

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Another jam-packed issue delivered to your doorstep! And spring is on the way (although as I write this, Boston is suffering from the worst snowstorm of the winter!) so we can get out there scouting for insulators once again. Actually, we've really been fortunate down here in the desert southwest as we have had virtually no winter. I've been able to get out and look for glass several times in the last three months without even seeing that awful white stuff!

Lot's of stuff to pass on to you in this issue. We have articles from our new Show Standards Chairperson Sandy Ellison, and the new Historian, Rick Soller. Elton Gish, Ethics Chairman, gives us a rundown on buying insulators on the Internet auctions. And John McDougald reports on the testing of questionable insulators. Finally, Dudley Ellis, Nominations Chairman, fills us in on the voting procedure for the Western Region Vice President.

A note of concern: A few days ago, long-time NIA member Bob

Adams was operated on for a serious artery blockage in his neck. Most of you recall Bob (along with Phoebe) and their annual award presentations at the National Conventions. He is recuperating, but he needs our support and prayers. Send get-well cards to 707 N. E. 113th St., Miami, FL. 33161-7239.

Speaking of the National Convention, June will be here before we know it, so get your plan together for attending the 30th National Convention in

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experience.

- 1) Do you know the seller? Are they known in the insulator hobby? Check the seller's 'feedback' rating and view the seller's 'feedback' that was left by people who have dealt with the seller in the recent past. If the seller has no 'feedback' or he has one or more negative feedback comments, check with

...guidelines... could help you to avoid a bad experience.

knowledgeable collectors or send a message to the ICON mailing list asking if anyone knows this person. You may also wish to send email to people who left the seller 'feedback' to check further.

- 2) Is the insulator described well? Do they adequately state the color and the details on the embossing, condition, etc. so you know exactly what you are about to bid on? If not, ask the seller for clarification BEFORE you bid! He should respond quickly and answer all your questions to your satisfaction.
- 3) Is a picture available? Does it look realistic? Colors can get very distorted from digital cameras, and from computer monitors. Don't always believe what you see in the photo as the real color. Ask the seller if you have any doubt! Sometimes the seller will have other photographs or he will be willing to take another one for you. If the seller did not post a picture, ask him to send you one. If he did not post a picture in the auction and/or cannot send you a photograph, it may be a good

idea to avoid the auction.

- 4) If the insulator is being sold by (what you believe to be) an insulator collector or dealer, is the opening price reasonable? A knowledgeable collector or dealer will not usually offer an insulator far below a reasonable price unless he has set a higher reserve price.

5) Remember, offering an item for sale on eBay is a binding legal action to sell, and also being the high bidder on an item is a binding legal action for you to carry through with your purchase. See the eBay rules and terms for more details.

- 6) If you do not know the seller, cannot find others who know him, and/or he doesn't have adequate favorable 'feedback' comments, you may want to avoid sending him a large sum of money. Consider using eBay's SafeHarbor Escrow Services. Information about Escrow Services (such as I-Trade and TradeSafe) can be found at: <http://pages.ebay.com/aw/life-pageB1.html> This service will ensure the safety of your money and the honesty of the transaction (guarantees the seller has the item).

- 7) If you have entered into a transaction where the buyer or seller doesn't "follow up" as expected, make several attempts to contact them via email. If your attempts fail, sometimes the person is out of town or may have severe problems with his computer. I have seen this a couple of times and it has even happened to me. You can also obtain the seller's address and phone number at: <http://pages.ebay.com/aw/user->

[query.html](#). eBay also provides forums to help resolve problems, although, as you read in the fine print, they are only "agents" and not responsible to see that the transaction concludes successfully! They do offer additional avenues of help to resolve complaints at: <http://pages.ebay.com/aw/complaints.html>

Another point should be made again. If someone you do not know contacts you **first** and offers to sell or trade an insulator, you are not obligated to send payment without seeing the insulator he is offering. In this case, you should expect the seller to send you the insulator first. In these cases, it is always best to ask other collectors if they know this person.

The best advice when purchasing insulators from someone you do not know is "Buyer Beware". Our hobby of insulator collectors is small and many people know each other from trading or face-to-face meetings at various shows. Ask your collecting buddy about the person you do not know. If he doesn't know them, he will have a circle of collector friends he can ask. Know whom you are dealing with!

Happy Collecting!!

