

#### QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL INSULATOR ASSOCIATION

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#### In this issue of Drip Points:

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#### NIA Board's Report to the General Membership Regarding the Results of its Investigation into Imitation EC&M Insulators

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#### A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



Hello everyone, well this is an issue of the Drip Points that should not be missed. I know some of you out there are of the opinion that the NIA is toothless or has not been doing much to aggressively pursue those that do not have your best interests at heart. I talked to one fellow at the San Jose Western Regional a few weeks ago who made no bones about it, he was not an NIA member "because it was a waste of money". He told me, that "the NIA didn't do anything to enforce show rules or any other rules" and that "he wasn't going to waste his money" Well I took this with a grain of salt, because I know better, and I think that you do as well.

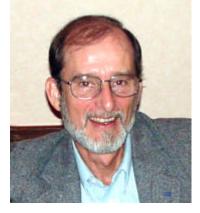
Over the coming months, you will learn more about the NIAs on going investigation, and I think this issue will get things kicked off quite well.

Be sure to read Steve Marks column carefully and to take a look at the color insert in this issue and draw your own conclusions. There has been nothing more frustrating to me than being kept silent by an ongoing investigation. I really hope the limited information presented in this issue of *Drip Points* is a wakeup call to those of you who do not think enough is being done. I only wish we could have said some of this earlier.

There are folks on the NIA board that are enduring multiple threats of law suits, physical threats, false accusations of theft, and a lot of general verbal abuse on your behalf. If not for these folks, the hobby would be up to it's neck in fakes.

#### Kevin Jacobson, NIA #6720 Information Director

#### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Well, the 34th National Insulator Convention in Springfield is now history. What a great show it was! Kudos to Steve Blair and Glenn Drummond for hosting this premier And thanks also to the event! many volunteers who helped these guys make the show a true success. The exhibits this year were truly awesome - maybe the best ever at a National! The outstanding color coverage in the August Crown Jewels will give you a pretty good synopsis if you did not have the good fortune to attend the show in person.

While I think of it, one of the important announcements at the show was the location of the 2004 National Convention. If you haven't heard, the 35<sup>th</sup> NIA Convention and Show will be held in the Eastern Region in New Kensington, PA (near Pittsburgh) on July 23 - 25. This show will be hosted by the experienced team of John Hovanec, Ron Barth and Tim Grantz with sponsorship by the Western Reserve Insulator Club. It should be another good show! So mark your calendars now for this upcoming event!

Perhaps the single-most noteworthy event of the convention was the award of Lifetime Membership to Steve and Lois Blair, and Glenn and Sandra Drummond for over three decades of service to the hobby. Congratulations to the four of you!

Lynda and I also had the good fortune to attend the Western Regional Show in San Jose California a few weeks ago. It has been a long time since we've had one of the NIA shows in California and this was a premier event! Hosted by the NorCal Insulator Club, the high point was the outstanding group of exhibits (22 of them by my count), most of them "National quality"! I learned an awful lot from these displays and most of the attendees did likewise.

One more item on shows: I think I reported in an earlier Drip Points that the NIA was having a lot of trouble getting liability insurance for our shows. Thanks to the diligence of Treasurer Dudley Ellis. we were able to secure show insurance for calendar year 2003 but at a substantial premium increase. We have only a one-year binder, so I worry that we'll have a similar problem next year. Remember, if you're hosting a show, as an NIA member you qualify to use our policy to cover your show's insurance requirement. As time goes on, we are finding that an increasing number of venues are requiring insurance coverage. This can cost upwards of \$300 a day! The NIA rate is only \$50 per day. (Call or email Dudley if you need some help on this.)

I have one change to report concerning the NIA leadership team. Sandy Ellison, long-time Chairperson of the Awards and Recognition Committee has resigned her position to concentrate more on golf and the Prairie Signals Insulator Club. She has done a magnificent job in this crucial position and I'm going to miss her. On the "upside", I've chosen Bill Meier to replace Sandy in this important role. Bill doesn't need much of an intro-

duction as most of you know of his dedication to the hobby and the NIA over the past couple decades. While he's best known for bringing the hobby into "the computer age", he has also long been a champion of recognizing people for contributions they've made to the hobby. I welcome Bill to the team and look forward to working closely with him. If any of you have any ideas or suggestions concerning exhibits, awards, judging or things of this nature, please make them known to Bill. He'll be pleased to discuss them with you.

