

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Well, the 1998 collecting season is fully upon us. Already we've seen some really great shows, swapmeets and tailgaters, but the best is yet to come. Everyone is talking about the upcoming National Convention and Show in historic Williamsburg – it's shaping up to be a great event! (I've even got my glass picked out and packed!) And the Western Regional in Denver will be happening by the time you receive this. I look forward to seeing many of you at these shows and renewing old friendships.

Thanks for your positive feedback on the modified format for the *Drip Points*. The good news is that I received no complaints about the slightly smaller type and the narrower margins. This helps the publishing cost line by reducing the number of pages, but I was worried that some of you with eyes weakened by years of intensive inspection of the minute insulator details would bulk at the added eye-strain of reading the publication!

Lots of good stuff in this issue. President Rick Baldwin gives an assessment of where the hobby is today in his article and the Vice Presidents report on each of the

regions. Treasurer Mike Guthrie reports that the NIA remains in the black – always a good thing – and Joe Beres sent the membership chart showing our rate of growth (before the flood of dues paying that occurs at each National show!) Be sure to read Dudley Ellis's note about the upcoming election for NIA President and Eastern Region Vice President: And when you receive your ballot VOTE! Our new By-laws Chairman, Steve Marks, comes to grips with the revised insulator grading standards in his article and you will find this interesting – maybe even controversial! And finally, don't miss Elton's note on

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FROM THE CENTRAL REGION

For this report I have several topics to discuss, the first of which will be the show reports. First of all, the NIA Central Regional held in Garland, TX was reported to be a great success. Good walk-thrus and plenty of sales occurred, but an increasing presence of irradiated insulators in Texas was the topic of discussion by collectors. I attended the Collector's Jubilee held on April 3 and 4 in Wheaton, IL and can say that it was also a great success. It seems however that lightning rod ball sales may have been slower this year than last. I heard that the Missouri Valley Insulator Club show on April 18 in Alma, KS also had steady sales. The Northwestern Insulator Club's show that I attended on April 25 in Bloomington, MN was my first and won't be my last. Long time collector/dealers Kevin Lawless and Dick Bowman made the long trip to partake in the fun. Rick Soller was absent this year because he is in the middle of moving into a bigger place to store his collection. Needless to say, I got to purchase a bunch of insulators from other collectors who were looking for him. Dennis Stewart hosted another get together in Cincinnati, OH on May 3 that brought several area collectors out. I was in the middle of a project at school at the time and was unable to attend. I really wanted to celebrate the 105th anniversary of the drip point patent that weekend but couldn't get away. Maybe I'll make it next year.

Here's a listing of the upcoming shows:

| | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|---|
| June 5 & 6 | West Manchester, OH. | 4 th annual Hog Roast/Insulator Swap Meet at the home of Alan Stastny |
| June 13 | Tama-Toledo, IA | Hawkeye State Insulator Swap Meet |
| July 31 – Aug 2 | Williamsburg, VA. | NIA National Convention Show and Sale |
| August 15 | Milwaukee, WI | Spectrum Antique Insulator Show and Sale |
| September 12 | Houston, TX | 7 th Annual Antique Insulator and Collectible Show sponsored by The Lone Star Insulator Club |
| September 12 | Sioux Falls, SD | Northwestern Region Insulator Club Swap Meet |
| September 27 | Ann Arbor, MI | Huron Valley Bottle and Insulator Club Show |
| November 7 & 8 | London, OH | 28 th Mid-Ohio Insulator Show |

Check the *Crown Jewels* or give me a call for more information about these shows.

In the "advanced thinking" category, the NIA National will be up for bid in the Central Region in 2000 (that's not that far away!) - so if anyone is interested in hosting this one, start planning now!

The NIA Survey has had some response, but we would like more. If you haven't filled it out yet, please do so now and mail it to Matt Poage.

The election is fast approaching for the NIA President. Please take your time to fill out and return the ballots. According to Dudley Ellis at the time of this writing, the ballots will be in the mail shortly. If you already received it, but didn't vote please take the time to do so.

Send in the NIA
Survey if you
haven't done so!

The NIA Board continues to tackle issues with the membership handbook. In this issue are the revised grading standards to better reflect the current trends in sales. It is hoped that new collectors will be less likely to be disappointed with a transaction if sellers follow these standards.

In this issue I have also written a short story of an incident that has occurred in our region. This may affect everyone so I hope that you take a moment to read it.

