

## Pioneers Of The Hobby: II

[from Esther Rancier, *Match Covers A Guidebook for Collectors*, 1976]

**Walt Mensch:** Walt Mensch, after joining the Marines in 1935, began collecting matchcovers. He contributed to the *RMS Bulletin* for years from his various stations in the Pacific area, serving as Editor from 1955-1956. His major contribution was to alert collectors to the potential value of U.S. Navy ship covers and Military covers. He listed Navy Ship covers in the 1940s and continued doing so to the 1950s. His Pre-War Ship listing is still the bible for Ship collectors, although his Post-War Ship listing was supplanted by the COMBINE listing. In 1959, he gave up his covers and began a coin and hobby shop in California, but, after a severe heart attack, he sold that business and retired. He became a hobby legend to new collectors, and, while attending the 1971 RMS Convention in San Diego, the collecting bug bit him again, and he started again, producing the newest and best covers seemingly at will until his death in 1972.

**Robert Oliver:** Bob Oliver is the sole surviving member [as of 1976] of the first five collectors who met at the 1939 World's Fair. Not formally a charter member of RMS, he feels very responsible for the club's organization. Recently retired and presently residing in Mira Loma, California, Bob has been active, not only in RMS, but also the Empire Matchcover Club, and is a consistent winner of exhibition prizes, having 23 trophies and hundreds of certificate awards.

**Frank Ryan:** When RMS charter member Frank Ryan dies in 1972, the hobby lost a good friend. In October 1946, as RMS President, Frank wrote, "We now approach the most advantageous time the hobby has ever known. We are on the threshold of national recognition. The time is ripe for us to push our hobby to the front. All must help...See if you can help...in forming a group of collectors...You will grow. The hobby needs these stimulating meetings..." He was a man who liked to serve his hobby.

**Paul Schaeffer:** Paul Schaeffer was another founder of RMS, He was from Egypt, Pennsylvania and also was an active member of the Lehigh Valley Match Cover Club. In 1961, he estimated he had 100,000 covers. After his death in 1970, his fellow collectors honored him with a memorial cover he would have been proud of.

**Edith Cooper:** a charter member of RMS, Edith Cooper served as its Historian for many years. She began her collection in 1939, and in 1965 she estimated it to be between 20,000-30,000 covers and related that she had given away or sold some 70,000 covers over the years. She is now retired and lives in Arlington, VA.

**Charles Higgs:** America's best known collector was Dr. Charles Higgs, a charter member of RMS, who died in 1968. He received world-wide publicity as the owner of the world's largest collection (estimated to have about 2 ½ million covers). RMS's Outstanding Collector Award is now called the Charles Higgs Award. He lived in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, in a large house reputed to have 15 rooms with filled cases indexed covers. Some say he even rented barns to store even more covers. Whatever the truth, it took several truckloads to move all of his covers to collector Jack Viehe, who disposed of them in private sales. It is doubtful that any future collector will amass such a collection. Present largest collection (1 million covers) is held by Bernard Rohrer of Long Beach, California.

**Al Policke:** Al Policke, an RMS charter member, was one of the organizers of the Empire Club and its first president. He was one of the first to conceive the idea of convention matches. He built a replica of the Brooklyn Bridge with full books. Originally from Jamaica, New York, Al is now retired and lives in Orange Park, Florida, and is primarily active in the Sunshine Club. He is an acknowledged legend.