

MATCH TIPS for New Collectors

by "Billboard Bill" Thomas

"What do you collect?" When a collector asks you that, don't say "matchcovers," as that's not what he means. He's asking your collecting preferences, or specialties, so you need to know that there are types, sizes, and categories, and what they mean.

Matchbook types refers to primarily to manufacturer's private brand names, so Jewelite, Matchorama, Filigree, Cameo, Uniglo are all matchbook types. Some types of matches come in different sizes, and others are of one size only. Like, Jewelite is always a die-cut, shaped matchcover with 20 matches in it. But a Cameo or a Uniglo can be of most any size. There are sizes ranging from those with 10 matches to ones with 240. Certain mfr's types, like Universal's Aristocrat, are also of a fixed size; Aristocrat's contain 28 matches - even though the cover is what we commonly refer to as a 30-strike size.

And then there's categories. Categories has nothing to do with the manufacturers; it is what YOU and others choose as the subject matter that you wish to collect. If you are a deep-sea diver or in love with mermaids, then mermaids might be one of your preferred categories. You would collect mermaids of any size and of any type, although you might keep the sizes separated because of the different album pages which are different only in the size of covers they will hold.

Some of us collect only certain types of covers, like Jewelites, and when asked what are categories are we reply "Jewelites." And some of us limit the size of the covers we collect, regardless of the subject matter; like, say Hotels - 20-strike size only. Those who do that don't have to worry about buying album pages for 30s and 40s covers, see?

So you can see there is an intermixture of terminology which can be confusing at first, but not once you've digested this page. Your

collecting preference categories can be Hotels (a subject matter category), 20-strike Hotels (a size-limited category), Uniglo Hotels (a type-limited category), or, in the extreme, 20-strike Uniglo Hotels, meaning you collect hotels, but only those which are a)Uniglos and b) only 20-strike size. Not many of us are that finicky, but this extreme example shows you how you can be quite precise in defining what kind of covers you like when someone asks, "What do you collect?"

Plastic album pages will, of course, hold any kind of cover that fits into their pockets. The slitted paper album pages are tailor-made for certain sizes of covers, and today you can get them for 20s, 30s, 40s, Jewel/Jewelite, and Ace-sized boxes. You can fit two 10-strike covers into the slots for a single 20-strike cover. You can also make slits on blank pages to fit your own needs, so that you can show an assortment of sizes all on one page. Slitted pages can harm the tender, delicate strikers of old covers, especially if the album page is a tough paper. That's why some folks devised sewn pages back before plastic pages. Sewn pages are home-made, there's no mfr, but you can find some at auctions where estates are being sold off. They are kind to covers and can be made to fit any desired size of covers, but they take lots of loving labor to make & you must feed lots of expensive bonbons to her that wields the needle & thread.

If you have the wall space at home - and a tolerant spouse - you can hang up your displays after getting home from a convention instead of restoring the covers to their albums. Visitors will show much more interest in them than in photos of your kids in a football jersey. To display Feature matchbooks with the matches in them, you can buy a costly tailor-made frame, or you can buy an empty K-Mart frame and staple some 1" strips of heavy cardboard horizontally across the frame; then just open a matchbook, slip it onto the strip and close the matchbook.

Write me your questions or ideas; I'm Bill Thomas, 222 S. Ranger Blvd., Winter Park, FL 32792-4331. Phone for Fax is (407) 657-0222 and I'm up until at least 11 PM EST.