



## Editorial

## Hobby Polarizing?

“Yep, Sonny. By cracky, I can remember back in the good ol’ days when covers were plentiful and readily available to all! Now, gosh darn it, I know you aren’t going to believe this, you young whippersnapper, but there was a time when you could actually sashay into any ol’ place o’ business and just pick up oodles and oodles of matchbooks! Why, they had ‘em right there out on counters and tables, bowls full o’ ‘em!! Makes me smile just ta think of it!—What time is it, anyway? 5:30?! Almost missed my Viagra! Pass me that bottle behind my walker, will ya?”

Seems like quite awhile ago, but actually those ‘good ol’ days’ were less than 15 years ago. It was in those prior times that there was a relative plethora of collectors (compared to now), and they were all basically happy because covers were easy to obtain and lots of new issues were coming out on a regular basis. Things have changed since then, and, as I’ve noted many times already, the hobby has shrunk as a result. But, a secondary result is that the ‘residual’ collectors seem to be polarizing with regard to their wants, standards, and values. There is some overlapping, to be sure, but I get the impression that it’s boiling down to mainly the veterans vs. the rest, and I use ‘vs.’ guardedly here since I don’t mean to imply that there is antagonism between the two, only that the two are representing more and more divergent views on what is to be collected, etc.

The group that I call the ‘veterans’ tends to collect the higher end material and are sticking with the traditional values of what is collectible and what is not. To some extent, the ‘veterans’ have always gone after the harder-to-get covers, anyway, and that’s understandable since they are, as a whole, the more experienced, more knowledgeable, and more serious collectors. And, for the same reasons, they, more than other collectors, would be less inclined to see hobby standards change.

Without drawing any distinct line here as to *when* a collector becomes a veteran, many of the ‘newer’ collectors, whether they’ve been in the hobby for one year or ten years have given up on attaining the ‘rarer stuff’ because it’s ‘just too hard’, or because it’s too expensive, etc. And, at the same time, one hears more and more these days comments such as, “Well, why aren’t flats acceptable? They have the same art work!” and “I don’t see anything wrong with collecting struck covers as long as they’re not really mangled,” or “...and what about bob-tailed covers if they’re fixed nicely?” Similarly, I’ll occasionally hear an indirect complaint about the Group I listing, or articles about DQs, Crowns, older sets, etc. in the RMS Bulletin, for example... “What’s the point? No one can get any of that stuff anymore!” Of course, what the complainer is actually saying is that we should concentrate on what’s available to everyone...the mediocre stuff! Well, if that ever happens, I’m outta here! As a teacher, I’ve seen the same thing take place within Public Education over the last 20 years. Because of ‘political correctness’ and someone’s odd idea of ‘fairness’, standards and expectations have been brought down to the lowest common denominator—and you’ve all seen what the results of that have been. I’d really hate to see that take place in the hobby, as well.

Collectors have always been free to collect whatever they want, in any condition they want, and most of the ‘veterans’, I’m sure, have some struck covers in their collection (I know I do), but that’s not the same thing as making such covers acceptable throughout the hobby. Thus, what I’m concerned about here is the apparent push by some to lower the standards of the hobby—simply because it would make things so much ‘easier’ on newer collectors. I don’t think that’s the route we should take.