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

FROM THE BY-LAWS CHAIR

In early December I presented the Board with two proposals. I am pleased to report that the Board has approved both. The first proposal concerned the incorporation of the NIA. To date, the NIA has operated as an unregistered, unincorporated, non-profit association. There is nothing wrong or improper with operating in that manner. However, operating in that manner has prevented the NIA from availing itself to special benefits that registered non-profit corporations have. Some examples of non-profit organizations are the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Sierra Club, National Geographic Society, American Numismatic Association and Star Trek Fan Club.

Clearly, one of the benefits of incorporation would be that the NIA would no longer have to pay sales tax on the items that it purchases for fundraising. Typically this would save the NIA about \$100 a year. Another benefit would be with the publishing of *Drip Points*. Editor Tom Katonak has determined that having a federal tax exemption number would allow us to apply for state gross receipts tax exemption. Tom estimates that the savings alone on publishing *Drip Points* would be approximately \$400 per year!

Incorporating will require a significant amount of work. John McDougald is going to prepare the necessary paperwork to register the NIA with the IRS as a tax-exempt organization. It is our belief that the NIA will qualify under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3) for this status, as the NIA (as noted in our by-laws), is a corporation organized

and operated exclusively for scientific and/or educational purposes. Once John has completed our registration with the IRS, he will turn the matter over to my wife, Melanie, who will register the NIA as a non-profit corporation. The IRS process will take approximately 60 days and may very well cost about \$750. Filing the Articles of Incorporation will take another 30 days and cost about \$75. These are one-time fees.

The NIA by-laws will have to be amended to include the required legal definitions like "duration," "purpose of organization," "character of affairs," "registered agent," "number and duties of directors," etc. If my timing estimates are correct, some time over the summer (after the National for obvious reasons), I will begin the long and tedious process of updating our by-laws and membership handbook.

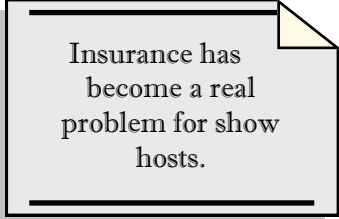
Once incorporated, there will be annual requirements. Corporations are required to have a "statutory or registered agent." There are companies available for this that act as a corporation's registered agent and file the corporation's annual report. A typical fee is \$120 a year. This would be the only ongoing cost. We would also be required to file a non-profit corporation income tax return with the IRS each year. This is a relatively simple form, and the responsibility would most likely fall on the shoulders of the NIA's Treasurer.

The second proposal that I submitted was on the purchase of liability insurance for activities at shows. A \$1,000,000 policy costs about \$500 per year. There is no deductible. Such a policy would

cover bodily injury and property damage, and indemnify the show hosts, and the NIA. Most hotels, convention centers, etc., now require that the host carry an insurance policy. For \$500 per year, the NIA could cover all of the activities at all NIA Class A, B & C shows (National, Regional and local).

Insurance has become a real problem for individuals and/or local clubs looking to host shows, because of its expense. Over the last five years, clubs and show hosts have been forced to pay an average cost of \$300 per day for liability insurance. This is quite a bit of money for an individual host or local club to come-up with. It has, in fact, had two significant impacts on shows. First, show hosts have to work harder to find a facility that does not require insurance (if they don't want to pay for insurance, or simply can't afford it). Second, show facilities not requiring insurance are often of a lesser quality than show facilities that do require insurance.

Local clubs and individuals, looking to host a show, would have to become members of the NIA in order to take advantage of the NIA's insurance policy. Currently the NIA by-laws contain a provision, which allows for local clubs to join the NIA. A club can become affiliated with the NIA upon payment of annual dues and approval of the club's by-laws (Article II, Paragraph 3). By-laws are of course "my turf." I would like to see the local clubs retain as much of their informality and independence as they want to. Currently my thoughts (and what I



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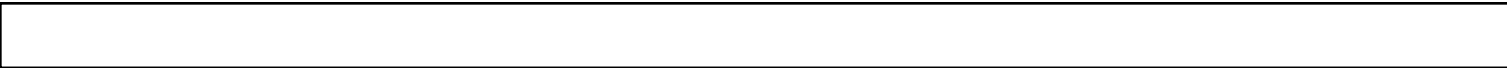
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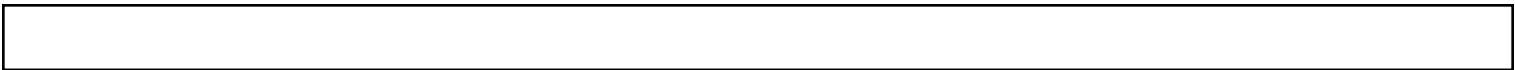
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