

Getting Trading Stock

Well, as I pointed out last time, currently the three main ways that collectors get their covers are buying, trading, and from the freebie tables. But, we're just interested in building up our trading stock, here, so buying is out for most people since they're not interested in buying trading stock. Trading is normally out, since it's trading material we're trying to get in the first place.

From the top three, then, that leaves us with freebie tables. Freebie tables are a great source of covers, but, as a new collector, I believe that I was told that the material there was free for the taking, but one was expected to take covers only that were needed for the person's actual collections. I'm not certain taking items for trading stock would qualify. But, that was some time ago, and my recollection may be faulty. If someone's an expert on freebie table etiquette, please let me know.

In any event, freebie tables are only a good source *if* the collector can get to them...and that means getting to those club meetings, swapfests, and conventions...which most collectors in the hobby, for whatever reason, *don't*!

So, where does that leave us? We're not going to buy; we're not going to trade (until *already* have trading stock); and we're probably not going to have access to freebie tables on a steady and regular basis. Hmmmm! There *are* other sources, however.

One is relatives and friends. Just get the word out and you could have a veritable army of helpers scouring the community...state...country!...All for you! Of course, the more social you are, and the bigger your family, the more effective this approach is. In actual fact, hardly any collectors rely solely on this method. It's just too hit-and-miss. Still, it can furnish you with some covers...perhaps a lot, over time.

If you're willing to do the leg work, there's always the tried and true "Get 'em yourself" option. Get out and canvas your community businesses and pick up your own caddies of covers. Yes, those business covers *are* still out there! Yes, they're not as plentiful as they once were...and Yes, this approach takes more effort than it used to. But, it's an option readily available to anyone who still drives and is not bed or wheelchair-bound. And, the actual getting-of-the-covers is free. It *does* help to have a winning personality and convincing arguments as to why the clerk or store manager should give up those matchbooks, and the most successful matchbook-gathering collectors all have it down to a science. Their expert suggestions include things such as: being able to show a matchcover club membership card along with, perhaps, a copy of a bulletin (this establishes your authenticity); using the argument that the matchbooks were designed to advertise that business, and your sharing those matchbooks with all sorts of local and non-local collectors will thereby give the business even more bang for its advertising buck.

Too strenuous and time-consuming? How about a different way of canvassing your community? Now, this option involves buying covers, but it's much cheaper than auctions or other normal purchasing procedures. The idea here is that you can advertise in a local circular that you're willing to buy matchbook accumulations and then simply wait for the owners of such to contact *you*! You *will* eventually have to go out and look at those accumulations if they sounded interesting over the phone or in the e-mail, but, unlike simply walking into business after business, ad infinitum, this method is more sure-fire to result in cover acquisitions.

As with so many other things in life, it gets down to how much time and effort are you willing to expend. The results are usually proportionate. It's up to you.