



**GREATER CHICAGO
INSULATOR CLUB
NEWSLETTER**
Rick Soller, editor



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2015 National to be in Sandwich, Illinois!

If you missed the January club swap meet at the home of **Arlen and Tina Rienstra**, you might not have known that the club supported a bid for the 46th national show with **Bob Stahr** and **Jason & Daniella Townsend** listed as the show hosts. If you didn't attend the national, you might not have heard that they won the bid. The show will be July 2-5, 2015 at the Timber Creek Inn and Convention Center in Sandwich.

If you plan to attend the show and get a sales table, you should contact Bob or Jason as soon as possible since club members will get preference in where their tables are located if they send in a contract right away. You can get show contracts at <http://2015niashow.com/>

2014 National Show Report

The Greater Chicago Insulator Club was well represented at the National Insulator Association Convention, Show, and Sale held in Farmington, NM on July 3-6, 2014. The show was hosted by NIA President Lou Hall and big-time collector Tommy Bolack and featured some unique activities in a picturesque location.

Bob Stahr arrived earliest to the show since he is a past president and attended NIA Board meetings on Wednesday before the show. Bob flew to the show and had a sales table. Bob had extra duties at this show as he is one of the show hosts of next year's national in Sandwich, IL.

Russ and Marge Frank drove to the show and enjoyed frequent stops at antique stores along the way. In fact, I heard on one day of their trip they barely drove 100 miles because they spent so much time in antique stores. They had a sales table with an extensive presentation of miniature insulators for sale.

Tina and Arlen Rienstra also drove to the show. Tina had numerous boxes to take to the show since she is the chair of NIA product marketing and brought shirts with logos and other NIA merchandise. Arlen brought a display case, insulators, and bottles for his display of glass made by the Western Glass Manufacturer (W.G.M.) Company. The display included purple W.G.M. insulators and a variety of bottles. His efforts resulted in winning the NIA award for best display in the Specialty category.

Rick Soller also displayed at the show. Because he flew, the display consisted on one spool insulator, a CD 1087 embossed M A KNAPP // CHICAGO ILL. He flew in on the same plane as **Jason Townsend** and the two of them made a quick stop at the Wal-Mart after landing to get some Dramamine for the return trip and some poster board for the return trip. Rick's display recounted the brief history of the company, listed the few insulators sold by the Knapp Works, and included a picture of a drawing of the building that housed the company. Rick also had a sales table consisting of several dozen porcelain, miniature animals made by Wade Potteries of England, a company that also made insulators. Also on his table was a CD 203.2 Armstrong that he sold, a CD 728.7, and some German porcelain schnapp's cups.

Jason Townsend and Rick flew on a jet from Chicago to Denver but opted to take a 2-propeller, 9-seat plane from Denver to Farmington's Four-Corner's airport. Both swore to never do that again. Despite clear weather, the plane bucked, plummeted, bounced, swayed back & forth, and generally made both passengers nauseous. The return trip was equally like a roller coaster although the Dramamine helped a little. Jason brought several high end insulators to sell for Joan Crandall including two glazed threadless pottery teapots, an unglazed pottery egg, a rare white unmarked Fred Locke helmet, and a few other pieces. On the way home, Jason hung around the desk at the gate of a plane heading to Chicago earlier and managed to get on the earlier flight. Rick caught the full later flight and arrived safely in Chicago at about 9:20 p.m. on Sunday. Both flyers were successful in avoiding a storm that was heading for Chicago but luckily did not get there as early as predicted.

Kim Borgman made it to the show but I don't know how he got there. His daughter, **Whitney**, was recognized at the banquet as the recipient of one of the NIA's academic scholarships. The scholarship is worth \$1,000. She earned the scholarship on the strength of her 3.8 GPA, three years of working on the school yearbook, involvement in choir, participation in stage crew and recognition as the top athlete at the school. She also was involved in service activities such as food drives. As NIA #9301, she indicated in her one page application that she has attended insulator shows since she was 8 years old and spread the word about the hobby via stories about the these trips. She will be using the money to pursue a B.A. in radiography at Indiana University-South Bend. Congratulations!

Joe Gomez made it to his first national. He seemed to have a great time although I had little time to talk to him with all the other people to see and all the insulators to look at.

