

Women

I was thinking the other day (*oh oh!*), and I started wondering about the position of women in the hobby. Right off the bat, even the casual observer will easily notice that there are less women in the hobby than men. *Why?* And, for the women that are, and have been, in the hobby, *Have they been fairly represented?*

Well, they must have been...*Mustn't they?* I haven't seen any women's rights groups picketing clubs and conventions. *Have they been accorded equal opportunities?* Hmmmm, I'm sure they have..I mean, there haven't been any law suits, no government intervention programs that I've heard about. But, just to lay my curiosity to rest, I took a look at the stats.

Unfortunately, I didn't have access to all the past club, convention, and general hobby records, but I found that I could at least analyze the stats for some of our current situations and activities—enough perhaps to get a credible picture of women's representation in the hobby currently. I was also able to locate some past RMS rosters, going back to 1953, so I threw those in, as well—for some historical perspective.

First, some overall numbers for comparative purposes. The last US estimate (2009) reported 50.7% of the population was female. Currently (*as near as I can figure, based on my hobby database*) women make up 26.6% of the hobby, and, more specifically, 27.3% of the RMS membership. Here's a breakdown of the last few years:

<p><u>Women in the hobby:</u> 2007 - 27.1% 2008 - 27.3% 2009 - 27.2% 2010 - 26.6%</p>	<p><u>Women in RMS:</u> 1953 - 20.4% 1957 - 30.3% 1960 - 34.2% 1965 - 34.3% 1981 - 38.4% 1990 - 31.3% 2007 - 25.5% 2008 - 25.9% 2009 - 28.0% 2010 - 28.0%</p>	<p><u>Women as RMS Presidents:</u> 19.4%</p> <p><u>Women as Hall of Fame Winners:</u> 19.2%</p> <p><u>Women as Outstanding Collectors:</u> 29.2%</p> <p><u>Women as AMCAL Presidents:</u> 35.8%</p>	<p><u>Women as RMS Area Award Recipients:</u> 37.7%</p> <p><u>Women as RMS Editors:</u> 16.6%</p> <p><u>Women as Current Regional Club Editors:</u> 37.0%</p> <p><u>Women as Current Regional Club Presidents:</u> 8.3%</p>
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Well, first we have to get by the disparity between the percentage of women in the population and the percentage of same in the hobby. But, I think that's pretty easy. Smoking, and thus matches, have always been pretty much a male domain, so men probably had a 'head start' as far as collecting matchcovers is concerned. Plus, men have always travelled more, so they enjoyed bother great access and greater variety.

Once we get over that hump, the actual presence of women in the hobby is currently 26.9%, and women in RMS have averaged about 29% over the last 50 or so years. But, have they had an equivalent showing in the leadership roles in the hobby? Lower? Higher? Is there a 'glass ceiling' in the hobby? What about the honors and recognition bestowed by the hobby?

If we match that 29% showing with women's presence in various sub-facets of the hobby, we then see...

In The Hobby*

- (-) Their representation as presidents of RMS is less than what might be expected.
- (-) Their representation as Hall of Fame winners is also less than what might be expected.
- (-) Only 16.6% of RMS editors have been women.
- (-) Women have the poorest showing as current regional club presidents, only 8.3%
- () On an equivalent basis, they're right where they should be as Outstanding Collectors.
- (+) As RMS Area Award recipients, they've done better than that 29%.
- (+) Women as AMCAL presidents was also better than average.

We thus have more minuses than pluses, but resulting explanations may well vary. For example, there have only been 12 RMS editors over time, so that may not constitute a large enough number to really postulate anything from. Why haven't there been bigger numbers of female RMS presidents, club presidents, and Hall of Fame winners? *Is the hobby basically a 'good ol' boys' club?* Hmmm..... Maybe...Maybe not. There are other plausible explanations. For example, perhaps those slots tend strongly to be filled by veteran collectors, regardless of gender...and there are far more veteran male collectors as veteran female collectors.

Or, maybe it's all a power thing, and less women are into that. Or, perhaps women in general have greater demands on their time (children, grandchildren, charitable work, etc.) Or, perhaps women just can't stand the additional pressure. (!) *[yea, right!]* Or, maybe women, being the 'gentler sex' simply tend to defer to their male counterparts. (!) *[If that were true, I wouldn't be divorced!...On second thought, Yes, I would!]*

Or...*Is it too terrible to even voice?....Doth the evil head of gender bias rear its ugly head amidst our pure and lovely hobby? [I actually don't believe that, but it sounds goods].* No, it's probably just all due to some combination of cultural factors...but, who knows, there might be a little gender bias, unintended, of course, below the surface.

Whatever the reasons, the numbers indicate that *someone*, perhaps, might take notice of the current situation. Our female collectors, for example, might wish to try out more for the positions noted above. Male collectors, on the other hand, might want to do a little self-psychoanalysis...*Am I voting for or against this person because of gender? Am I prejudiced? Do I just automatically think the 'guy' will probably do a better job?* Once again, though, I'd have a hard time believing that's the case *[but then again, I'm a guy!]*.

Actually, many of these situations simply revolve around who was willing to volunteer at the time. *Who wants to volunteer to be editor? Who volunteers to run for club president? Anybody?...Anybody?* Anyone who's ever been to a club or business meeting knows how it goes. Do men simply volunteer more?

Whatever the reasons for the apparent disparity of numbers in at least certain areas of hobby activity, there must *be* reasons. And, even though everything I've voiced here is mere supposition (except for the stats), it's food for thought....something to think about.

**Based on the hobby as of March 2010*

***Northern Lites and Southern Ontario not included in regional club stats*