



Editorial

[Note: The following views are not particularly those of the RMS officers, nor should they be taken as representing the overall official RMS Match-cover Society,...and, if they prove to be too controversial...they aren't mine either!]

A LITTLE INNOCENT LOBBYING?

The annual RMS convention is almost upon us once again—this time, w-a-a-a-y over here in California. And, anytime collectors get together for a convention, swapfest, or even an occasional club meeting, there are always display competitions....the key word here being “competition.”

Although RMS's rules for displays are probably the most detailed and strictest in the hobby, every such competition, whether it be at AMCAL, United Eastern Swapfest, etc., prohibits the exhibitor from putting his or her name on the front of the display where it can be seen by possible judges. That's because judging is supposed to be done on a fair and impartial basis, and the idea is that if the judge knows beforehand which display belongs to whom, the resulting vote may be biased one way or the other.

And that's certainly a valid concern. As a teacher, I see that all the time in school. Whether the students are being asked to vote on student council candidates or which art project in class is the most attractive, it invariably deteriorates into a popularity contest where the actual qualifications of the person or item take a back seat to who the person or creator is.

Thus it is that I'm always a little concerned about the lobbying that inevitably takes place when there's a display contest looming on the

horizon...and anyone who's ever attended such an even knows exactly what I'm talking about.

Although such lobbying may sometimes be done by a spouse or friend, it's normally carried out by the person who created the display. It takes two forms: blatant and subtle.

In the blatant variety, the prospective judge is simply told outright, “That's my display there, the one with all the great Indian headdresses. None of the other display even come close to this one. You should vote for mine.”

In the subtle variety, the display owner simply drops a seemingly ‘innocent’ remark amidst an ongoing conversation: “Oh, I had the display I was entering just perfect, and then all those beautiful Indian covers shifted position in the baggage, and I had to quickly redo the whole thing when I got to the hotel.” Or, “Take a look at the General Match Co. covers I have on display and tell me if you see any new manumarks.”

The results are the same in any event. The person has just circumvented the rule about not showing his or her name on the particular display. Now, the judge knows that such-and-such display belongs to so-and-so, and all sorts of “social” factors may come into play: friendship, loyalty, guilt, revenge, and so on.

There used to be a regular at the AMCAL conventions who would unabashedly lobby for his own displays. He made sure everyone knew that he had displays in the contest and exactly which ones they were. Did it work? Well, he won an awful lots of awards!

If you're in Indian Wells next month, try conducting a little test; just keep a quiet count of how many times you're lobbied about various displays. I'll be surprised if you come away with a count of zero.

Of course, if you do, it's probably because everyone read this editorial, so I can't really lose!