Former club members **John and Carol McDougald** were in attendance. They had some top shelf insulators from their collection for sale and are planning to attend the Sandwich national and sell more of their collection there. They hope the trip enables them to visit friends and relatives in the area.

Steve Jones joined the club at the show. He currently lives in Naperville but I believe he used to live on the east coast so it was nice to get him to join and we hope to see him at future shows.

One of the unique opportunities at the show was visiting the collection of Tommy Bolack. Bob Stahr and I took the one-hour tour on Saturday at 7 a.m. When we got there, Tommy was giving a tour to another group and a tour showed up at 8 a.m. as we were leaving so he kept busy with tours. In a nutshell, the tour was overwhelming.

Outside, a huge cliff rises up behind the house. In front, 12,000 acres spread out in front. Water rights allow him to grow hay and other crops resulting in a green vista from the house to the highway that is at least a mile or two away. The house itself on the outside is made of petrified wood found on the ranch that is held in place with concrete. Some of the petrified wood is used in walls around the house or to create interesting structures.

The road leading to the house begins along a paved, pine-lined stretch that overlooks fields populated by peacocks, pea hens, and turkeys. At the Wildlife Museum, it then turns into a dirt road that passes a cage holding a bear, along a man-made lake marked with old street lights, and across a railroad bridge brought there from some other place. The wood planks of the single-lane bridge make one think they will plummet into the Animus River below at any time. Signs warn to only cross one car at a time. Some more twists and turns lead you past the Electro-Mechanical Museum and to the cliff-side road where eventually you get to the house.

Inside the house on the right, a huge, lighted display case is the first thing that greeted me. I understand Brian Rickert was recently contracted to build the case for Tommy. In it were a variety of foreign insulators as well as other delights. I enjoyed seeing a miniature Brookfield beehive commemorative in the case along with other miniatures from manufacturers. I also saw a turquoise fuse cut-out that Tommy outbid me for in one of Dwayne Anthony's catalogs.

After this part of the tour, we went to the other side of the house where more rare insulators were displayed. In fact, insulators could be found just about everywhere in the house. Up the spiral, wood staircase we went to discover about a dozen purple Cochrane bells at the top along the railing. In his bedroom was a display case above the headboard with more rare pieces. In the room on the other side of the house, a larger, high-up display case held more for the eye to see. In places, were quantities of other scarce pieces such as a dozen peacock NATCOs or 20 CD 128 opalescent Hemingrays.

I was immediately frustrated when I entered the house because of my camera. First, I ran out of space on my camera. I deleted a bunch of older pictures but then my batteries died and I did not have replacements with me. Luckily I had my phone and I figured out how to take pictures with it. I'm still learning how to see the pictures and how to send them to my email account. For those hosting the 2015 National, it would be nice if you had a selection of batteries available for picture takers. For those attending, remember to check your camera for batteries, film, or enough digital space.

On Friday afternoon, Bob and I visited the Electro-Mechanical Museum. I tagged along with Jason and Bob a lot because I did not have a car and both Bob and Jason had rented one. The building was warehouse-like with a concrete floor, high ceilings, and no windows. As big as it was, it was not big enough for all the items Tommy has accumulated. There were several huge generators that took up an immense amount of space and baffled us as to how they got into the building given their size and weight. Huge switchboards, monstrous stacks of computer boards, hundreds and hundreds of meters, and even several hundred insulators could be found in the building. I enjoyed most the approximately 15 foot wide by 20 feet tall section of shelving filled with battery jars. Later I learned that Tommy had bought Richard Dawson's extensive collection at one point and has added to it since then.

Another unique opportunity at the show was the auction of pieces from the Douglas and "Pinky" Selby collection. A few other collectors also donated items. The auction took place on Friday starting at 4:30 p.m. and saw a large crowd of people in attendance. John & Carol McDougald donated a box built by Jack Tod to help Carol McDougald create shadow drawings of porcelain insulators submitted for a new U-number. The box had tools to measure the height, curvature of grooves, and the pitch of threads. The lid had a plastic window that, when flipped up, allowed a piece of paper to be attached to the back to trace the shadow. Three bidders went after it with Elton Gish dropping out first, followed by Rick Soller, leaving Bob Berry as the winner.