Good Collecting to All,

Bob Stahr, NIA #4186
Central Region vice President

FROM THE WESTERN REGION

Greetings! I've been getting quite a few responses to the NIA Membership survey that came out in the last issue of *Drip Points* - about 130 so far. If any of you are procrastinating please send them in. Some of the results will be available at the National in Williamsburg, and will also be published in the next issue of *Drip Points*. Please note my new address: 12771 Eudora Drive, Thornton, CO 80241. My phone is (303) 453-1895 should any of you have any questions.

The upcoming Western Regional show is coming up quickly: June 5th and 6th in Denver. Unfortunately, many of you will not have received this issue by the time it's happening. At any rate, there are still tables available if you're one of the folks (like me) who likes to postpone things!!

Checks should be made payable to the TRIC and sent to the address above. The banquet will be held Saturday night and will cost \$20 per person. Tables are \$35 for the first and \$25 thereafter. We are still trying to get *Denver News4* to have a crew on hand Friday evening but, like most news teams waiting for a good automobile accident to cover, they haven't made any promises as of this writing!

Two important factors about this show are its location - north of downtown Denver so the traffic isn't bad, and easy access coming north or south on I-25. There's also easy access from the notorious DIA airport. If you need any info about the show - call me (or TRIC President Larry Volmer at (303) 235-0587). This should be a great Regional show and it's also a great time of year: Early June - not too warm!!

While on the topic of upcoming

shows, I just heard from the Enchantment Insulator Club that the Eleventh Annual EIC Show will be held in Albuquerque at it's usual time, the last Saturday in September (26th). Mark your calendars now and look for detailed information shortly (or call EIC President Tom Katonak if you need something right away).

The Albuquerque EIC Show is "on the books" for September 26th!

The other Western Region event already on the list is the Seventh Lone Star Show in Houston on September 12th.

I'm looking forward to seeing you at the Western Regional!

Matt Poage, NIA #3757
Western Region Vice President

...DRIP NOTES

- Dues are past due for 1998! Tell your friends to send their membership renewals to Joe Beres, Membership Director. Without an up-to-date membership there is **no vote** and **no Drip Points!** **AND...**you can't get into the National Show Members Day!
- Elections are coming for President and Eastern VP. **VOTE!**
- Want something with the NIA Logo? Fill out the order form at the end of this issue and send to Jill Meier! (She'll also have a full stock at Williamsburg!)
- We need your responses on the 1998 NIA Survey (included with the past issue of *Drip Points*)

COLLECTION SEIZED BY POLICE

By Bob Stahr

Although this happened to a lightning-rod ball collector, I believe this story is appropriate and should affect your collecting or dealing habits.

Many of us in the insulator hobby collect other things as well or deal in general antiques. Many times we buy collections and pick items up at flea markets, antique shops, or garage sales. How many of us have receipts to prove ownership of our acquisitions? Well, maybe we should. A lightning-rod ball collector in the Midwest recently had his collection seized by police after being served a rather ambiguous search warrant. The collector had purchased some lightning-rod balls and vanes from a gentleman back in July and over

the course of the next few months bought more. By October this gentleman had offered his brother's riding lawn mower for sale since his brother needed the money. The price seemed fair so the collector bought it. The problem arose in early April when this gentleman was arrested for burglary. The gentleman mentioned he sold lightning-rod equipment to the collector and the police subsequently obtained a search warrant. Rather than confiscating some of the items, the

It's important to know who you're dealing with!...

entire collection was confiscated. Apparently the criminal had told police that he sold hundreds of items to the collector. This was not possible, but without receipts or a listing of when, from whom,

and how much the items were bought for there is no proof to dispute the criminal's allegations. Although no charges have been filed against the collector, the police still have possession of the collection. I wonder how many items the collector will be able to account for and whether any of those items were destroyed in the seizure. It would be rather easy for any one of our "pickers", flea market/antique dealers, etc. to turn out to be a criminal, so it is important to know who you are dealing with. With proper documentation and keeping receipts, this story may have had a happier ending.

NIA NIA

FROM THE NOMINATIONS CHAIR

The insulator digs are over here in the south. Sawmill briars, blackberry bushes and kudzu are deterrents as well as the copperheads and rattlesnakes. When I view the scars on my legs from the winter and spring hunts they bring memories of the early morning breakfasts, the toiling over maps, tall tales, sore muscles, the great outdoors and most important to me the camaraderie of my fellow insulator collectors.

