

MATCH TIPS for New Collectors

by “Billboard Bill” Thomas

Everyone makes New Year resolutions but hardly anyone keeps them. As a new collector, you can show many of us old-timers how to do it right by doing things the way everyone should be doing them...

Answer all mail, and reasonably promptly. Yes, you work all day and mow the lawn and shoot hoops with the kids, but if you skip a bit of watching the idiot box and tend to incoming hobby mail instead you'll be glad you did.

Trade fairly. That doesn't mean just one-for-one; it means taking the trouble to find at least a few covers that your trader will be delighted with. One of the nicest treats is to read, “Hey, those last covers you sent me were real great!”

Join some clubs. They don't all have to be in your home town or even nearby. Many of us belong to widely scattered clubs so we can read about our colleagues in their bulletins. Attending local club meetings will enable you to move upward more rapidly from new collector to not-so-new collector.

Take an active part. Don't just pay your dues and sit back waiting to be amused or entertained; you do that at a ball game or rodeo. If you are bashful about running for office, then volunteer to bring refreshments or to do a little Show & Tell about YOUR categories, which are different from anyone else's. A club's officers do not have to be the smartest, oldest, or most knowledgeable collectors in the club—the best president is one who knows how to run a meeting, even if they know little about covers.

Publicize our hobby. Talk it up at social gatherings and at the office. Make a display for a local bank's lobby—and be sure to have your phone number available. Give a little promo speech at a Kiwanis, Elks, or Toastmasters

gathering—no one will laugh at you because YOU know more about the hobby than anyone you're talking to.

Collect actively. No need to make an all-day crusade out of it if you're a working type, just hit one merchant on your lunch hour. Watch for merchants going out of business, changing their name or address, and offer to take all of their old matchbooks off their hands. If you're retired, enjoy a full day of cruising the countryside, enjoying new scenery, and stopping wherever matches might be obtained. You could surprise yourself.

Carry a caddy of supermarket matches with you—some merchants feel they MUST have matches for their customers, regardless of what kind they are, so offer to swap your caddy for theirs. Win friends for the hobby by telling them how great their matches are, even if they're not.

Recruit for the hobby. Carry a few club applications with you, including RMS ones. If they have time to fill it out, offer to take it and their dues to mail in yourself. Follow up on local recruits by calling to see if they need help or encouragement, and then give them help and encouragement.

Get others working for you. Friends, relatives, or work colleagues who travel can be asked to bring back matches; it's no big imposition. Show them how to shuck a matchbook so they can bring back only the empty covers—it's safer. If you phone or e-mail business calls, ask them to send you a cover or two, and remember to return a Thank You.

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