

MATCH TIPS for New Collectors

by "Billboard Bill" Thomas

TEN WAYS TO GRADUATE FROM NEW COLLECTOR TO EXPERIENCED COL- LECTOR IN 1997

1. ANSWER MAIL! Many folks don't answer their mail these days, and those in our hobby are notoriously guilty. You expect a reply to your letters, don't you?
2. TRADE FAIRLY. Don't send junky covers. Try to send what your trader collects. Send about the same no. of covers that they send you. If you can't do this, tell them. Agree with traders on how frequently to trade, about how many covers, etc.
3. JOIN SOME CLUBS & TAKE PART. Joining clubs will get you news of covers & will enable you to meet other collectors. Taking part in club activities by volunteering for office or for committee tasks will make you a desirable active member, not a bystander.
4. WRITE AN ARTICLE. For your club's bulletin or for any hobby magazine or newspaper. You do NOT need to be a skilled writer; the editor will smooth up your words to make you look good, cause then his bulletin also looks good. Ask ye editor what topic they'd like to see covered in an article, and about how long..
5. ATTEND MEETINGS. Not just your local club's, but RMS conventions, AMCAL & UES, and local club swapfests. You'll learn a lot, get lots of covers, have some fun, and maybe even contribute a bit of your effort, skill, talent or experience. All clubs welcome collector visitors, so if you travel try to catch the meeting of a far-away club. If you are not a member when you arrive, you likely will be before you leave.
6. MAKE & SHOW A DISPLAY. At club meetings for sure — you can win an award, and folks will get to see your most prized covers. But

go a step farther — put a display into a bank or store window, with your name and phone number so viewers can contact you for more hobby info.

7. GET INTERVIEWED. Local TV and radio stations can always use interesting time-fillers, so contact them & see if they'd like to do an interview. Have a few nice covers or displays handy and tell folks our hobby is inexpensive and great for shut-ins. Ask local newspapers if they'd care to do a feature article about you & our hobby.

8. RECRUIT NEW COLLECTORS. Get the name, address, and phone no. of anyone who shows interest in your hobby; carry some club applications with you always, plus your club or business card, and some nice matchbooks. If they live locally, invite them to see your collection; if they're from far away, be prepared to tell them there's a club near to where they live. Reel them in actively the way a deep-sea fisherman fights a tarpon or marlin.

9. RESEARCH A TOPIC. Become an expert on at least one topic or type of cover, then offer to give a short pitch on that topic at your next club meeting. You don't have to be around a long, long time to know lots about a topic, you just need to devote a bit of time and effort into learning more about it than others know.

10. HELP A NEW COLLECTOR. Sooner or later a club will recruit someone newer than you — maybe YOU will be the recruiter. Even though you're relatively new in the hobby, you can still help by making them feel at ease and by showing them that they're not the only new kid on the block. Many old-timers tends to get wrapped up in each other & ignore newcomers, so take the time to be helpful, and pretty soon you'll be an old-timer, too!

[Call, write or fax me if you have questions. I'm Bill Thomas of 222 S. Ranger Blvd., Winter Park, FL 32792. Phone/fax is 407-657-0222. Have a real great 1997 with plenty of dandy matchcovers...]