
How Spouses Fare In The Hobby

“At last year’s [1949] convention, an 83-year-old widower, Harry Poynton, who specializes in “Girlies,” or gamlour-girl covers, and Burton Keller, an 8-year-old, who specializes in “Giants,” or outsize covers, posed together for the benefit of the newsreels. But most of the big match-cover men I have met are middle-aged and married.

A few romances between match-cover collectors have been sparked by the admiration a man and woman feel when they show each other their 1939 “Baseball Centennials” (16 to the set) and “First Movies” (1932 issue, including the Marie Dressler and Jean Harlow covers). But these are the exception, not the rule. Most collectors acquired their covers within the past 10 years and their wives a little earlier. Naturally enough, the enthusiasm of these marriage partners for match covers is unequal.

Ted Park, a Rhode Island collector, answered an ad in a Providence paper which offered a collection of match covers in exchange for an outboard motor. Park admitted he didn’t have an outboard motor to trade but said that he might be interested in buying the collection. The owner asked him to come around. Park went, prepared to offer as much as \$50 if the covers looked good. . However, in the best tradition of swappers, he started with a low bid of \$5.

The trading never progressed beyond that point. The owner said, “The collection is yours.” His wife was standing right behind him when he said it. She followed Park to the door when he left, the collection in tow, and with a convincing show of gratitude told him that he had made her “the happiest woman in the world.” Not all women married to matchcover collectors go to such extremes. Some of them compromise.

Needless to say, it’s one thing to tolerate the difficulties which match-cover collecting creates for the housewife if you live in a 10-room house. It’s another thing if you live in a one-bedroom or all-in-one-room apartment. One collector kept his duplicates, which are necessary for trading, under the bed. Every time his wife tried to tidy their one-bedroom apartment, she had to stumble over albums, shelves, and cigar boxes filled with match covers. She learned to circuit these, but for some reason she was never able to resign herself to having the extras stored under the bed. She stood it as long as she could. Then she dais the match covers must go.

But separating a collector from his match covers is a little like separating a hiker from his shoes and socks. The husband finally hit on a way to get around his wife’s housekeeping problem and keep his matchcovers, too. He built a platform on wheels which fitted under the bed, and on this stacked his duplicates. Now, when his wife wants to sweep out, all she has to do is roll out this dolly , swish the mop around, roll the dolly back in place, and go on with her work. So far she seems reasonably well satisfied with this arrangement.

Some match-cover collectors’ wives, in self-defense, have started rival collections of menus, post cards, and scenic folders, streetcar transfers, salt shakers, streetcar tokens, pencils, and swizzle sticks. They bring their own collections to the R.M.C.S. conventions, show off their prizes to one another, and swap stories of how hard it is to have a match cover collector in the house.” [From *The American Magazine*, August, 1950, pp. 42-43+]

This article got me thinking about....How Spouses Fare In The Hobby...so....>>>



[Ed. I canvased collectors with these basic questions: 1. Does spouse collect with you? 2. Is spouse supportive? 3. Is spouse at least tolerant? 4. Hobby is a real sore point? I divided the responses here into positive and negative, but some would go in the middle.]

“My wife is supportive and sort of collects with me, in fact she goes outta her way to look for them for me, as she travels more than I do today, and she makes sure all her relatives get them for me if they see them.” *Anonymous*

“Well, my wife just read your e-mail and here are her answers: 1. No; 2. Sometimes; 3. Yes; 4. No. If we downsize from a four bedroom two-story to a bungalow - guess what doesn't move with us; if I die first, an empty garbage truck better back into the driveway (heh heh).” *Jerry Craig. CA*

“Regarding your email questions: My wife does not collect but is a member of a club or two. I would describe her as "tolerant" toward my collecting. She particularly enjoys the trips to UES and RMS each year.” *Ron Barksdale. CT*

“I think #3 comes closest to my situation. My wife tolerates my collections, but she thinks I'm nuts for having them. (I have a few other collections, but matchcovers is my largest.) I think that people who collect are of a different mentality.” *Larry Danver. CA*

