

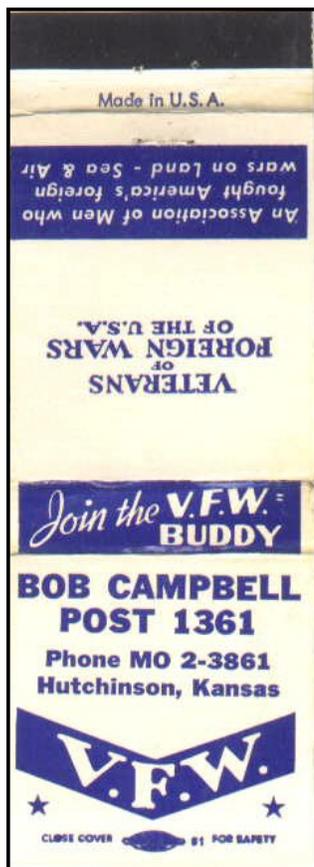


Collecting V.F.W.



by
Mike Prero

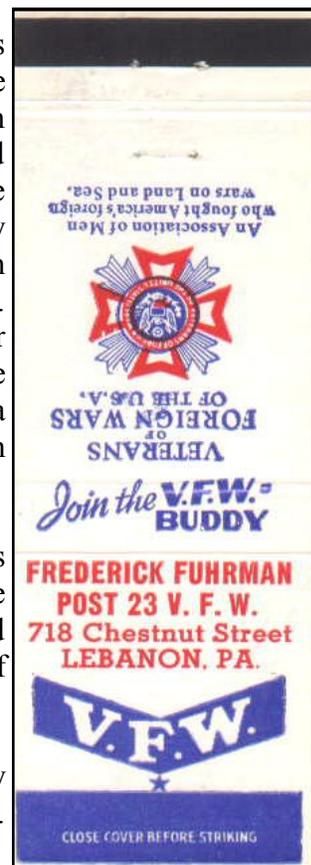
Another great Fraternal category! It has much to offer the collector—age, length, numbers, variety, sets, and more. Some collector, such as myself, collect them for the challenge that a larger category presents; others collect them because of their personal experiences in the military and/or membership in the V.F.W., itself.



The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) of the United States traces its roots back to 1899. That year, Veterans of the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Philippine Insurrection (1898-1902) founded local organizations to secure rights and benefits for their service. In Columbus, Ohio they founded the American Veterans of Foreign Service. In Denver, Col., they organized the Colorado Society, Army of the Philippines. In 1901, Philippines Veterans in Altoona Supreme District Jr. Vice. 2000-02 and Pittsburgh, PA., started the Philippine War Veterans. The following year, Philadelphia, PA became the home of the American Veterans of the Philippine and China Wars. In 1905, these three groups merged with the American Veterans of Foreign Service.

In 1913, the American Veterans of Foreign Service was amalgamated with the Colorado Society, Army of the Philippines and became the Army of the Philippine-Cuba and Puerto Rico, then changed their name to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

The Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW was founded in 1914 by women relatives of the Spanish-American War veterans.



Early members saw their first responsibility as service to the veteran and his family. In an era when the government did little to assist its veterans, Auxiliary members ministered to the wounded in hospital and raised funds for needy veterans and their dependents.

It is now one of the most prestigious veterans organizations in the world with a membership of 1.8 million members and approximately 9,000 Posts worldwide. “The accomplishments of the VFW are many, including lobbying for a GI bill for the 20th century; donating more than \$1 million each to the Vietnam, Korean, Women in the Service and World War II Memorials; fighting for compensation to veterans diagnosed with Gulf War Syndrome; and improving VA medical centers services for women veterans. From providing \$2.5 million in college scholarships to high school students every year, encouraging the elevation of the Veterans Administration to the President's Cabinet, and contributing more than 13 million hours of volunteerism each year in the community, the VFW is there—*honoring the dead by helping the living.*” [<http://www.vfwpost5702.org/VFWHistory.htm>]

OK, let's get down to basics. Unlike American Legion posts, which are numbered consecutively only by state, V.F.W. posts are numbered consecutively regardless of their locations. Thus, the logical strategy for organization is simply numerical, by post number. So, for example, my own collection runs sequentially from Post 1 to Post 10420 (How can that be when there are only some 9,000 posts total? For the same reason that RMS is at 9,600+ in membership numbers, but we don't actually have that many members currently. One figure represents a current number, while the other number represents a cumulative historical total.

Also, while we're on organization, there are always those pesky covers that don't have a Post number displayed. Some collectors hunt unmercifully until they finally identify the numbers for such covers. Personally, if I can't find it quickly, I simply put that cover in a special section at the front of my first V.F.W. album. Chances are I'll be able to identify it at some other time.

What about the covers, themselves? Well, as you would expect with any Fraternal category, there are a number of stock designs, each being exemplified by hundreds and hundreds of covers; a variety of non-stock designs; and an array of conjunctives. The latter includes Woodies, WW II Patriotics, Girlies, Metallics, Dated, etc. Most covers, here, are front-strike, but reverse-strikes are common, as well. A small portion are wide-strikers.

Although there are quite a few Universals here, Monarch and Superior seem to have put out the largest share of these covers. All of the major manufacturers can be seen in any good-sized V.F.W. collection, however, as well as a lot of the older, well-recognized names...plus a sizeable number of 'jobber' manumarks on the more recent covers.

Sizes? In my own collection of some 839 covers, I don't have any 10s, only 12 30s, no 40s, and no boxes. So, the vast majority are 20's. I would guess this picture is representative, but Donna Longenecker, PA, had 2,847 as of 11/05, so her collection would certainly paint a better picture.

What does the future hold for V.F.W. covers? Well, as with just about *all* categories, the future may not look as rosy as the past, but past covers are always out there. It doesn't look as if there are too many V.F.W. posts issuing matchbooks anymore, but just look at all the ones that are already out there. Surely, enough to afford most collectors years and years of pleasurable collecting.

I do the V.F.W. listing, but it's currently only up to 843 covers.