The best pieces of the Selby collection were two CD 190/191s in yellow. Both were damaged but the first set had a mint top but only half the bottom and the second set had a top with damage and a bottom with about 3/4ths of the base present. I visited the Selby's many years ago during a trip to California so had a personal connection to them. I also am working on building my transposition collection so thought this was a key piece to get. I heard rumors the pieces might go for as much as \$10,000 so I didn't think I had much of a chance to get one of them especially with all the California collectors in attendance, the color being unlisted, and the price guide value sitting at \$3,000-3,500. Nevertheless, I thought I would at least bid early on so

people knew I was interested in transpositions. You can imagine my surprise when I won the piece for \$1675. I was even more surprised when the second one sold for \$3,000.

As is always the case at an insulator show, you learn a lot by being there. For example, I talked to one of the descendants of William McLaughlin and learned that when he made his commemorative CD 162 insulators, he used pieces of depression glass in the batch which causes the insulators to glow under strong blacklight. Jack Riesselman and I got talking about the “Haley” insulator in Tommy’s collection and he said that two of the Haleys came out of a dig in Providence, Rhode Island with one whole one and one split in half and reglued. At least one came out of New York which is where the name of the insulator comes from. It was named after Mr. Haley who first owned it. At one of the GCIC swap meets at the McDougald’s house many years ago, one was brought by an attendee who said it was found in Marshalltown, Iowa when the foundation grocery store was being dug.

Farewell to Jim Crandall

The first insulator show I attended was in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in about 1985 and the first dealer I met was **Jim Crandall**. Jim never changed from that first impression I gained. He gave me a deal on two boxes of insulators, was soft spoken and kind, and was always pleasant to talk to. It seems his table was always adorned with a personalized table cloth showing various colored insulator silhouettes and his table filled with Chicago-area insulators displayed on a multi-step shelf. It is with great sadness, then, to report that he passed away on March 23, 2014.

Jim had the ideal career for an insulator collector. Beginning as a meter reader for Commonwealth Edison, he became a lineman after a few years. For 43 years he worked for the company and through his work, found some incredible insulators. Here are a few I know I recall off the top of my head although there are many others:

U-933A – This white porcelain piece is unique in that it has a grooved (not threaded) protrusion on top of the insulator and is the only unipart with four skirts. Jim found several of these in the Fisk Generating Station in Chicago (see the January 1992 Crown Jewels). Some have pins still cemented into them and a few have date codes similar to those used by Imperial Porcelain Works. I haven’t seen one of these for sale for years now so they apparently were not used in any other location. I’m glad to own one that I bought directly from Jim.

U-820 – This was an experimental insulator with a helical design tested on a line in Wilmette, Illinois. According to Robert Winkler who did extensive research on the line, Jim was lucky enough to acquire one of the first of these from a retiring employee of Commonwealth Edison (see the September 1987 issue of Crown Jewels). I didn’t add one to my collection until last year.

U-239B Macomb in white – Although the U-239B can be easily be found in brown, the white one is a rarity, almost as rare as the cobalt blue one. Jim was lucky enough to find two of these (see the January 2006 issue of Crown Jewels). I still don’t have a white one (nor a blue one).

U-425 Lapp – This porcelain insulator made by Lapp was essentially a failure. The stem was too small to handle the side to side stress put on it and some broke as a result. Lapp abandoned manufacture of the insulator although A.B. Chance did not since there version (the U-425A) had a thicker base. Commonwealth Edison was one of the areas that used the U-425 and some of them remained in service allowing them to occasionally show up on Jim’s table. He’s the only dealer I have ever known who had some to sell. I know of a couple that are still in service in Waukegan, IL that I’m waiting to recover so I can have them on my table too.

CD 1129 – One year when the Collector’s Jubilee show was at the DuPage County Fairgrounds, I remember a man walked in with an unusual round glass strain. He worked for Commonwealth Edison and indicated that the strain was found on the drop wire to a Chicago house covered with stucco on the outside. I mention the stucco-covered house because that is the reason I heard as to why the insulator was not removed. Pulling the attachment to the house off might have also pulled stucco off the house so the drop wire was just cut at some point and left hanging on the side of the house along with the Johnny Ball. I offered \$150 for the insulator at the time but I guess Jim offered more. I think his charisma and common background also gave him the edge.

CD 233 Carnival with string tie wire – Although the CD 233 in carnival made by Pyrex is not hard to find, Jim found a few of these in an electrical vault (see the December 2001 Crown Jewels). Since the vault was protected from rain and to reduce radio interference, the thick cable attached to the top of the insulator was secured with string rather than a tie wire and the string was then coated with Shellac. The carnival coating on these insulators was strong and perfect and the string was a nice addition to my collection of tie-wires when I was finally able to get one a few years after I learned about them.