“Yes, we do collect together. I started much later than Janet. One reason being I was working and could not get to the conventions. So when I started attending conventions I found the freebie tables. Not knowing what to pick out or up, Janet very firmly told me not to save covers in her areas, which turned out to be very numerous. So I settled on my areas: drug stores, barber shops, phone numbers, and U.S. towns, sort of by default. She has "falsely" accused me of going through her covers in search of my areas. Now, I feel that I am the better collector; Janet does more of the club work. We get along very well and support each other. I converted a spare bedroom into my work area. She has the rest of the house.” *Duane Johnk. CA*

“I have a spouse but she does not collect. Still, she is very supportive of my collecting.” *George Sparacio. NJ*

“You bet! My husband is a collector and loves his Military covers, plus collects Crabs and Chef hats. I got Bill interested in the hobby in 1986, before we were married, and he's been hooked ever since.” *Jan Penny. FL*

“My wife now collects with me; in fact, she has outbid me on some items when we have auctions at our club's meetings. She does not belong to RMS or to the local club, but does enjoy attending the meetings with me.” *Jeff Williams. PA*

“My husband doesn't collect (anything!), but he is supportive of my collecting. My mom usually attends swapmeets/conventions with me, and we always joke about what my husband will say when I get home. Usually it's just, "Oh no, you got more matches! " He will, however, bring home matches for me if he sees them somewhere.” *Debbie Guynup. NY*

“A few years ago when I was single I regularly attended club meetings and AMCAL. When I met Alfie she was not exactly sure what a matchcover collector was all about. She was not interested in collecting but she was more than willing to attend the various functions with me, and we went to two AMCAL's, two Sierra-Diablo swapfests, one RMS, and even attended some club meetings. When we moved to Arizona it became somewhat prohibitive to attend club meetings, so we will attend the S/D swapfest next week and decide about AMCAL after that. Alfie is a doll collector and has over 700 dolls, so she is quite tolerant of my hobby, and also very supportive. Since we often travel to doll shows and antique shows in support of her hobby, she does not mind when I suggest going to a matchcover meeting. In fact, she looks forward to it since that affords her an opportunity to browse through the antique stores in the area. She is particularly looking forward to the swapfest because she is familiar with all the antique stores in the area. Since we are both retired, our individual hobbies give us plenty to do and we never seem to be in conflict.” *Jack Benbrook AZ*

“My ex-?*&^(\$@ had nothing to do with my hobby.....she could have named it as a co-respondent in our divorce!” *Anonymous*



“My ex thought I was nuts. She said if I was going to collect things, I should collect diamonds and furs...which is just one of the many reasons why she’s now an ‘ex’. She even used my collection as leverage for what she wanted in the divorce settlement. How low can a human being sink!” *Mike Prero, CA*

“Yes, I have a wife. No, she does not share any collecting of covers or casino chips. She does support my activities. I can only display or have covers and chips in binders in my office (spare bedroom). I am allowed a nicely framed display of my best chips in the family room, but not covers. She attended a chip show in Las Vegas, but spent most of her time in the casino. She will not attend a swapfest or AMCAL. Nothing for her to do. Since marriage is a give and take situation. I can't complain too much. The good always outweighs the bad. I get to go on trips to Nevada and play in poker tournaments and look for chips.” *Raulin Mendonca, CA*

“I am mostly a no. He is not satisfied to collect just one thing but goes by spells of collecting everything from paper money to tokens to matchcovers to wooden nickels to....Our house is small and Reg has a tendency to take up a lot of it. I sometimes dream of living in a place with nothing but bare surfaces but to do any real good I would have to move out; after almost 39 years of marriage I'm more or less resigned to putting up with it.” *Diane Smith, CA*

“My wife has absolutely no interest in my collection and only wonders what she is going to do with it when I die. I have not become an active collector largely due to this.” *Ron Beach, CA*

“My wife does not really show interest in any of my hobbies, of which I have 3. I have taken her with me to a convention, and she was not impressed. So I am a lone collector in my family. Collecting for some 50 years has had its ups and downs. My first swapfest at Bill Restkin’s was quite an experience; I displayed many albums and left them out for everyone to see. Not knowing that there would be thieves there. I lost some 128 good covers. I did learn the hard way. If my wife would have been there to watch it would not have happened.” *Louis Cherny, MI*

