

The Hazards of Collecting

There are some “mistakes” in collecting that can be aggravating, costly, and/or downright dangerous to either you or your covers. If you’re new to the hobby, you might wish to take note of these, especially since they can all be avoided.

The only real danger to you is presented by the inherent *flammable* nature of what you are collecting. Even if you, as most of us, are into collecting covers, as opposed to full-books, you can’t get away from dealing with the matches...and therein lies the rub! (ouch)

Normally, the covers brought to you by friends and relatives, those you buy at yard sales, flea markets, etc., and those you pick up yourself from various businesses, are all going to have matches in them. So, those matches will have to be stripped out at some point or another. If you’re like me, I save them up until I get a nice big bag full and then settle down with a good video and strip away [*the matches, not me!*].

The end result is a pile of nice, usable covers that you sort and store and an even bigger pile of matches that you....? What *do* you do with them? Here are three solutions that I use, myself:

- 1) I’m a pipe smoker, so I always save some to actually use.
- 2) I also have a wood stove, so I can burn them there, but that’s really only practical in the winter. [*Note: do not burn them all at once unless you have asbestos furniture!*]
- 3) Even using #'s 1 and 2 simultaneously, I always have lots left over, so the only other choice there is is to simply throw them out. **BUT, definitely DO NOT throw them out before soaking them first!** Those matches are very flammable, and just a little accidental friction will set them off...in your garbage can, in the garbage truck, or at the dump! So, make sure they’ve all been soaked in water before you throw them out. [*see the upcoming Jan/Feb issue’s “The Lighter*

Side of the Hobby” for a true “incinerating” experience!]

The possibility of a fire is also present in other phases of the hobby, such as mailing full-books to a trader. The post office has *very strict* regulations about mailing matches...and *heavy penalties* for burning down one of their buildings or charring a mailman. Basically, matches have to be mailed in foil-lined containers. Some collectors simply line a cardboard box with aluminum foil; others similarly wrap the full-books, themselves, and mail them in a soft, padded envelope, *but I don’t recommend the latter*. I checked with my local post office, and it doesn’t sell any special containers.

What about travelling with matches? *Try telling the flight attendant to please store your suitcase full of matches and watch how fast both you and your suitcase are left on the loading platform!* Checking with American Airlines, you can’t carry all those matches onto the plane; you have to check that bag with your check-in baggage.

And then there’s the entire world of collecting full-books, and even those of us who aren’t full-book collectors still have at least a few Features to store, so this affects us all. Personally, having thousands and thousands of full-books stored around the house would scare the bejeebers out of me, even though I don’t know of a single serious incident ever caused by such. Precautions should definitely be taken. If you store your full-books in albums, as some Feature collectors do, one precaution would be to have blank sheets that separate each full sheet from any contact with another, *although I don’t trust that either because of the pressure, and possible friction, from the sheets laying on each other when the album is closed*. Another precaution would be to store your full-books in metal drawers or cabinets.

I’m not a full-book collector, myself, so how about some of you who are sending in your own methods, and we’ll run them in the next issue? There are probably a variety of interesting possibilities.