CD 175s & CD 205s – I wouldn’t be surprised to hear that Jim handled hundreds of these insulators since they were used extensively in the Chicago area. Both insulators were used for service drops for homes or buildings. The CD 175 is reported to have been used extensively in the alleys of Chicago. Probably every collector in the Chicago area has one of each. This probably makes club members think the insulator is common but outside the area, they are hard to find and find a willing market.

CD 162 [100] HEMINGRAY-19 // MADE IN U.S.A., smooth base – Another insulator commonly used in the Chicago area was this insulator. Jim had hundreds and hundreds of these. In fact, he sent several hundred of these in aqua, blue aqua, and blue (10 boxes in total) to the September 2011 GCIC swap meet in Racine, Wisconsin hosted by **Randy Wesner** (see the GCIC Newsletter of September 2011). Besides myself, boxes were purchased by **Bob Stahr, Dave Shaw, Carol Hovorka, Richard Case, Steve McCollum** and **Dieter Holz**.

Jim was involved in the hobby for a long time. He was NIA #297 which makes him one of the early members of the National Insulator Association. When I joined in the early 1980s, my NIA number was almost 3000 so Jim probably joined at the very start of the organization around 1971. He was also an original member of the Greater Chicago Insulator club when it started in 1991 with a membership number of 5. He was one of the “legions” of club members who made the trek to southern Indiana to help themselves to the remaining collection of **Marion Oschmann** after Marion sold his collection to the McDougalds and they removed what they wanted.

Jim was involved in many shows. In 1985, he co-hosted the National show in St. Charles. He also co-hosted the annual spring show that was held in Carol Stream for many years before it moved to the DuPage County Fairgrounds, where Jason Townsend took over hosting it and eventually moved it to Yorkville, Illinois. Once in a while, Jim would produce a display. Most memorable to me was the display of line splices he did at the 2012 Yorkville show. He was a regular at the Mid-Ohio show in London, Ohio (later moved to Washington Courthouse and then to Springfield). I also saw him at the Toledo/Tama, Iowa swap meet on a regular basis. He also attended many nationals, shows held in Wisconsin by the Wisconsin Insulator Collector’s Club (Sun Prairie, WI and Milwaukee, WI), and Columbia City, Indiana shows. Often he was accompanied by **Joan**, his wife of 55 years.

Classified Ads

WANTED: Marked Cook porcelain including pin-types, multiparts, suspensions, Johnny Balls, spools, etc. Let me know what you have. Top dollar paid if I like you. Contact Dan Ling at: AMBERED257@HUGHES.NET.

INSULATORS FOR SALE: Visit <http://www.InsulatorStore.com> for a variety of glass insulators, boxes, cleaning supplies, lighting, and other insulator-related goods. Gift wrapping is available.

Wanted: Mickey Mouse insulators (CD 257s), Jumbos (CD 269s), or anything with ears in glass and porcelain! I'll buy collections too. Richard Case, Insulator815@aol.com Thank you and let me know what you have.

Upcoming Shows

July 25-26, 2014 (Friday & Saturday)

Hog Roast

Arcadan, Ohio

20th Annual Hog Roast & Pool Party starting at 5:00 PM. Insulator Swap Meet July 26 from 8:00 to 2:00. Insulators, lightning rod collectibles, milk bottles and other vintage collectibles. Location: 8784 Grubbs Rex Road, Arcanum, OH 45304. Info: ALAN STASTNY 937-546-4745.

September 13, 2014 (Saturday)

**14th Annual Greater Chicago Insulator Club "End of Summer" Picnic and Swap Meet
Racine, Wisconsin**

14th Annual GCIC "End of Summer" picnic and swap meet. Show hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. It will be held at the home of RANDY WESNER, 434 Blaine Ave., Racine, WI 53405 (262) 633-0756 Email: randysdodge@gmail.com Call or email if you need directions.

September 13, 2014

2nd LRB show

Kokomo, Indiana

October 2014

River Falls, Wisconsin

October 31/Nov. 1, 2014

**Mid-Ohio Insulator Show
Springfield, Ohio**

July 3-5, 2015

**NIA National Show
Sandwich, IL**