Letter #3 July 09, 1994

Hello, radio antennae insulator collectors of America!

Do we have a national club going now? Yes we do. The enclosed membership list is up to 35, and most have sent in $2-$5 each to cover these startup costs. By the time I get this mailed out mid-July, there may be more.

NEW EDITOR

I have asked Dan Howard in Oregon to assume the position of editor, and he has graciously accepted. You will find Dan to be enthusiastic, polite and considerate, a thorough person, zealous in his attention to this hobby. I have spoken with Dan and corresponded, and I am confident he will make a superb editor. He has the time and the writing skills and the technical interest that is needed to elevate this newsletter. I will be mailing Dan a packet with info that you all have been sending me, and he will begin to include those things in future newsletters.

I will still be active as best I can, but am already president of the Dixie Jewels Insulator Club, and editor of its quarterly newsletter. Additionally, as of last December my 16 year-old daughter moved in with me, which is great after having lived apart from her for 8 years. Being the primary parent in her life, and a single-parent, I want to have more time for her as well.

TREASURY REPORT

You have sent in a total of $46 thus far, of which $18.56 has gone for mailing the first 3 newsletters (10, 29, 35+ people). I will forward the remainder to Dan Howard, and any recent contributions you may have just sent me. One thing to discuss soon is to whether to have dues beginning in 1995. I feel that the editor needs a cash cushion because there are always free mailings to new people and production costs.

HUGE STOCK AVAILABILITY

Legendary dealer 'Marshall' Dick Bowman brought a huge radio collection to the Houston NIA National Show to piece out. He dealt about 30% or more out of his room to individuals, then sold the remnant, about 150 pounds I would guess, to Jim Overstreet in Atlanta. I know all this cuz I had to haul it back! So Jim is the man to contact for new additions to your collections. He has many dupes including scarce ones.

A STROLL DOWN HISTORY LANE

When assembling the first mailing list for this club, I relied on letters and scraps of paper I had saved for 10 years. This club could have started 10 years earlier if I had not encountered some major changes in my life just at that time. So though I continued to collect threaded glass and porcelain, and add to my radio antennae collection, I lacked the zeal to get this club started! Anyway I thought you might find the following excerpts from letters interesting in light of the fact they were written 1984-1985!

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

7-21-84 A review of correspondence with Jim Singleton showed we were trading radio pieces and threaded also. Jim is from Melrose MA where Oakman was associated with several wonderful early telegraph insulator manufacturers. Jim talked about researching his life thru the libraries. Jim goes on to say:

My interest comes about from my connection to amateur radio. Licensed since 1954 (age 11). Back then I found a couple of old glass insulators dangling from poles. They got broken when I used them in antennaes back in the 50's. Found another by chance 8 years ago [1974], the only one I had until about a year ago when I decided it would be fun to see if I could get more. To my surprise the variety available was much greater than I had suspected. I have about 100 glass, about 20 porcelain and 10 porcelain lightning arrestors. My #1 interest is glass, even have a couple in original boxes.

2-26-85 Dear Keith, recv'd Jan.85 Crown Jewels & am interested in the large group you have for sale. [Keith had bought a sizeable collection, gone thru it and still had lotsa variety for sale after keeping many.] I will take all the ones you have. Maybe I'll find some I don't have. I have about 235 radio antennae insulators and about 40 lightning arrestors. Will send $24 plus postage.

I well remember my first one. I guess about 10 years ago [1975] I read a short article on them and became interested. When I was a kid back in the 1930's, I helped put them up for our old battery radio, but they're long gone. Shortly after reading the article, I had occasion to go in a small electric repair shop in Farmville, VA and saw a small blue porcelain one on the work bench. I asked him how much he would take for it, and he looked at me kind of funny & said " you can have it, I don't have any use for it". I was hooked and since then have found them everywhere, old houses, hanging from trees, on poles, antique shops & flea markets etc.

Some of the glass ones have names: Pyrex, Consolidated, Fleron, L.S.Brach Mfg. Co., TEC CO., A.G.K.....I found a lightning arrestor last Sunday I didn't have, on an old house, that was about to fall in.

