

Those Early AMCAL Conventions

Recollections of Loren Ross

AMCAL was organized in 1955, prior to the RMS Convention that year, which was scheduled to be held in Los Angeles. As noted in last month's feature article on AMCAL, the original letters used were "AMCOC." The three founding clubs were Angelus Matchcover Club (Los Angeles), Redwood Empire Matchcover Club (Santa Rosa), and Golden State Matchcover Club (San Francisco). The three clubs each put in \$25 for a total of \$75 to start a treasury, and from that meagre financial start we now have our 45-year old, very successful institution.

In 1958, there was quite a lot of discussion about adding more clubs to AMCAL, especially Long Beach (I got this from Vance Marks and Edgar Marshall, as I was not part of AMCAL and did not attend that particular meeting). After it was decided to accept Long Beach, the other main item was how much to charge Long Beach. As it turned out, no future clubs paid any assessment, since the outcome of the said discussion was that any club formed in California would be admitted to AMCAL and that there would be no dues required.

Some of the clubs that used to be part of AMCAL but are now defunct are: Redwood Empire, Matchcover Club, Golden Gate Matchcover Club, Northern California Matchcover Club, and Golden Orange Matchcover Club....and there was also a group of 6 (not a club) known as the "Sinful Six"! *[There must be an interesting story behind that one!]*

Original plans for the AMCAL conventions called for the annual conventions to be held in Southern California on odd years and in Northern California on even years. The first convention was actually held in Monterey *[the location wasn't stated on the matchcovers that year, although there was a map shown of the coast area]*. The second convention was in Long Beach. The third convention, in 1958, was actually combined with the RMS Convention that year in San Francisco. After that, though, it was decided to make the convention location more convenient for people to attend, and so Fresno was picked as a centrally located site. Thus it was that AMCAL was moved to Fresno for the next 16 years.

AMCAL conventions were to be held from Thursday to Sunday each year, with no by-laws or constitution. Early AMCALs only had one auction, sometimes in a guest room. At these early auctions, bids many times would be raised by pennies, perhaps equal to 15¢ or 20¢ in today's dollars. The auction consisted of five lots per member, with 10% of the selling price going to AMCAL. The one main convention function was the banquet on Saturday night. In 1964, a Friday-night dinner was put in place to hold people at the motel. Early room rates would have been in the \$4-\$6 range. In 1964, at Motel Fresno, a room ran \$6-\$10, and the convention banquet was \$3.50. It was estimated that a person could attend the entire convention for about \$65, including room, meals, and all events. Today, that \$65 pays for one night at the hotel.

Early registration was \$2, equivalent to \$20-\$25 today (today is a bargain). AMCAL established ten display awards for the convention: Best of Show, and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd in Singles, Sets, and Groups.

[Special thanks to Loren for this look back at an AMCAL that most of us weren't around for. It helps put things into perspective]