Now that the digs are over, I am going to flea markets and antique shops - and planning trips to insulator shows. I am really looking forward to the National in

Williamsburg, Virginia where I will be announcing the winners of this year's NIA elections during the annual NIA business meeting.

I thank everyone who gave me recommendations for filling these positions. An excellent slate of candidates is offered for both positions. Jimmy Burns from Texas, Kevin Lawless from New York, and Bill Meier from Massachusetts are the official candidates for NIA President. Larry Novak from Maryland and Kenneth Willick from New York are the candidates for Eastern Region Vice President. Please read each candidate's resume printed in the Spring issue of *Drip Points* and vote your conscience.

The ballots will be in the mail on

May 30, 1998 to all NIA members in good standing. They are due back to me by July 20, 1998. Don't delay! Vote early so you won't forget.

Remember, only the NIA members in the Eastern Region will be getting a ballot for Eastern Region Vice President.

You should have the ballots about the same time you get this issue

See you in Williamsburg!

**Dudley Ellis, NIA #5085
Nominations Chairman**



he removed the remaining ones from his sales stock. Jeff also said he kept one of each style of clear pin-type insulator he sold to Pacer Henry and requested examples of each from Pacer after he irradiated them so he could show others what was being made. Jeff Hogan and Pacer Henry are not NIA members.

The irradiated insulators we are seeing in Texas may have come from Florida. A recent report from someone who attended the Las

Vegas bottle show said they saw irradiated bottles at that show. You should be aware that irradiated bottles and insulators have been observed at several shows. The insulators that I saw in Texas are dark amber and have a look that is unnatural.

**Elton Gish, NIA #41
Ethics Chairman**

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THE NEW NIA GRADING STANDARDS

A Public Service Message From Your By-Laws Chairman, Steve Marks

I was warned about taking on this project, but felt too strongly about it to back-off. If there is anything that rivals the disagreement that insulator collectors often have when determining an insulator's color, it is determining an insulator's condition. Still, it seemed to me that we had outgrown the few simple definitions that we had "on the books." After all, we only had three categories in the NIA Handbook: Mint, Near Mint and Damaged. I felt that they had lost their meaning because we had failed to keep up with the trends that dealers and collectors were setting in describing insulators. In fact, collectors and dealers were making-up their own descriptions and abbreviations, like "VVVNM+." The "Vs" were clearly getting out of hand! Certainly, at the very least, they are a source of confusion among

novice collectors. As a maturing hobby, we ought to do better than this.

It was the unanimous consensus of the Board and Chairmen that the present system needed some type of tweaking. And that's where I found out that opinions as to how to grade an insulator varied as widely as the Grand Canyon. After sorting through the comments that I received from all of the Board Members and Chairmen, it became apparent to me that there were generally two themes that had strong support. The first group consisted of those people that wanted to completely do away with abbreviations in favor of simply describing an insulator's damage (or lack thereof). The second group consisted of people who wanted only to have abbreviations.

I wrestled for quite some time with all of the feedback I had received. I couldn't stop thinking about it. Would everyone in the hobby just stop using abbreviations? Not likely. Do the abbreviations by themselves present a good measure as to an insulator's condition? Nope. Would the Diamondbacks make

the playoffs in their maiden season? Not if they keep playing like they are.

What about value? Do you tie-in a reference scale to value? After all, in the old definitions there is mention of value. Is a "Near Mint" insulator worth about 25% less than a "Mint" one? Or is that closer to 50%? Nah. Let it stay as a point of discussion between buyer and seller. The NIA shouldn't be telling people how much an insulator is worth, I thought. How about a numerical scale as in the bottle or coin hobbies? It would probably create another nightmare. I recalled what it did to coin collecting and was told about what effect it has on the bottle hobby.

How about explicit definitions for condition? Nuts! We would all travel down a path to insanity if we were to say that a 196, with a small bruise in the rear of the umbrella and a few nicked drip points, is VNM because it displays ^{NIA}M, but that if more than six drip points are off in the front, and it has a small wire groove chip it's NM. Where would it end?

So after racking my brains out for
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All the "Vs" are a source of confusion!

NIA

several weeks, and after having had the benefit of receiving wonderful suggestions from almost every Board Member and Chairman, I finally came-up with a "grand compromise." Take the pros from each of the two suggested systems and try to meld them together. Guess what? It worked! Sure, not everyone was 100% pleased with my final product, but everyone agreed that it was much better than what we had. And with that having been said as an introduction, please find below the newly adopted NIA Position Statement on Grading Standards.