Charles Crews Appomattox VA

3-19-85 Dear Keith, yes - you may put my name on any lists you have of collectors. I collect small antenna insulators, lightning arrestors, old QSL cards, old radio components, books, mags -- way too much!! I will try to photograph & catalog my duplicates and eventually send a list..... I also have some Edison stuff - I'm sort of an Edison nut! Have an Edison record (cylindrical), some Edison lamps, books, a spoon with engraving of Menlo Park Lab in bowl of spoon, some photos. I am also looking for insulators in original boxes. Bob Dennison Westmont NJ

6-5-85 Keith: I just found your letter of 1-15-85 concerning 'radio wire insulators' among some receipts. Sorry for the delay. I have not collected insulators for about 7 years now, but I have always picked up radio wire insulators I don't have at shows, flea markets and yard sales. I have near 60 of them & maybe 12 are porcelain. I have no list as they're more a fascination than a hobby to me. I would enjoy being in contact with you and others. I make no money on this hobby as it is purely historical. I've been working on a book for 3 years now and it does consume alot of time.

Jerry Gibby Taft, CA

11-26-91 Jeff Hogan sent me a sales list including hand-drawings.

RECENT MAIL

As I turn this newsletter over to Dan, I wanted to share excerpts from a few recent letters from you all. I have received drawings of entire collections, old ads, news articles and so forth. Some will not copy well, some will be published later by Dan I'm sure. But here are a few excerpts:

From "mad dog Jack" Foote out in Sacramento:

Thanks for writing. I have been collecting radio strains on the side for a number of years. The colors and shapes have always intrigued me. My wife took over the collection a few years ago and added some really neat pieces - various shades of SCA (3), amber, various shades of green (4), and a nice pale blue and an electric blue. My understanding is that the colored stuff originated in Mexico also [as Keith stated in letter #2]. I find that the porcelain types are a bit easier to find at yard sales, flea markets, etc.

A club sounds like a great idea. Maybe by sharing info with other collectors we can shed a bit of light on these great 'go-withs.' Lightning rod apparatus has a good following. Would seem that these deserve the same!

Please include me in future newsletters. I'll see what I can dig up in the way of any information about these. Looking forward to hearing from you again soon!

[[editor's reply: so ..... what's your wife's name, Mad Dog? And if you really have an electric blue glass one (not peacock), then write back with the specs! That would be a new color for many of us!]]

From Charles Crews in Virginia;

I read your letter with interest. Don't have any of the insulators that are opalescent, but I do have several that are flourescent under a black light. I don't know if you have checked yours, but I'm sure you have several that will flouresce. They are not real brilliant, but they do fluoresce.

Some are yellow, some are real white. Real interesting. I was a rock collector, and some of them flouresce. Some older machine-made marbles fluoresce real brilliant. Have read up on glass, and different ingredients they use in making the different colors cause it to fluoresce. Sometimes just minerals in the sand. The insulators that fluoresce a deep white, are clear!

[[editor's note: thanx for the encouragement also and the cash for postage, Charles, but no I have no colored ones for sale at this time.]]

From Shirley Patocka in Penryn, California, who called me also:

I finally got to a copy machine, and have enclosed some ancient history - [[ed.note: article and pics from a newspaper 11/23/72!]] It was a small show in a small town, Georgetown CA, 21+ years ago. I had more colored ones at the 1986 show in Auburn and just used the antennae insulators for that display. I got the NIA ribbon!

I don't know if by others' standards I have lots or few, but have enjoyed collecting them over the years. I'm trying to round them all up so I really will know what I have. Enclosed is $5 for postage etc. Thank you for initiating the call to collectors! I look forward to participating in our information finding & sharing. I'll be on the learning end of it, but will do what I can to help if I can!

From Steve Blair, London Ohio (and London show host), I received pics of many colored glass radio items. The most awesome was the solid opal noname that I reported in newsletter #2. Wish I could dupe this and include it here! This puts my partial-opal one to shame. Are there others out there? Let us know!

From Dick Mackiewicz in Coventry CT:

Dear Keith, [Dick discusses joining our new club, then goes on:] I have been collecting for some time, with the aim of publishing a book devoted to the subject. I also collect early antenna kits and antenna eliminators. I have catalogued more than 130 types of insulators thus far with many variations of some types, and over 66 different types of lightning arrestors, again with many variations. I have several duplicates available to trade, and will send xerox copies of my notebooks to interested collectors.

