

AMCAL

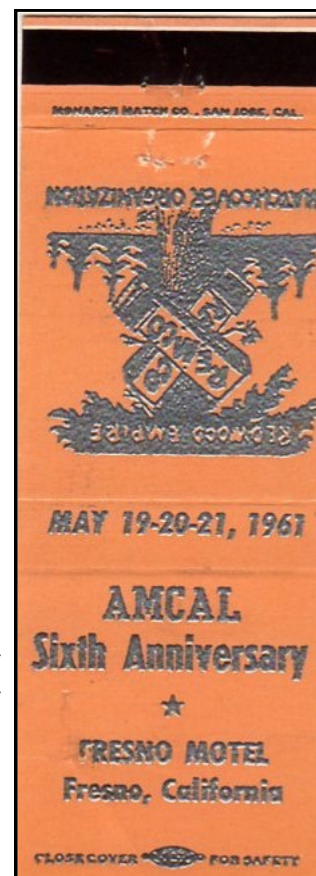
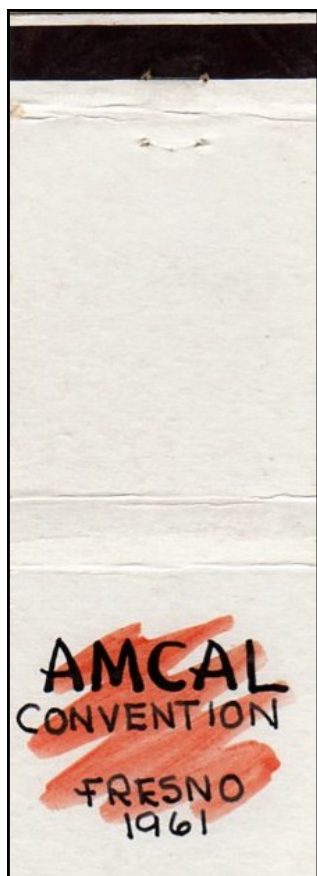
by
Mike Prero

Although by some quirk of fate I've fallen into being RMS editor, I rarely am able to attend the RMS Convention as the dates normally conflict with when I go back to school. Indeed, the last one I was at was the Denver get-together in 1987!...and that's one of the reasons that I appreciate AMCAL so much.

"AMCAL" stands for Associated Matchcover Clubs of California, and, just as the name implies, it's all of the California clubs together...and that's the biggest association in the hobby, simply because California has always been able to correctly boast the largest number of regional clubs of any state. Over the years, the specific clubs have occasionally changed as, for example, the Golden Orange and Northern California clubs disappeared and our own Sierra-Diablo came upon the scene, but AMCAL has always represented the California contingent of the hobby—those wacky and wonderful people from out West.

The AMCAL conventions began in 1956. As the cover to the left shows, it was initially referred to at least by some as "AMCOC," but by the following year it was "AMCAL" to one and all. *[and thank goodness!]*

The entire concept is a totally voluntary cooperative effort on the part of the California clubs, of which there are currently four: Angelus, Long Beach, San Diego, and Sierra-Diablo. The clubs, themselves, don't pay any dues or the like, and, as long as the individual collector belongs to at least one California club, his or her membership in AMCAL is automatic. It's an experiment that has proved to be both successful and enduring...thanks to the time, effort, and dedication of all those who continually make it happen...and collectors



now attend from as far away has England.

Past AMCAL Locations

1956 - San Francisco	1965 - Fresno	1974 - Fresno	1981 - Fresno	1990 - Fresno
1957 - Long Beach	1966 - Fresno	1975 - Santa	1982 - Fresno	1991 - Fresno
1958 - San Francisco	1967 - Fresno	Maria	1983 - Fresno	1992 - Fresno
1959 - Fresno	1968 - Fresno	1976 - Santa	1984 - Santa Maria	1993 - Fresno
1960 - Fresno	1969 - Fresno	Maria	1985 - Santa Maria	1994 - Bakersfield
1961 - Fresno	1970 - Fresno	1977 - Fresno	1986 - Santa Maria	1995 - Bakersfield
1962 - Fresno	1971 - Fresno	1978 - Fresno	1987 - Visalia	1996 - Bakersfield
1963 - Fresno	1972 - Fresno	1979 - Fresno	1988 - Visalia	1997 - Bakersfield
1964 - Fresno	1973 - Fresno	1980 - Fresno	1989 - Visalia	1998 - Bakersfield

If you've never attended an AMCAL Convention, any description I give you here can't really do it justice, but let me at least try and take you on a personal tour...alá me! First, AMCAL runs for a full 6 days, with the last attendees leaving on the seventh day. It always starts off on a **Sunday**. Last year, there was a champagne brunch to get things going, room hopping during the afternoon, the President's buffet, and then keno. **Monday**, there was the first registration, a Chinese auction, some outside activities, a no host dinner and more room hopping. **Tuesday** was more of the same, but with a tour and a wine & cheese party. By **Wednesday**, things are going into high gear. Most of the attendees have arrived and the first big auction takes place. There was more room hopping, a chucking contest, and show & tell.

Thursday and Friday are the peak days. Now, on top of everything else, the exhibit room is open with all of the eye-popping displays and the freebie tables are open *[although both always close during the auctions...which forces all the people who aren't interested in the latter to basically return to their rooms. In my opinion, the other activities should be kept open in order to accommodate the interests of the greatest number of people]*. The auctions are big, long, and offer a very wide array of covers to buyers, although, not surprisingly, the bidding often raises the going prices to ridiculous heights...but, that's the fun of auctions! Of course, the room-hopping, cover-swapping, eating, and shop-talking continue. Thursday was the Casino Night with shrimp cocktails. Friday, there was also the one and only AMCAL business meeting and, in the evening, the wonderful poolside buffet with a live band, followed by bingo. **Saturday**, things are capped off with voting for the display awards in the morning and the final Awards Banquet in the evening.

By the time you're ready to leave, whether you've stayed all week or just a couple of days, you're loaded down with covers, perhaps some awards, and all sorts of notes and memos to yourself to remind you later that John is looking for such-and-such category, you owe Mary some good covers for that nice Girlie set she saved for you, Doug needs a copy of the list you're doing, etc. But most of all, you've renewed old acquaintances, made new friends and contacts, and revitalized your enthusiasm for your collecting in particular and the hobby in general...not to mention, of course, that during the whole process you also managed to have a great little vacation. And it's even better for me, because by the time I get back home, school is just about to end, and I go out for summer vacation!

Attending a convention gives you the opportunity to experience the hobby from a different perspective. It's exciting, there's always something going on, you're surrounded by your peers, and you see lots of covers that you ordinarily wouldn't. Conventions are great, and many would say AMCAL is the best.