Finally, let me mention the "keynote address" of this Drip Points issue. You all know the time and effort we've been putting into ridding the hobby of imitation and altered insulators. And you all know about the Federal investigation concerning the imitation EC&M embossed insulators. To this point in time, we have been unable to share any details with you for fear of jeopardizing the investigation. Now, more of the facts can be shared and First Past President Steve Marks will bring you up to date in his column. Let me say that I am most pleased with the work that the Authentication and Classification Committee has done in this critical area. I think you will be amazed and impressed as well! (Thanks to an anonymous donor for funding the color insert again this issue.)

Well, I think that's all I have to say for the present, but let me close with the thought that I've really enjoyed meeting and talking with so many of you at the shows this summer. For both Lynda and me, that has to be the highlight of these annual get-togethers!

Best in collecting,

#### Tom Katonak, NIA #3567 NIA President

# FROM THE FIRST PAST PRESIDENT



## NIA Board's Report to the General Membership Regarding the Results of its Investigation into Imitation EC&M Insulators

For the past seven years or so, serious questions have been raised about the authenticity of a group of insulators that have surfaced on the West Coast. The insulators in question include unembossed CD 735s, dramatic new colors of CD 120 CEWs and CD 123 EC&Ms, and a new style of glass block which has come to be known as the "Sierra Block." Α "Dealer" (whose name is being withheld by the NIA because there are ongoing civil and criminal investigations), introduced many of these pieces into the hobby at various insulator and insulator related shows.

From the beginning the NIA's Authentication & Classification Committee (hereinafter referred to as the "A&C Committee"), and the Dealer had an ongoing dialogue about these new finds and the Dealer was well aware that the NIA had questions as to their au-

thenticity. The Dealer challenged the NIA on several occasions to prove that these pieces were fake. Several collectors had spent tens of thousands of dollars on these pieces. The uncertainty as to the authenticity of these items has been the source of great anxiety among insulator collectors over the past five years. Even collectors who did not purchase these specific items were concerned that someone had the ability to counterfeit insulators and thus damage the hobby. At the request of its members, the NIA undertook an investigation into these items in an attempt to determine their authenticity. The NIA's A&C Committee performed the majority of this work. The investigation has been costly and quite time consuming.

The first phase of the investigation began in 2000 and 2001 with the "Sierra Blocks" (the details of that

Dealer on January 22, 2002. The NIA alleged that the Dealer had committed an act that was "objectionable to the best interests of the hobby." "Objectionable to the best interests of the hobby" as defined under the NIA's Code of Ethics, "includes, but is not limited to, any action or item which is likely to cause financial damage and/or loss, ill will, or injury to collectors or organizations involved in the collecting of insulators and related items. For example, a false or misleading representation of fact likely to cause confusion, and/or the possibility of the use of an insulator to commit fraud (either by the issuing party or through a subsequent party)."

The NIA further alleged that the Dealer had violated various provisions of the NIA Code of Ethics, including the provision that prohibits NIA Members from manufactur-

In October 2002, the A&C Committee was given the opportunity to inspect the suspected molds and insulators. The A&C Committee inspected a cache of EC&Ms. There were 29 green black glass "M-Mold" pieces; 8 clear "J-Mold" pieces; 1 peacock "J-Mold" piece; a broken aqua "M-Mold piece; and a 30<sup>th</sup> green black glass "M-Mold" that appeared to have been sandblasted to make it look old.

investigation were published in the Spring 2002 issue of *"Drip Points"*). The results of that investigation led the NIA Board to form an opinion and belief that the "evidence of authenticity" offered by the Dealer to the A&C Committee regarding the "Sierra Blocks," was a complete fabrication. The NIA Board decided to confront the ing, advertising, exhibiting or introducing into the hobby for distribution (through buying, selling or trading), any Imitation Insulator which is not plainly and permanently marked "reproduction" with the calendar year in which such item was manufactured. "Imitation Insulators" are ones that purport to be, but in fact are not, Original In-

sulators. This category includes but is not limited to reproductions, copies, replicas, or counterfeits of Original Insulators. The Board also had concerns that the Dealer had knowingly misrepresented the rarity and value of various insulators he had offered for sale or trade.