“I used to have a spouse that was amused and bemused at my match collecting. But her real fear was fire, so she wasn't too happy about it, but not enough to do something drastic, like burning the whole lot. Thank goodness she's not around any more.” *Karim Durzi, CA*

“My wife has zero interest in my matchcover collecting. The 4 grandchildren keep her very busy.” *Al Kaplan, FL*

“I have a significant other who doesn't live with me. I've been trying to separate out 2,500 covers in a very small den. All surfaces are covered, including the floor. He keeps asking me, "Have you picked up those covers yet?" I know he's annoyed because he slips when he walks to "his" chair, which he can't sit in anyway until I clear it off. He also won't come to local meetings with me. Too bad, but it won't keep me from the hobby.” *Sherry Sisson, NJ*

“1. No, he does not collect with me. 2. No, he is not supportive of this hobby. 3. No, he is not tolerant. 4. No, and it is a REAL SORE POINT, for sure. I have to do matchbook trading, correspondence, phone calls and hobby business or any activity with my collection after he has retired for the evening. He will (but rarely) surprise me with a matchbook or two from the casino we are in at the time. My spouse does attend club parties; take me to meetings and visit briefly with members. I persevere since I love the hobby. Glad I am not alone!” *Anonymous*

“My wife is not a collector. I, on the other hand, have always been a collector since I was a kid. As far as my matches are concerned I would say that they are a real sore point with my wife. The 100,000 plus matches I've



“I have a wife, Karen, who is tolerant of my hobby, but in no way enthusiastic about it. Best description is that if it all went up in flames one day without damaging the house, she would be fine with it. Given that the matches were here before Karen was, and that I am able to get away three times a year for Southern Swap, UES and RMS to do my match thing, I'd say that the current arrangement works for me. It would be nice if spouses shared the hobby, and in many cases that is the situation, but my early attempts to introduce her to the hobby were not successful, and I left it at that. When she comes home from dinner out with her co-workers and I ask if she inquired about matches, she generally replies, "Oh, I forgot to ask." But if there is a bowl of them out for the grab, she does bring home a handful.” *Wayne Eadie, NY*

“Give Tammi a 2.25, somewhere between tolerant and supportive of my match hobby, but closer to supportive. Though she cannot identify with it, she understands my need to involve myself in phillumenia (and, if truth be told, I relate similarly to her various pastime pursuits). Quite significantly, she does pick up matchbooks for me when she travels to her various conferences. And on two occasions, when we were out in the Poconos for Visiting Day at camp for our son, she did get me some matchbooks from, respectively, a garage sale and an antique shop, and told me that it was my birthday present (what better birthday present could she have given me?). *Ken Ryskey, NY*

“Yes, my wife collects covers also. She started out collecting chef hats because our daughter is a chef. Pat also collected Marriots because our daughter was a chef at the hotel. My wife also likes cameos, uniglos, and foilites. She is very supportive of me and the hobby. Pat goes with me to UES and the RMS conventions. In my hobby room in New Hampshire she has two shelves for her albums. The biggest problem we have is that when we go to an antique shop, I am just looking for covers. Pat loves to look and I am finished in 15 minutes while she is still in aisle one.” *Steven Weiner, NH*

“My wife does not collect, but she is supportive, although she moans about the mess it creates.” *Michael Midda, NY*

“I asked my wife, who doesn't collect, about it and she said she was tolerant, but I would lean towards supportive. She goes to flea markets with me, takes messages when a fellow trader calls, and doesn't say much my hobby room is a total mess. She also doesn't say much when I spend all evening working on my collection. One anecdote: I went to my first RMS Convention in 2003. I drove to Cincinnati on Wednesday and came home on Sunday. When I got home, my wife had had a real estate friend put up a 'for sale' sign in our front yard. She got a good laugh when she saw my face. (Her friend told us that she had two calls about our house from people who had seen the sign)” *Brian Meyer, NE*

“My wife, Sandy, "invited" me to a doll show. You can imagine my excitement as I followed her around all morning. At one table was a carton of miscellaneous items including a Matchbook Caddy from the Frisco Railroad. It was \$5.00 and I was hooked. I then went to my local library where I learned about Liberty Bell. I met characters like Bill Thomas and joined Windy City. My wife does participate to some small extent and likes Coca Cola covers. Unfortunately I have to credit doll collecting for my start.” *Bill Prescott, IL*