[[editor's note: Dick sent a huge stack of photostat pages of his collection, hand drawings with dimensions and embossings. I will forward this on to Dan unless he already has it. He also has many other radio-related items, as his business involves recycling radios and selling parts. He will be among the most 'technical' of the collectors, for those of you who want to delve into this esoteric sub-culture!]]

Also got short notes from Rick Soller, Gene Condon, Mike Gay and Larry Shumaker with postage monies included. Hint hint for you guys who haven't sent in yet...

Lastly please note the names marked with a '#' on the membership list; these are new names not on the April listing. The ad in Crown Jewels surfaced many more collectors and prompted others that we already knew about to write or call.

MANUFACTURERS

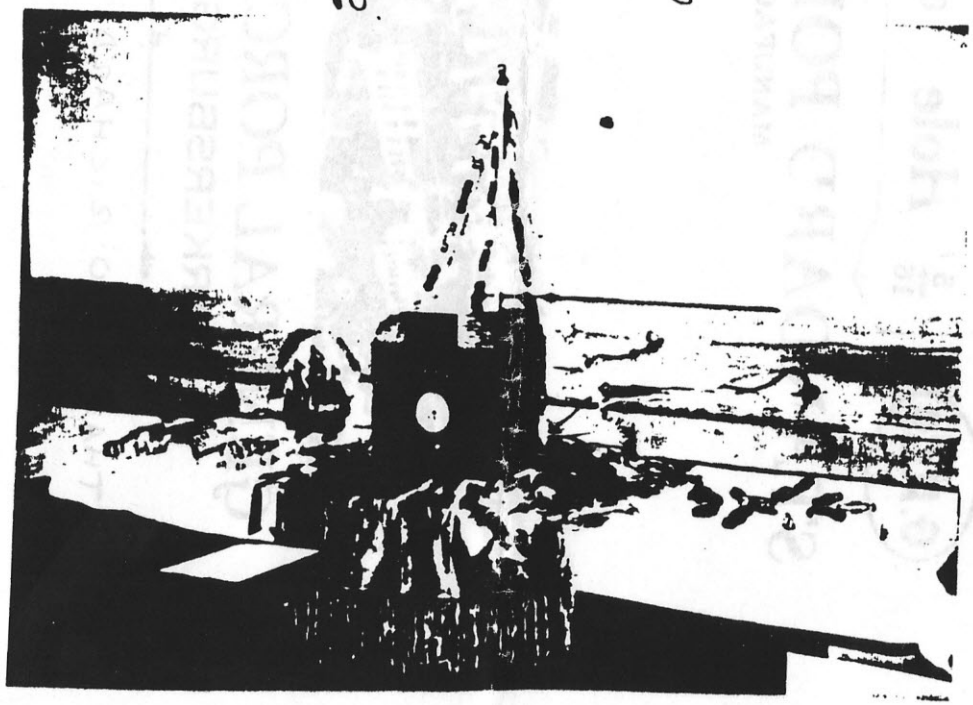
As this is wrapped up, I wanted to throw in some other loose notes on the names and locations of company embossing. There is a patent book in the larger insulator hobby that includes a great deal of information on patents and companies of radio antennae insulators. Research of that book would make for some good articles in future newsletters. Here is a bit of info I gleaned out long ago, plus scraps of info from elsewhere.

logo or initial	name of company	location
????	Bendix (aircraft radio)	????
????	Consolidated	Chicago
RR	Radio Receptor Co.	New York
H.E.Co.	Heineman Elec. Co.	Philadelphia
????	Insulaglas	????
????	Knox	Knoxville ?
	Square D	Detroit
TEC Co.	Trenton Elec. & Conduit Co. (electric sign insulators too)	Trenton NJ
G.P.Co.	General Porcelain Co.	Parkersburg WV

????	Findlay (threaded porc. also)	E. Liverpool OH
PP Inc	Porcelain Products Inc.	Findlay OH
????	Thomas & Sons Co.	E. Liverpool OH
????	Birnbach Radio	New York
????	Fairmount Elec. & Mfg. Co.	Philadelphia
????	Brach Mfg. Co.	Newark NJ

THANX TO RICHARD MACKIEWICZ FOR THE AD

1986 Nor-Cal Hrs. Club
Show and Sale
On the table on the left are some Pyrex in various sizes, etc. – on the right are porcelain. The strings are all different ones – glass.