The letter also advised the Dealer that it was the NIA's belief that the results of its investigation into the "Sierra Blocks" called into question all of the other "new finds" that the Dealer had introduced to the hobby. It was hoped that the letter would generate a dialogue between the Dealer and the NIA. The NIA offered the Dealer the opportunity to respond to the allegations in writing, in effect advising him that the insulator hobby deserved to know the truth about the "Sierra Blocks," and that this was his opportunity to provide that information in his own words. The letter also suggested that he might want to consider offering collectors who purchased these items a refund. The NIA offered the assistance of its Ethics Chairman to act as a point of contact and coordinator for refunds.

Rather than responding with answers to the Board's questions, the Dealer hired an attorney who threatened legal action against certain NIA Board and A&C Committee Members. In a letter dated February 1, 2002, the attorney demanded a retraction of the NIA's "libelous statements," and threatened suit if any information regarding his client or the insulators in question were provided to the NIA General Membership. The Board responded with a letter dated February 7, 2002, which stated (and bears repeating in this report), that the NIA is a non-profit corporation formed for educational purposes, whose Board and Committee Members are unpaid volunteers. It is the NIA's goal to encourage growth and public awareness of the insulator hobby through collecting, dealing and educational endeavors; protecting the interests of insulator collectors and dealers; and establishing standards and ethics by which insulator collectors and dealers may fairly deal with one another. The letter went on to state that it was the NIA's belief that this particular matter was a matter of public concern, and that the NIA Board Members feel strongly that they have an ethical obligation, and are duty bound, to share their opinions concerning the authenticity of insulators with the General Membership.

This was met with a second letter from the Dealer's attorney, dated February 12, 2002, threatening legal action again if any information was provided to the NIA General Membership. In a letter dated February 21, 2002, the NIA Board responded that it believed that it had conducted a fair and independent investigation and had properly exercised its First Amendment Rights as an organization, and that despite its requests it had received no substantive information from the attorney or his client. The Board warned that any legal action filed against the NIA would be ill advised and that the NIA was prepared to take all necessary steps to uphold its Constitutional Rights. On February 11, 2002, the NIA Board confronted a second Dealer. Although that Dealer received his letter on February 19, 2002, he has never responded to the allegations. The NIA Board never heard from the first Dealer's attorney again.

Because the Board had now formed an opinion and belief as to the credibility of these two dealers, it decided to investigate the dramatic colored EC&Ms that were also introduced to the hobby by these two dealers. The Board contacted several collectors and friends of these two dealers. As a result, in August of 2002, the A&C Committee received information from a collector that led the A&C Committee to a series of discussions with a Confidential Informant. These discussions then resulted in a Northern California Deputy District Attorney contacting the A&C Committee in September 2002. The DA indicated that he was in possession of what he believed were materials possibly utilized in the manufacture of insula-The DA indicated that the tors. items came from a Confidential Informant who obtained them directly from one of the Dealers the NIA was investigating.

In October 2002, the A&C Committee was given the opportunity to inspect the suspected molds and insulators. The A&C Committee inspected a cache of EC&Ms. There were 29 green black glass "M-Mold" pieces; 8 clear "J-Mold" pieces; 1 peacock "J-Mold" piece; a broken agua "M-Mold piece; and a 30<sup>th</sup> green black glass "M-Mold" that appeared to have been sandblasted to make it look old. In addition to the insulators, the A&C committee observed three mandrels for making threads in glass insulators two of which were not for EC&Ms, one of which was; a well made steel EC&M "M-Mold" (button on the reverse), which appeared to have been re-worked, having been previously used to make "L-Mold" pieces (button on the front); and a cruder steel mold similar to what has been classified as a "J-Mold."