“My husband collects with me.” *Judi Wittwer, AZ*

“My wife is tolerant, and actually gets into it at times. She especially likes Features. I think she is just amazed at the variety that's out there. She also encourages me to drop into stores, restaurants, shops etc., and always looks for me when she hits the flea markets and antique stores. Ebay's probably our only "sore" point. She's always ribbing me that some new matchcovers have again magically shown up in our mailbox. I always assure her that I am not spending the family fortune (not a hard sell, since we have none). I think she's just glad that this is my only real vice.” *Steven Dinero, NY*

“It will be 50 years on May 2, and I've still got her (Gloria)! How/Why she tolerates me - don't know - Yes, she's hooked too. I've got maybe 100 cats I keep and or collect, and she has at least 50.” *Larry Martin, AZ*

“My spouse does not collect but is very supportive. She even remembers to pick up covers for me occasionally. She is also willing to help carry covers in her purse, particularly when we are hitting the casinos. And once or twice a year she might attend a meeting, but only if there is a pot luck or picnic involved with the meeting.” *Richard Giardini, CO*



“My wife is VERY supportive of my hobby. She will tell me to bid on this or that because 'she' likes it. Suzanne is not a collector herself, although she has two small boxes of things like flowers, butterflies, antiques, sailing ships, costumes. You get the picture, anything I get that she likes, she gets. Suzanne was the secretary/treasurer for Trans Canada for a few years. She became a member of Trans Canada so no one could say anything about her sitting at the freebie tables getting covers for me. Although my wife does not want to go to any swapfests anymore, she is still wants me to continue with the hobby. She is more supportive than ever and does not miss a chance to tell other people she talks with about what the hobby is about. That is why I love her all the more after 44 years of marriage.” *Bill Scott, CAN*

“I am not a collector, but my late husband Ken was. I believe matchcovers was his favorite. In the long run however, I began to attend events with him and immediately liked the majority of people I met and those friendships still endure. “Match” people can be a lot of fun even a little raunchy at times but I was never offended and have had some really good times. I think he was very happy the year I received the “Norm Award” at UES. We spent the last couple of years of his life trying to get his collection “in order”. We were making good headway when he died. I’m almost finished disposing of his collection but will remain with the Connecticut Club for a while longer as I enjoy the people and being secretary and editor gives me a place to exercise my organizational skills.” *Joyce Moyer, MA*

“When Helga joined RMS it was mainly to get more involved and not just be "John's wife". She picked two categories that weren't my main categories. Does she actively look for them? Not really! When you wish to use the word supportive then you hit the nail on the head. She knows the terminology, converses often with many of my traders via email, helps me with my Girlie Club mailings and with my displays. She looks for interesting new stuff for me on German ebay and does all of the computer work for me. From the first RMS she has always felt "comfortable" with many collectors.” *John Bachochin, OK*

“My spouse tells me she is supportive. Claims collecting keeps me off the street.” *Fred Houk, FL*

“My wife does not collect, but she is supportive; she and my daughter actually came with me to last year's RMS convention [2004] and we are planning to attend this year's also.” *Ron D'Aprile, CAN*

“My wife is supportive and helpful when it comes to selling some items on ebay, but she is not the collector, Which is probably a good thing as the house (even being a 1890's farm house) will not stand holding many more "things". The barns are even full!” *Bruce Whyte, OH*

“For the most part, my wife, Donna, has been very tolerant of my hobby. Even though she does not collect, herself, she does appreciate some of the beautiful matchcovers and features that I show her. Of course, she also thinks that I spend way too much time in my office, away from the family. I just remind her that I could be out on the golf course dropping a pile of money and be away from home all day. A point well taken.” *Greg Lund, MD*

“My wife was always tolerant although not a fan of my matchcover and stamp interests. She did surprise me when she picked out a first day cover that bore my date of birth. Hard to find at age 73.” *John Jamison, TX*

“My wife is tolerant of my matchcover collection; she does come to the conventions and has a great time; at the Southern swapfest she participated in a computer and E-Bay demonstration on how to buy and sell. She now tells me that she has learned how to sell my collection online if I don't tow the line. I believe she is kidding...at least I hope she is.” *Brian J. Mason, FL*