



E
D
I
T
O
R
I
A
L

Stepping Up

“The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials.” (Confucius, 551 BC - 479 BC).

And we’ve got ‘em...trials!...Oy vey! Yes, there are social problems, and economic problems, and political problems, and military problems...and here in California, on top of everything else, we have fire problems, and water problems, and energy problems, and astronomical taxes, and bureaucracy run amok,...but I’m talking about the really important problems...hobby problems!

It’s bad enough that, numerically, we’ve been whittled down to practically nothing. Thanks to anti-smoking campaigns and resulting anti-smoking laws, collector numbers have dropped by some 75%. And, as the effects of that rippled outwards, clubs folded (Lone Star, San Diego, Berks County, Badger, Phillu-Quebec, among others), activities went by the wayside (AMCAL, for example), and bulletins shrunk in both number of pages and frequency. Not good.

But, at least we could take some satisfaction in knowing that none of that was of our doing. It was due to external forces, from outside the hobby, forces that we could do nothing about. Not so, the problem at hand. We’re running out of volunteers.

It’s always been something of a feat to be able to come up with volunteers to do all the hobby’s work—manning the tables at conventions and swapfests, handling the finances and or membership rolls for local clubs, writing bulletins, being club officers...there’s always work to be done.

But collectors aren’t stepping up to volunteer so much anymore. Of course, there aren’t as many collectors as there were before, but that just makes it all the more important that those who are left step up to take up the slack. We’re not only losing collectors; we’re losing the activities that make the hobby what it is...or, what it *has* been.

Recently, for example, one of the reasons that this year’s Southern Swapfest was cancelled, was that enough workers couldn’t be found. Similarly, Sierra-Diablo couldn’t find anyone to take over its bulletin auction...and now there *is* no Sierra-Diablo bulletin auction. It’s happening more and more frequently.

Bob Abbott, Liberty Bell MC’s President, just passed away in July. What would happen if no one stepped up to replace him? What happens if a club loses its editor? What happens if a club can’t find anyone willing to mail out the bulletins? Sooner or later, for one reason or another, positions open up, jobs have to be completed.

Someone’s got to step up—or the club folds—or the convention ceases to be held—or the web site disappears.

The hobby keeps shrinking. Given the circumstances, some of that shrinkage is inevitable, but some isn’t. We *can* do something about part of our dilemma at least.