

Tales Of The Undaunted Collector

[Ed. note: I've been collecting these stories for many years, but I never got around to running them, so you'll note that the authors in one or two cases are now deceased...but the tireless dedication and creativity of the collectors mentioned here lives on...]

The late Bill Thomas, FL: The *Silver Meteor* train went from New York to Miami each day, passing through Winter Park. From the train platform one day, I asked a dining car waiter if he had any AMTRAK matches. He said he didn't, but that they had them way back there in the lounge car at the opposite end of the train. Way too far for me to go, so I returned to the station the next day, patiently awaiting the arrival of the same train—only this time, I made it a point to be at the far end of the platform, where the lounge car would be. When I asked the lounge car steward if he had any matches, he said, "No, but they got 'em, up forward there in the dining car." Phooey! I finally got some from the AMTRAK office, itself.

Annie Johnson, IL: Some friends of mine were at a bar several years ago celebrating a birthday. One of the girls picked up two matchbooks for me and eventually gave them to me at work. After thanking her, I opened the first one, and it was full of chewed gum! How gross! I was afraid to open the other one, but it was OK. I gave her a hard time about the one with the gum in it. I'm glad she always gets me *two* books each time.

Joe DeGennaro, NY: I was staying at a Holiday Inn down south, and they happened to have a non-stock cover. Usually, I have time to check the place out and hit all the logical places for matches, but unfortunately on this occasion I had gotten there late and had to leave early the next morning. I did get a few handfuls, but I wanted a caddy so I called Housekeeping and asked if I could have a box ('caddy' to us). She said she'd have to check

with the manager, and if he said it was OK she would bring it to the front desk. When she arrived with a couple of caddies in hand, I thought I had hit the jackpot. Then reality set in. The manager said I could have a box for \$5.00. I looked at him in disbelief and said that was ridiculous since they didn't cost the hotel anywhere near that amount and were produced to advertise, not for profit. I told him that I would be giving his hotel free publicity all over the country, and, if I had to pay, \$1.00 might be a more reasonable price. Now he was taken aback and said, "No way!" I declined the \$5.00 price, but I was determined to get myself a caddy.

I put my stuff in the car and proceeded to find Housekeeping. On the way there, I ran into the hotel's handyman and asked if he had access to their matches. After a short explanation of matchcover collecting and explaining that I was in a hurry, he went away and returned with two caddies, which he gladly gave me and declined the \$2.00 I offered him. My extra effort had paid off. All in all, it wasn't a bad morning.

Dan Bitter, OK: In 1984, I was working at the World's Fair in Louisiana for six weeks. And, of course, New Orleans is full of eating places with lots of types of covers. Anyway, business at these restaurants was so poor because of the Fair—no customers, no matches, no nothing—so I came up with an idea since I was at the Fair all day. Why not talk them into giving me a caddy or two to take to the fair and give them out at the exhibit in order to promote their businesses. Well, that almost went too well! Within a week's time, I had gathered over 450 caddies. Some gave one caddy; others were a little more generous, maybe 5-6 caddies; and this did not include the five full cases that were given to me to give out—and these were from all different establishments. One restaurant was so grateful at the results that I never had to buy another meal while I was in New Orleans!

Have a favorite story that highlights your determination? Send it in, by all means. If you can e-mail it in to me, all the better, because I won't have to retype it....The Ed.