

MATCH TIPS for New Collectors

by "Billboard Bill" Thomas

This is not only for new collectors but also for old, used collectors: **ANSWER YOUR MAIL!** I am appalled at how deeply we Americans have sunk into the lazy mud pit of Not Answering Mail. For awhile I thought it was just the people in our hobby, but then I learned that ignoring one's mail has become a norm, a standard in other hobbies, in the social world, and in the world of business and commerce.

I have sent covers to total strangers who pleaded for them in RMS Bulletin ads and articles and have had not one reply. I have a Waiting For Answer file which contains letters to local Postmasters, the Postmaster General of the US, and to the administrator of my local hospital. All asked questions which call for an answer, but my mailbox continues to rust. The only folks who answer promptly are in the IRS—when I wrote that I had indeed made a tax estimate payment that they were bugging me for, they promptly replied, "Oh yeah? Well prove it!" That was just before the new non-hostile IRS law was enacted.

C'mon folks, how about us phillumenists being different from the rests of the world and tending to our mail like everyone used to do? With e-mail and faxes, you can now communicate faster and cheaper than ever before, but you still have to push a few keys and buttons. When writing to your traders and buddies, please impress on them that you are in the habit of making prompt replies, and that you appreciate the same in return. And what's even more important than making prompt replies is making any reply at all. Failing to answer a letter will move your seat in Heaven to one where all the covers are used, bobtailed and nationals.

In this issue, you should find some or all of the RMS display rules. Some of the rules and categories are in need of change. If you want to

see some changes, write to Marc Edelman; he's the RMS honcho of displays, and he needs to know what you like and want. If you write him soon enough, he may have time to consider & prepare some changes for the August convention. Getting them rules changed is like getting Saddam Hussein to say a rosary.

Yes, matches are becoming more scarce and more generic, but don't be discouraged. There's still plenty around. Would be no fun or challenge if there were heaps of Lindy covers laying around everywhere, eh? I still receive some military covers that I've never seen before, casinos and casino hotels are using matches like mad, and DD Bean and RJR are keeping us well flooded with Camels. I think that part of our matches shortage is a shortage of good, aggressive matchbook advertising salesmen. They're too lazy to hit the Joe's Bar or Ma & Pa's Diner; they want to sell only to the big corporate advertisers who buy big orders. Matchbook advertising is still rather cheap, but you and I can all help by telling a merchant, "What! You don't have matches? Hey, that's the best and cheapest advertising you can buy!" Local merchants don't hear such a pitch from matchbook advertising salesmen any more, so let's YOU do the sales pitch. You won't make a commission, but you'll help our hobby to find more matches.

If you didn't get a fire extinguisher for Christmas, go buy one for your hobby room. If you don't buy one, at least keep a tall rum & coke handy; if there's no fire, you'll know what to do with it. Postal rates are going up, or may be up already. Makes it all the more sensible to weigh your trade mail and squeeze another cover in before crossing the 1-oz. line. Ask your postal clerk for a chart of new postal rates, including international. Ask them why the Postmaster General doesn't answer his mail too.

[Hey, I'm Bill Thomas of 222 S. Ranger Blvd., Winter Park, FL 32792. Phone/fax is 407-657-0222 and I welcome you questions, ideas, or complaints. If you include a few nice airline or girlie covers, I'll return some from Florida's Walt Disney World. Happy 1999!]