The A&C Committee had the opportunity to place "J-Mold" and "M-Mold" pieces into the molds and noted that while the "M-Mold" pieces fit, the "J-Mold" pieces did not. This has led the A&C Com(Continued on page 5)

mittee to believe that the cruder steel mold may have been used for another style of EC&Ms. No questionable CEWs were observed, however, there was one questionable threadless, which had been broken in half. There were several "Sierra Blocks." There was also a plaster cast of a 130.1 Cal. Elec. Works (which the DA accidentally and unfortunately broke).

The A&C Committee took 63 pictures documenting "the evidence." Attached are several pictures showing the insulators, molds, mandrels, etc. **(see pages 7 & 8)** The molds, mandrels and insulators were then locked-up for safekeeping in a police agency property locker. As a result of this inspection, the A&C Committee formed an opinion and belief that the "J, L and M mold EC&Ms" were Imitation Insulators (i.e. counterfeit, fake, etc.).

Because this now appeared to be a criminal matter (i.e. fraud, theft by deception, mail fraud, etc.), a determination was made to keep this information confidential. The U.S. Postal Inspectors were in fact investigating the matter and requested the NIA's assistance in obtaining a list of victims and documentation of their losses. They required documented losses in excess of \$100,000 in order to prosecute. To that end the NIA Board solicited information regarding suspect insulators from collectors in the December 2002 issue of "Drip Points" and on "Insulator Collectors on the Net" (ICON). In that same issue, the NIA Board provided a quick reference guide to identifying "J. K. L. M and N mold style EC&Ms," (which was also subsequently published in greater detail in the January 2003 issue of "Crown Jewels of the Wire" magazine), and published its opinion and belief that

#### "<u>J, K, L, M and N mold style</u> <u>EC&Ms" are Imitation Insula-</u> tors.

The Board also made a determination that these particular insulators were "objectionable to the best interests of the hobby" (i.e. likely to cause financial damage and/or loss or injury to collectors or organizations involved in the collecting of insulators, and the possibility of their use to commit fraud)."

By the beginning of 2003, the NIA Board had collected what it believed was enough information for the Postal Inspectors to proceed with their case, and therefore turned that information over to them. The Postal Inspectors, through a Federal Grand Jury Subpoena dated January 10, 2003, took possession of the molds, mandrels and insulators that were previously in the possession of the Northern California DA's Office.

In response, the Dealers under investigation appeared to have started a campaign of disinformation to try to "legitimize" the insulators that the NIA had exposed. One Dealer also contacted several A&C Committee Members with more threats of legal action, not only against the NIA Board and A&C Committee Members, but also against the collectors who were providing the Postal Inspectors with testing samples. And, in the A&C Committee's opinion, these Dealers staged a "new find" of another imitation EC&M. The constant threats of litigation and pending criminal investigation by the US Postal Service, unfortunately delayed the dissemination of information to the NIA General Membership. The NIA Board was very aware that its Members wanted answers and proof regarding the EC&Ms, but under the circumstances that information needed to be withheld at that time.

In June of 2003, the Postal Inspectors informed the A&C Committee that while the dollar amount for damages had been met, they were concerned about criminal prosecution (which requires a higher burden of proof than civil actions), because the majority of the transactions between the collectors and the Dealers were conducted in cash and without receipts (like most hobbies). They also informed the A&C Committee that the molds, mandrels and insulators were being sent to the government's forensic laboratory for testina.

On August 11, 2003, the A&C Committee was advised that the U.S. Attorney reviewing the case was declining criminal prosecution at this time due to the lack of documentary evidence (specifically lack of receipts tying the victims to the Dealers). Although the U.S. Attorney had documentation for \$50,000 worth of purchases, the government's threshold to prosecute is currently \$100,000. The possibility for criminal charges against the two Dealers, however, still remains.

On this same date the Postal Inspector advised the A&C Committee that the government's forensic laboratory had completed preliminary testing on one of the molds, and had determined that it was of modern production and not antique at all. That mold was also determined to be the mold from which a peacock blue EC&M was made. The Postal Inspector went on to indicate that the evidence that the insulator was a fake was "incontrovertible." It is also the government forensic laboratory's opinion that the mandrels and in-(Continued on page 6)

sulators are of recent production.

The A&C Committee believes that a report will be written by the government's forensic laboratory detailing their observations and will be available at a later date. If the A&C Committee is able to obtain a copy of that report (it may be withheld do to the ongoing Postal Service investigation), it will publish it in a future "Drip Points."

