Elks Matchsafes
By Andy Denes

At the end of your recent article "Love Those Elks!" *[May/Jun 2007]* you asked, "What was going on, match-wise, in the previous 55 years?" The answer may be "match hardware." There were numerous B. P. O. E. match safes (those which held loose stick matches), and there are some 19 shown in Sanders & Sanders, *Pocket Matchsafes – Reflections of Life & Art, 1840-1920* (Schiffer, 1997), pp. 54-55. Most of these B. P. O. E. items are generic, with no date or mention of a specific B. P. O. E. lodge. With the emergence of matchbooks around the turn of the century, matchbook holders (match safes which held a matchbook, rather than loose stick matches) enter the mix, and I am attaching two scans of B. P. O. E. matchbook holders that pre-date your 1923 Lion Safety-Firsts.

The first is a sterling holder marked "A.R.T. Mfg. Co. New York Pat. Jan. 12. 04," dating this holder to 1904, or later. The object sticking out at the top right is the blade of a cigar cutter that was part of this holder, and this modification was patented August 15, 1905. The holder includes no reference to that second patent, and this could mean [a] that it was an oversight, and nothing further should be deduced about the dating of this holder; or [b] that the second patent had not been issued yet, in which case the holder was made between the two patent dates. It should be noted that the "T" of A.R.T. was Diamond Match's Henry C. Traute, and A. R. T. Manufacturing Company was another iron he had in the fire. The second is a copper holder with enamel appliqués for both the B. P. O. E. and the Fraternal Order of Eagles. This holder is inscribed "State Convention – Butte – July 1-5, 1921." The two organizations apparently had a joint convention, of which this was a souvenir.

I think one can generalize these developments throughout match history, in that those who commissioned various match-related media favored the permanence of match holders until they were eventually won over by the economy, efficacy, and ubiquity of matchbooks.