum

Autographs have always been a part of Table Tennis history, as fans love their champions and a signature on a programme or bat is a lasting and treasured memory of a brief encounter with greatness.

Indeed items signed by star players make excellent exhibits in the ITTF Museum; for example the first World Championship programme signed in 1926 by all the participants. In the 1930s and '40s some programmes were printed with facsimile autographs of participants on the back cover. Nowadays most autographs by all sports heroes are hastily scribbled and often barely readable, or just a first initial and a wrinkled line.

Recently the Museum was fortunate to acquire a 1948 album chocked full of autographs, a veritable Who's Who of World Champions and top stars from the 1930s-40s: Barna, Vana, Leach, Sido, Farkas, Andreadis, Stipek, J. Koczian, Ehrlich, Haguenuer, Miles, Reisman, Peggy Franks, Vera Dace and many others. Each page includes a small cutout picture, a full signature, and some have handwritten notes about their careers. This beautiful book was compiled by a fan who clearly loved Table Tennis and its Champions, and is now on exhibit in the ITTF Museum.