The A&C Committee has also learned from the government's forensic laboratory, that there are in fact scientific tests available in the private sector that will definitively determine the age of glass. The A&C Committee has received samples of various suspect insulators (not just J, K, L, M and N mold style EC&Ms which, as mentioned above, the NIA Board has already determined to be Imitation Insulators), and control samples, donated by various collectors, which the A&C Committee will be submitting to an independent laboratory for analysis. The results of these independent tests will be published in *"Drip Points."* 

In the meantime, the government's forensic laboratory is sending the seized insulators, mandrels and molds back to the Postal Inspector handling the case to preserve the chain of custody, and for safekeeping until more documentary evidence is obtained. This evidence would also be available through subpoena to anyone (or any group of individuals), pursuing a civil action against the Dealers. Also, if any collectors come across J, K, L, M and N mold style EC&Ms for sale, they should immediately notify the NIA's A&C Committee, who will in turn alert the Postal Inspector. The Postal Inspector could then issue a "Cease and Desist Order," which if violated, would result in immediate criminal prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Marks, NIA #4951 NIA First Past President

## FROM THE WESTERN REGION



Wow! What a wonderful Western Regional Show the Nor-Cal Insulator Club put on for the hobby August 8-10 in San Jose, CA.

I can't even begin to tell you how many collectors were in attendance. It compared to a national show. There were over twenty exhibits, eighty sales tables, and dozens and dozens of enthusiastic collectors present.

Congratulations goes out to Dave

Elliott, Mike Doyle, Bill Rohde, Lou Hall, Ian MacKay, outgoing Nor-Cal President Larry Shumaker,

in coming Nor-Cal President Colin Jung and many others who donated countless hours to

make the show a success.

Buoyed by that success, the Nor-Cal Club is setting its sights on the possibility of bidding for the opportunity to host the 2005 National Show, probably in either Northern California, or Reno, Nevada.

But before the 2005 National comes the 2004 Western Regional. At least two groups are considering bids for that show. The Jefferson State Insulator Club may bid to host the show in Southern Oregon, and another group is talking about bidding for the event to be held in Colorado.

But before the 2005 National comes the 2004 Western Regional. At least two groups are considering bids for that show. I would encourage individuals or clubs interested in submitting proposals for either the 2004 Western Re-

gional or the 2005 National to contact me as soon as possible.

Howard Banks, NIA #900 Western Region Vice President













## FROM THE CENTRAL REGION



Greetings Fellow Collectors.

One of the great things that I like about this hobby is the fact that most collectors enjoy sharing their collections.

Every year just like your membership dues notice from Joe Beres,

you get a copy of the NIA directory. As you know the directory lists all of the NIA members that wish to be listed. This enables us to be able to call and sometimes even visit other collectors in this small hobby.

Can you imagine another hobby? Say coin collecting? Where you would consider opening your door to someone with the same interest? Someone who just called you out of the blue about coins? I didn't think so.

located in central Illinois, in the early 80's. I even met a few collectors and attended a bottle club meeting in the Denver area that way.

Since I started collecting, I've hosted several dozen people that where passing through the area. I've enjoyed ever minute of it. Sometimes I'm sometimes envious of collectors that live near major Interstate highways.

I heard of one collector that prefers to remain anonymous, who lives in the northern Illinois with the initials R.S. that drove crosscountry visiting collectors on his way to and from a California National.

Visiting other collectors is also a great way to work out insulator trades. Almost everyone has at

least some t r a d e stock. The key is to bring a few of your ins u l a t o r traders with you.

Collectors are genuinely proud of their collections, and for the

I know some people; including myself that look up other collectors while on vacation. Sometimes while on business in another state, I'll check the directory and call a few collectors to see about getting together to swap insulator lies and view their collection.

I started calling other collectors

most part love to show them off. Some of the best collections I've seen will never be set up at a show. It also gives you a chance to learn more about your fellow collector and get to know him better. You also might learn a few things about insulator history and insulator displays.

