



Editorial

“Trading Continues To Dwindle”

Ever stop to wonder why the Golden Age of everything is always in the past?...(!!!) It's sad, indeed, to note that trading in this hobby continues to dwindle and dwindle further away. Trading has always been the backbone of the hobby. Most collectors don't go to club meetings; most don't attend conventions; and most have never seen the vast majority of their peers....but *trading* has always connected us. From one end of the country to the other, from small town to megalopolis, trading kept us in touch with one another; it gave us access to one

another's dupes; it formed lifelong friendships. Now, like an old friend, it's dying, and I can't do anything about it.

There isn't any single cause you can blame, and that makes it all the more nefarious, for a number of different factors have worked all too successfully together to cause this tragedy. The hobby, itself, as noted elsewhere, has significantly shrunk. That's certainly part of the problem.

The American match industry collapsed in the 1980s. That's another factor. All those fancies aren't being produced anymore, and those were always sure-fire interest promoters. Covers aren't as plentiful anymore, thanks to anti-smoking campaigns; not very many of those great old 'help-yourself-bowls' of matchbooks sit on business counters anymore. On top of that, more and more of the chains have gone to generic matchcovers.

And then there's technology. While it's done wonders to both

promote the hobby and make all sorts of information much more readily available to collectors, it's also lured at least some collectors away from trading and to selling...i.e., ebay, private web site auctions, etc.

Ask collectors to trade these days, and you hear..."I just don't have the trading stock anymore," "I don't have the time," "Postage is just too expensive," and "It's not worth it; I just keep getting the same stuff over and over again." I can't argue with any of those statements; they're all valid complaints....they're a sign of the times. Does anyone really believe that there's going to be a reversal of these factors and a resurgence in trading? Not likely. If we can get the hobby numbers at least back up to what they were in the late 1980s, we'd have more people, and that would mean more traders, but still...

Trading won't die out, though. There will always be us diehards, with a trade in one hand and (ever-increasing) postage in the other.