

Getting a Return On Your Time and Effort

For a number of years, not too long ago, it seemed that selling covers was thought of as something that should be “beneath” the ethics of the average collector. It was OK if you were one of the few that had set up a large-scale mail order business, and it was OK to sell your collection when you were retiring from the hobby, but selling covers on a regular basis, or even a semi-regular basis, whether you were an “average” collector or a “dealer” who set up a table at a convention...or a suitcase in your room...was portrayed by many as some sort of traitorous behavior to the basic concepts behind the hobby.

That wasn't true, of course. One has only to browse through the earliest hobby bulletins and newsletters, even those before RMS, to see that collectors were selling covers right from the outset. Today, it's a common and accepted practice, especially with the technological advantages we have now, such as e-bay and web sites, although, I dare say, there are die-hards who still view this activity as something worthy only of an Untouchable. The latter view is unreasonable, unrealistic, and impractical.

Selling some of your dupes is a practical manner in which to get at least a small return on the time, effort, and expense you've incurred in pursuit of your hobby. Although we can rightly tout that participation in our hobby is *relatively* inexpensive, there are expenses: albums and pages, certainly, among other sundry supplies, postage for trading...and then there are the club meetings, conventions, dues, etc. And what about auctions? The prices for the same covers steadily get bigger and bigger each year. Although you'll never end up like the guy below, it seems only logical to cover some of those expenses from what money you can occasionally generate from your own covers.

But, that's only one of the advantages to selling off dupes from time to time. Another very important result is that it keeps covers in circulation rather than gathering dust in boxes throughout the house. And, *buying* those covers may be the only way that newer collectors can get established.

Lastly, but certainly still very important, many, if not most, clubs would either collapse or be forced to raise their dues to incredible levels without those covers to sell in their auctions, raffle as prizes, and so forth. Dues never cover bulletin production and mailing costs. Clubs have to have other revenue-raising activities. That's *always* a good reason to support your club auctions...and there can't be buyers without sellers!

So, as it turns out, in one way you're not only doing yourself a favor when you sell covers...you're actually helping both your fellow collectors, the clubs you belong to, and the hobby at large.

As an addendum, I should point out that I argued for years that the selling of covers shouldn't result in turning the hobby into a business. And, although I don't think that has happened as yet, the selling side of the hobby constantly looms larger and larger as 1) covers have become less easily available; 2) the number of collectors in the hobby has dropped off sharply; and 3) trading has dwindled to a mere shadow of its former self. Personally, I certainly don't have anything against selling covers. In the past, when I had hundreds of traders, I *needed* a large stock of dupes, but these days I sell my dupes off when they're getting too voluminous to deal with, knowing that the demand just isn't there any longer from traders. Still, I can't help sighing as I remember those wonderful times—sorting out those dupes into all those quirky little categories that I knew one or more of my traders would ask for sooner or later and knowing that they would be appreciated and cherished upon receipt. (By the way, if you're nostalgic about those days, you can recapture them by attending the nearest swapfests!)