SECOND PLACE WINNER..Shirley Patocka (story on page 9 under other picture.)

Requesting Patent Information
by Dan Howard

Valuable information about the history of an insulator or lightning arrestor may be found be researching its patent. In a brief article that appeared in the AWA Review Vol. 6, David W. Kraeuter says that copies of patents can be ordered from the Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks, Washington DC 20231. The cost of each copy (in 1991) was $1.50 postpaid. I haven't tried this yet. If you do, please let us know whether or not this still holds true

Source:

The Antique Wireless Association, The AWA Review Vol. 6, 1991, Holcomb NY, pg. 184.

AN INTERESTING MODERN INSULATOR
by Dan Howard

If, like me, you include modern antenna insulators in your collection, you may find that the local ham radio store will have a new one or two for your collection.

Such was my experience when I visited a ham store in the Seattle area a few years ago. Among the items that I purchased, was a black plastic end insulator measuring 6 1/4" x 1 1/8" and marked "Pat. 4091350" "W4FXQ."

I recently wrote to W4FXQ, William Buffington Jr., to find out a little more about my insulator. He sent a nice letter in return and a copy of his patent. In his letter, Mr. Buffington explained that he designed and patented the W4FXQ insulator in the late 1970's. Among the unique features of his design are lateral holes running through the body of the insulator and a helical rib pattern (See figure 1).

Mr. Buffington's design makes it possible for the insulator to function in tension or compression, according to the needs of the user. The continuous spiral ribbing and lateral holes make it possible to wind the insulator with additional wire to form "loading coils" or "antenna traps" of various lengths (valuable features, especially when the insulator is to be used in a transmitting antenna).

According to Mr. Buffington, most of the 3 million units that he sold went to the military. He said that they valued the insulator's light weight, strength, and versatility. He blames "lack of imagination" for the disappointing sales to ham radio operators.

The earliest ad that I found for the insulator was in the August 1979 issue of QST magazine. Van Gorden Engineering of Euclid Ohio sold the insulator as part of its "Hi-Q" line of antenna accessories.

In 1991, the mold and manufacturing rights were sold to Van Gorden. Unfortunately, the insulator no longer appears in Van Gorden's ads and I don't know if it is still available. However, if you are lucky, you may still find one of these interesting modern insulators at a ham store in your area.

Sources:

William Buffington Jr., W4FXQ, Letter to Dan Howard, April 26, 1994
Patent 4,091,350, Issued May 23, 1978, US Patent Office
QST Magazine, August 1979 pg. 136.

United States Patent [19]

Buffington, Jr.

[11] **4,091,350**

[45] **May 23, 1978**

[54] **INSULATING CORE FOR USE AS A STRAIN INSULATOR OR A COIL FORM**

[76] Inventor: **William E. Buffington, Jr.**, 1554 Montrose Ave., E. Jacksonville, Fla. 32210.

[21] Appl. No.: **745,821**

[22] Filed: **Nov. 29, 1976**

[51] **Int. Cl.**[2] **H01F 5/02**; H01F 27/30; H01B 17/24; G01Q 1/00

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **336/208**; 174/208; 338/303; 338/321; 343/722; 343/850; D13/17

[58] **Field of Search** ..... 174/138 R, 138 J, 174–177, 174/207, 208, 212; 219/355, 546; 336/207, 208, 338/58, 62, 63, 261, 263-266, 270, 282, 286, 296, 298, 299, 302, 303, 321; 24/115 J, 115 K, 129 R, 129 A, 129 D; 343/722, 749, 750, 752, 820, 821, 850, 866, 868, 895, 859, 865; 242/85.1, 125.2; D13/17, 18

