



EDITORIAL

Yet *Another* New Roster Is Out!

The new 2007-2008 membership roster is out, and so now is a good time to discuss some aspects of it.

You know, I've thought for some years now that club rosters have lost much of their appeal for members, and I think we're at a point now where few collectors actually use them on a regular basis. Using our club as an example, that's certainly true. Few people request hard copies, and few use the roster posted on our web site. That means that the vast majority of you don't use the roster, and, if it weren't for the fact that I need to occasionally check it for editorial purposes, I would have little or no occasion to use it, myself.

Why? What's happened? A combination of things, I believe...The first and foremost being the relatively recent revolution in personal communication—e-mail and the internet. If a person has access to the internet, a person has access to basically anything—addresses, phone numbers, etc. And with e-mail, even if you can't find what you want, you can easily and quickly contact someone who knows.

Another factor is the shrinkage the hobby has experienced over the last 15 years. At its height, my database showed over 4,000 collectors in the hobby. The current number is down to 1,780, and I'm sure I have some deadwood in there that I haven't culled out yet. The point is that the average collector has far fewer fellow collectors to keep track of, and, in practice, you already know the small circle of collectors that you correspond and trade with.

And trading is certainly another factor. The original value of rosters was that they showed you who you could contact to trade with—but most collectors today *buy*—and buy from *auctions*! Trading is down to a dribble of what it formally was.

...So I'll put forth my now time-worn suggestion yet again...***The hobby does not need all of these individual club rosters! We, as a hobby, should go to one, combined, general roster posted on the RMS web site, with access open to all hobby members*** (by password) (and, with an option for a hard copy mailed to any collector who desires one). The logic of this approach seems *so plain*! Yet, clubs still cling to the *outdated* belief that it's their rosters that are main drawing cards for collectors to join and remain members. ***That's simply not true!*** Today, a club's main drawing cards are its auctions, its bulletins, and, to a lesser degree, its meetings and special activities. Plus, with one, combined collector listing, individual clubs could *still* tout that membership gains access to this super-roster.

Think of the money, time, and effort that each club could *save* by not issuing their individual rosters! All they would have to do is steadily supply RMS with the necessary updates. Plus, just as with our club roster posted on our own web site, such a roster would *always* be current...whereas hard copy rosters are already obsolete by the time they arrive in your mail boxes! And, for anyone who actually *uses* those hard copies, they're doomed to manually updating them all year long!

By now, you're probably asking, "Yea? Well, who's going to pay for all this...and how?" That's another beauty of this concept. Most of it's not only *free* to begin with, but it actually *saves* everyone money! Every club *already* maintains its own roster information, and, with not having to annually send out a hard copy to each of its members, the club comes out *way* ahead. RMS *already* maintains its web site. It wouldn't cost

them a penny more to add this cumulative roster.

But, someone *would* have to pay for the cost of hard copies mailed out to those collectors who wanted them. Well, originally I envisioned each club paying a pro-rated fee to RMS to cover such costs, but it would be much simpler all around if each such collector just paid the cost+postage of the copy he or she was ordering. *Easy!* And, don't forget that the on-line roster could simply be printed off as a hard copy. So, if this collector over here wanted a roster but didn't have a computer, it would certainly be possible for a fellow collector with a computer to print her a copy. *There's nothing wrong with that—They're both hobby members entitled to a roster-...and RMS is not 'losing anything' because this is not a money-making activity for RMS.*

Another advantage! Most collectors belong to several clubs. That means every time there's a change of address, e-mail, telephone number, etc....each one of those clubs has to be notified. But, with *one* roster...*one* notification.

Another advantage! For the same reason, with *one* roster, collectors wouldn't have to constantly keep track of, and then store, all these various rosters coming in from their various clubs.

What about the poor sap who has to put this combined roster together and then maintain it? Well, that would probably be...me, come to think about it. I'm already the web master for the RMS web site. But, with the incredibly huge annual stipend RMS pays me for being its editor—What the Hell! Why not?

Boy, the whole thing makes obvious sense to me, but the stumbling block in the past has always been the regional clubs' stubborn reluctance to let go of their own individual rosters—old ways die hard.

Can we get past that now? I don't know. There are always people who just don't 'cotton to such new-fangled ways and such'. I would hope that each club would at least discuss the possibility of what I've suggested here and consider the immense advantages.