

HOBBY HISTORY

The Movers & Shakers: II

Evelyn Hovious, of California, was one of the very early collectors, although she didn't join RMS until later. I remember once, when visiting with Evelyn, she told me how she got interested in matchcovers. As a girl during World War I, she had volunteered to work at the local Red Cross station that acted as an R&R site for servicemen...and she gave out quite a few Red Cross matchbooks in the process...the rest is history! And what an outstanding history she was to have in the hobby! It's not clear whether she actually helped found Northern California's first two clubs (Golden Gate Matchcover Club, founded in 1951, and the Redwood Empire Cover Organization, founded in 1954), but she definitely served as an officer in both. In 1964, she was RMS's Outstanding Collector, and she went on to serve as President of AMCAL from 1966-1967 and then President of RMS from 1970-72. She was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1991.

At the same time, she amassed a huge collection, numbering over 5 million! For years, she was consistently the biggest patron of clubs across the country and conventions and swapmeets. She donated thousands upon thousands of covers to those activities, gave away covers to those collectors who had the privilege of visiting her, and helped start Sierra-Diablo Matchcover Club in 1983. For years, she was the Grand Dame of the hobby.

Neal Hospers, of Texas, started collecting in 1936 while on a trip to Michigan with his parents. They were all hotel covers. And that's the business he went into and that's the area he specialized in. In 1941, he joined United Matchonians as member #1833. He joined RMS in 1942 and member #138 and IMC in 1975.

Neal served as a Naval officer on the USS Boston. His first job was as a bellboy at the Santa

Maria Inn, Santa Maria, CA. Worked for Hilton chain up to 1978, when he opened his own chain of restaurants. He was listed in "Who's Who in SW Commerce and Industry," and "Who's Who in Finance and Industry." By 1979, he had the "largest collection of catalogued Hotel/Motel matchcovers in the world" and was listed as such in the Lone Star Book of Texas Records. In 1980, he was recognized in the World Almanac's *Book of Buffs, Masters, Mavens & Uncommon Experts*. In 1982, he was listed in Ripley's "Believe It Or Not". And, in 1984, he appeared on "PM Magazine", a nationwide TV program.

He also certainly had one of the largest DQ collections in the hobby [*although I don't know if it rivaled the 5,000 DQs that Harry Branchaud, CA, had*] and had started a DQ listing of Hotels, but he passed away before he could finish it. It's odd that a collector of his stature was never recognized as Collector of the Year and never inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Stuart Bergman, TX, remembers... "I visited his home and his hobby area, and it was fabulous. As no organization would accept his collection [*500 albums*] as a gift, it was sold piecemeal in RMS auctions. I was introduced to Neal and his wife Shirley by Bob Oliver at the RMS Convention in Hamilton, Ont., in 1985. As I recall the details, Neal and Shirley were engaged to be married. On the date the wedding was to take place, Neal had to have his leg amputated. Instead of postponing the wedding, he and Shirley were married anyway. They were both remarkable people. Neal and Shirley were on a cruise when Neal took ill and had to leave the ship and was taken to a hospital, where he died.

I found out that Neal added to his already largest collection of Hotels, Motels, and Inns by purchasing Ken Riggs's collection of Holiday Inns."

Neal Hospers was another of those 'hobby legends' who helped make the hobby what it is today.