



The Scout Patch Auction

Specializing in rare Scouting collectibles

5150 Carpenter Rd.
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
ramore@tspa.com

734-434-8772
f 734-434-7227

Year in review 2006

By Roy More, ISCA #0020L

Another year has passed. The saying goes "time flies". My mother-in-law pointed out that after awhile it seems time goes by Concorde. Lets look at hobby happenings in 2006 and some thoughts on 2007 and ahead.

More five-figure patches sold than ever before

We did not eclipse the 2005 record price of \$71,000 for a single patch but there were more five-figure, i.e., patches priced over \$10,000, sold than ever before. Most of these were OA items but not all. There were several collectors who put more than \$100,000 into the hobby with one rumored to have put \$1,000,000 into their collection. Now the hobby is clearly much more than just about money but these are still significant sums for this hobby. What is wonderful is that the hobby has a broad range available to it for those of limited means as well as those with more available funds.

Passings

This will be a common thread going forward. 2006 again saw the passing of several collectors. Two of note were Phil Parlett in the spring and Dick Flock in the late fall both from California.

EBay Listings Declined

Ebay has been a significant force in our hobby as well as many others. 2006 though is the first year of a decline in listings in the Boy Scout categories. Ebay has masked the decline by defaulting to "Worldwide" in its searches. This results in rock-and-roll pins and other miscellaneous items from Australia falling into our category. I have raised this with my TSAM at eBay and they said, "This is the way it is." When one looks at US only listings my rough estimate is a 20% decline in daily listings.

I do not know why this has happened. One is clearly the cost of listing and selling on eBay has gotten to the point where eBay may make more than the seller. Our hobby is a prime example of the 'long-tail.' That is, we are a niche hobby. Many of our items are in

search of the one collector from an area that is looking for patches from his youth. As such, the items are generally not too expensive, the average is under \$20, but they are passionately collected. Still, it can take awhile for a patch to find its home. Listing on eBay has now gotten too expensive for many folks to maintain their eBay stores and yet not have patches bring their value when put up at auction.

Another possible reason is that the 'golden age' may be passing. When eBay came onto the scene at the end of the 1990s, we commented that it would be the 'golden age of collecting' as attics would empty to eBay rather than the city dumps. We may have now had most of that run. Stuff still surfaces but maybe not as frequently.

Another reason, one that is likely but is very distressing, is the flood of fakes and misrepresented patches. We see it in some of the questions people ask. We see it in discussions on Patch-L where collectors are concerned about bidding on eBay for fear of getting stuck with a bad patch. We, TSPA, are working on something to help with this but eBay's system clearly is not working well in this area. We will have to see how 2007 develops. Many sellers are looking at non-eBay alternatives.

For the rest of the article including category by category reviews, see the upcoming International Scout Collectors Association journal. Go to www.scouttrader.org for membership information.