[56] **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

905,141	12/1908	Bogue	174/208 X
1,415,240	5/1922	Hynes	338/302 X
1,858,483	5/1932	Conrad	338/270 X
2,093,872	9/1937	McCoy	174/208
2,422,458	6/1947	Amy et al.	343/722
2,653,992	9/1953	Hill	338/321 X

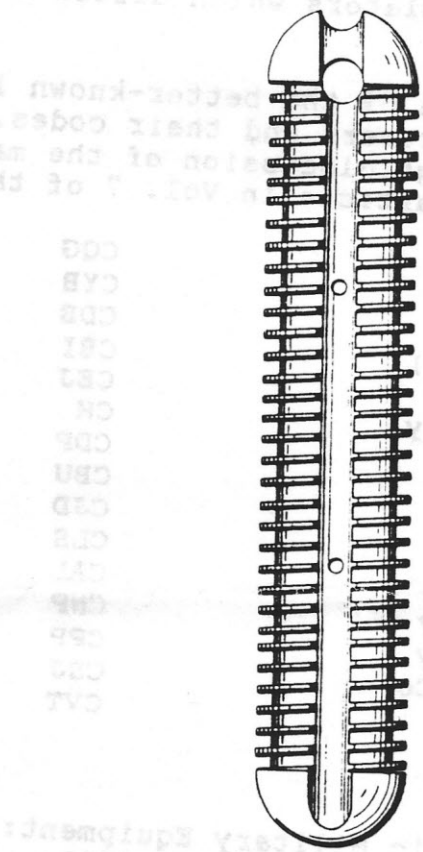
Primary Examiner—Laramie E. Askin

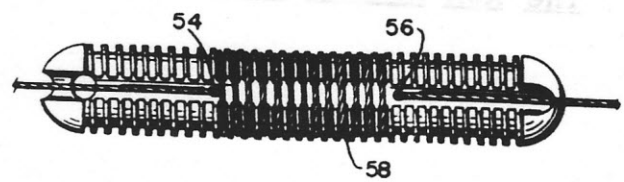
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Littlepage, Quaintance, Murphy, Richardson and Webner

[57] **ABSTRACT**

An insulating core including a helical groove for use in a coil form, U-shaped grooves for use in an insulator in compression and diametrical holes for use in an insulator in tension. The wire used in the system is part of an antenna system.

6 Claims, 11 Drawing Figures





Identifying Surplus Insulators
by Dan Howard

In the years following World War II, surplus material flooded into the amateur radio market. Insulators were no exception. Publications such as CQ magazine, and specialty surplus catalogs carried ads for military insulators for years. These items often rivaled civilian production for quality and the immense quantities on the market insured very low prices. Surplus insulators are still commonly available today.

In his article "Electronic Military Equipment: Naval Equipment Manufacturers," F. W. Chesson describes the manufacturers' codes which often appear on surplus insulators.

Most of mine carry a three letter code followed by a series of numbers. For example, a cylindrical white porcelain end insulator/spreader 4 1/4" x 1/2" is marked CSJ-61192. According to Chesson's article, CSJ was the manufacturer's code for Stupakoff Ceramic and Mfg. Co.. Chesson indicates that the first two digits of the number are used to designate the part type. I assume that the remaining digits designate the specific part (I have pair of identical insulators which differ only by the three letter manufacturer codes.)

Here is a list of some of the better-known insulator and lightning arrestor manufacturers and their codes. For a complete list of codes and a thorough discussion of the manufactuers' code system, see Mr. Chesson's article in Vol. 7 of the AWA Review.

Belden Mfg. Co	CQG
Birnbach Radio Co	CYB
Bud Radio, Inc	CDB
Corning Glass Works (Pyrex)	CBI
E F Johnson Co	CEJ
Electrose Insulator Company	CH
General Ceramics	CDP
Isolontite, Inc	CBU
J F D Mfg. Co	CJD
L S Brach	CLS
Locke Insulator Company	CAL
National Porcelain Company	CNP
Porcelain Products Company	CPP
Stupakoff Ceramic & Mfg. Co	CSJ
Victor Insulators, Inc	CVT

Source:

Chesson, F. W., "Electronic Military Equipment: Naval Equipment Manufacturers," The AWA Review Vol. 7, 1991: Holcomb, Ny pp 69 - 89.