

HOBBY HISTORY

National Matchcover Week April 22-28

There actually *was* a “National Matchcover Week”. It was April 22-28, and it was initiated in 1962. The only thing was...it wasn’t “official”.

I’m not an expert in “National Weeks,” but the term ‘National’ would indicate that the federal government would have to be involved, but I’m told that that’s not the case...and that wasn’t the case here.

No, this was the brainchild of collector Warren Delk in late 1961. He suggested in the March 1962 *RMS Bulletin* “that we work hard to make this a gigantic affair, one to hit the whole United States.” He was planning to contact each state governor to ask that the week of April 22-28 be so designated in that state. Delk went on to suggest “that during the one week dedicated to matchcovers...we make a special effort to get an exhibit display somewhere in our locality. That we make sure to ask our local newspaper, at least, and even local Radio and TV stations, to cover our display of matchcovers.”

Well, *Bulletin* Editor at the time, Ernestine Abbott, latched onto the idea immediately...*and why not?* So, as *the* week approached for the next few years, the *Bulletin* announced it, reported it, and hyped it.

By June 1962, National Matchcover Week newspaper articles were already beginning to appear in the *RMS Bulletin*, and the July *Bulletin* reported receiving “many, many articles from members who contacted their local newspapers for coverage.”

Delk’s idea actually caused quite a wave of publicity about the hobby throughout the entire country as a number of individual collectors took

up the crusade that he had started. The late, great Evelyn Hovious of San Francisco, alone, had one newspaper article, two radio, and two TV appearances during the week of April 22-28!

Apparently the *Patterson Evening News* (NJ) was the first to pick up on it in its April 10, 1962 issue. Many other papers, magazines, and journals across the country ran similar stories—*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Swappers’ Paradise and Hobby Heaven*, *Sunday News*, and so on. True, some ran them a little late for National Matchcover Week (the *Allentown Evening Chronicle* ran theirs on May 10th; the *Kankakee Sunday Journal* ran theirs on May 13th; and the *West Orange Chronicle* ran theirs on May 17th, for example), but publicity is publicity — although, sometimes you have to wonder...the Elmhurst, IL, article referred to Joshua Pusey as “Mr. Pufey” (!) and called “phillumenists” “thilluenists” throughout the entire article.

There were public exhibits put up by collectors in Vineland, NJ; Des Moines, IA, and elsewhere; There were radio interviews and TV spots. The ball was rolling!

The *Bulletin* continued to carry National Matchcover Week items through 1969, although by 1967, judging from bulletin space donated to it, it was already petering out. After 1969, it disappeared completely. No reason was ever given that I could find. Editor Frank Gosztyla simply says in the May June 1971 *RMS Bulletin*, “Seems like it just fell by the wayside and no one cares to pick it up.” I did notice, though, that in 1969 Warren Delk was having medical problems, so my guess is that he either passed away soon after or became inactive. He was a Committee Chairman, and neither he nor his National Matchcover Week Committee are even mentioned in the 1970 convention business meeting minutes. I’m surprised RMS didn’t try to keep it going. Gosztyla suggested an “Annual Convention Week,” but that never went anywhere.

Too bad. It was a good idea, and it got results.