The NIA encourages all members to declare any and all damage that would detract from an insulator's appearance and monetary value when compared to a "perfect" insulator. The following descriptive categories are general guidelines, which collectors can use as a starting point for such descriptions, and are furnished in an effort to promote uniformity in grading. The NIA strongly discourages the use of embellished abbreviated descriptions such as "VVVNM+." Buyers and sellers are encouraged to verbally discuss the condition of an insulator before entering into a transaction.

M: Mint. No visible and/or apparent damage.

VNM: Very Nearly Mint. Very minor damage that detracts very little from the insulator's appearance.

NM: Near Mint. Minor damage which detracts from the insulator's appearance.


Fair: Fair. Damage that is quite noticeable and affects the desirability of owning the insulator.

Spec: Specimen. Major damage to the point where a significant portion of the insulator is missing. A piece that can best serve as an

example of a type of insulator.

* * *
Let me give you some additional thoughts on the above. One line on a list or in an advertisement can contain enough information that one need not stop at a simple two or three letter abbreviation. That is the purpose for the "position statement." Abbreviations can be a starting point for more information. Sure, abbreviations will always be used in the hobby. To some extent they are necessary to cut down on advertisement costs, allow for quick descriptions when dealing with extremely large quantities of insulators, etc. They are listed because many people felt that the NIA has an obligation to collectors, especially novice collectors, to provide guidance and uniformity on what are commonly used terms in the hobby. But they are not necessarily the end-all description. It doesn't take that much more effort to indicate: "VNM, sm. dome ping and base sliver". It paints a much better picture than just saying VNM, and provides a better sense of expectation.

As you can see, a couple of new categories have been added.

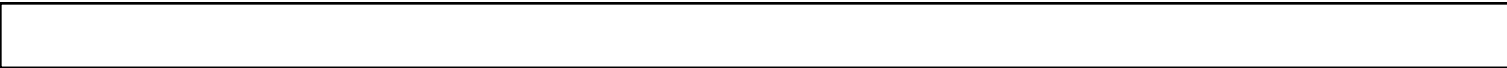


"Fair" is a new grading category.

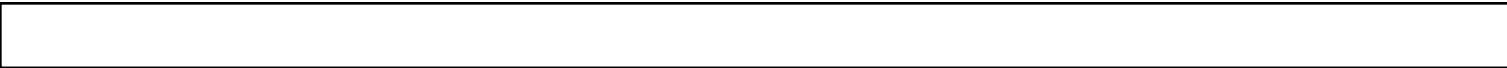
"Very Nearly Mint" and "Fair." Also, I have changed "Damaged" to "Specimen." Dealers just won't use "Damaged" because it is such a negative word that is an instant turn-off to buyers. In defining these terms I was careful not to inject anyone's personal opinion. For example, I didn't say that "a VNM piece should contain a bare minimum of non-factory defects such as small pings, or a nick located in an inconspicuous place

like the back of the inner skirt." It would be futile and open to too much debate and personal interpretation.

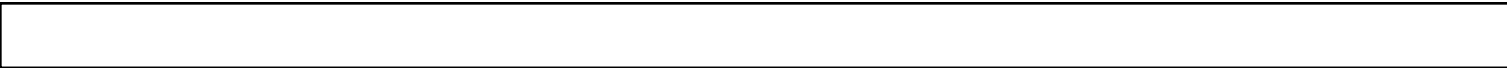
I'm sure you'll have a strong opinion on this just as each of the Directors and Chairmen did. The NIA Directors and Chairmen have thought long and hard about this subject and the impact that any changes might have on the current status of the hobby. I believe that the new grading standards will have a positive impact on the hobby and serve collectors, particularly new ones, well. Obviously I hope that you will agree. As long as I am sticking my neck out on this one, let me make one thing perfectly clear (apologies to Dick Nixon). I approached this project with the firm belief that the NIA should not issue strict definitions for grading terms. Likewise, I do not believe that there should be rules per se, established with regard to grading insulators. It is my belief that the NIA should not put itself into a position of becoming "the grading police." It would be counterproductive for the hobby and impossible to enforce. The NIA should be an entity that provides guidance for collectors and dealers, and not act as Congress "imposing the law of the land". That's not what our hobby is about. Grading however is a necessary part of the hobby and it needs to be uniformly applied. Indeed, describing and/or grading insulators, along with enthusiasm for collecting, history, ethics and personal relationships are the very foundation of our hobby.



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