

HOBBY HISTORY

The Celebrity Set Scandal

Ah! The Celebrity Set...one of the most famous and rarest of sets in the hobby. The set consists of 111 30-stick covers made by Lion. "Compliments of the American Match Industry" is imprinted on the inside of each cover.

Well, in 1951, eleven of the match companies retained the public relations firm of Verne Burnett Associates to increase the sale of book matches through a nationwide publicity campaign. The account exec was Bruce Millar, and the press agent was Marcella Schneider. Miss Schneider convinced the match companies that collectors would be a vital link in this campaign.

Some complete sets were brought to the 1951 RMS Convention in Asbury Park, NJ, courtesy of the match companies, through the efforts of John Andrews, RMS Public Relations Officer.

Complete sets were distributed as follows:

- Oldest collector present: Harry Poynton
- Collector from farthest north: Barney Gallagher
- Collector from farthest south: Marty Deer
- Collector from farthest west: Laurence Everitt
- Collector with nearest birthday: Blanche Kelly
- John Andrews
- War veteran: Rudy Olsson
- New England Club
- Empire Club
- NACAMCO Club
- Los Angeles Club
- San Francisco Club
- Denver Club

Two other sets were set aside for the Pennsylvania and Indianapolis clubs, which were just in the process of forming at the time.

The sets given to each local club were for the purpose of display and were to remain the

property of the respective clubs. About 200 Celebrity covers from broken sets were also distributed to members present.

Then the problem popped up. Al Polick, RMS President 'assumed' was under the impression that the set John Andrews received was for RMS, and that he had accepted it as a rep of RMS. Except, Andrews hadn't turned the set over to RMS..

-Nov. 4, 1951: Polick wrote Andrews asking for the return of the set.

-Nov. 11, 1951: Andrews responded that there was no set for RMS. The sets presented to the clubs were only for the regional clubs.

-Dec. 15, 1951: Edgar Perkins (the new public relations director for RMS) wrote to Andrews (at the request of Polick) demanding the return of the set and basically inferring that Andrews had stolen the set. (This particular set, by the way, was housed in an especially nice display case)

-The Jan 1952 *RMS Bulletin* also contained some semi-libelous remarks about Andrews and the missing 'RMS' Celebrity Set.

-Jan. 14, 1952: Andrews wrote a public letter to the RMS membership and furnished irrefutable proof that the set he received was indeed intended for him personally, and that there never was a set for RMS. (Millar and Schneider signed an affidavit saying that the set specifically given to Andrews for all of his work and cooperative efforts with Verne Burnett Associates)

-Jan 14, 1952: Andrews also sent letters to Perkins and Polick threatening to sue.

-Feb 6, 1952: Polick and Perkins apparently stepped back. Perkins wrote to Verne Burnett Associates protesting that no Celebrity set had been designated for RMS and asking for one. He received a terse response that there were none left.

-October 5, 1952: Andrews and his wife resigned from RMS.