Can you imagine another hobby? Say coin collecting? Where you would consider opening your door to someone with the same interest? Someone who just called you out of the blue about coins? I didn't think so. But the insulator hobby has the advantage of being small, which brings the advantage of almost everyone knowing everyone else. That is also one of the reasons why reputation is so important. But that is another subject.

Our door is always open. If you're in the area or passing by give us a call. We're in the directory, and don't be surprised when I call on you.

I would like to thank Steve & Lois Blair and Glen Drummond for hosting a VERY successful National this year in Springfield, OH.

Great job!

Ed Peters, NIA #6300 Central Region Vice President



## FROM THE EASTERN

#### REGION

As many of you may know, the eastern region of the country took a pretty severe power hit recently. In addition there is that nasty Worm that's been infecting computers all over the world. Between the two of them, Ken's computer has been blown away and Ken asks me to let you know he will not be able to contribute this time. If the lights stay on and that virus software arrives, he plans to be back in the Winter edition.

ed.

Ken Willick, NIA #3709 Eastern Region Vice President



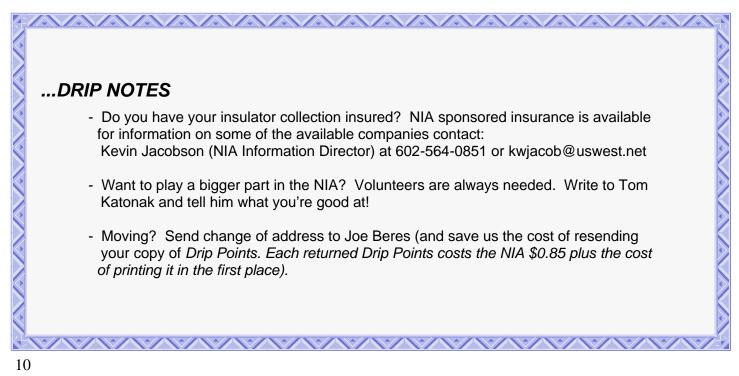
## FROM THE NOMINATIONS

#### CHAIR

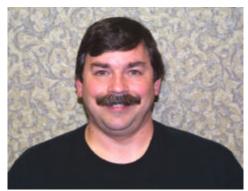
Well the National and the Western Regional have come and gone. I hope most of you got to attend at least one of them if not both. They were both wonderful.

At the National, Ed Peters was re elected the Central Region Vice President. Next years elections will be for President and the Eastern Region Vice President. Anyone wishing to run for one of these positions, please give me a call or drop me an email.

Jack Roach, NIA #4156 Nominations Chairman



#### FROM THE HISTORIAN



Help the Hobby by Rick Soller

If you would like to promote the hobby, write the publishers below and tell them you want them to include insulators in their price guide.

Collector Books (P.O. Box 3009, Paducah, KY 42002) publishes Garage Sale & Flea Market Annual and lists Jacqueline Linscott as an insulator dealer but does

not list any insulators in the text. This publication also lists clubs so write them with information on your club. They also publish Sharon, and Bob Huxford's Flea Market Trader which is similarly devoid of prices for insulators or club information. The Huxfords also edit Schroeder's Antiques Price Guide which also needs insulator information.

A second major publisher that needs a push in the right direction is Krause Publications (700 East State St., Iola, WI 54990). They publish the Antique Trader<sup>™</sup> Antiques & Collectibles 2003 Price Guide edited by Kyle Husfloen. I assume this means they own Antique Trader but it wouldn't hurt to write both places. They also publish Warman's® Antiques and Collectibles Price Guide. This is in it's 37th edition and still does not mention insulators.

Workman Publishing is responsible for the book Antique Roadshow Collectibles. We've all wanted to see insulators on the show or take one ourselves and see what they said about it. If we can't have that, at least they could put some data on insulators in this book. I know this publisher is in New York but haven't found an address yet.

Shiffer Publishing (4880 Lower Valley Rd., Atglen, PA 19310 or email them at Schifferbk@aol.com

Workman Publishing is responsible for the book Antique Roadshow Collectibles. We've all wanted to see insulators on the show or take one ourselves and see what they said about it.

<mailto:-Schifferbk@aol.com>) issued Mike Bruner's Definitive Guide to Insulators but two other books could have insulators added to them. Write them and ask why Clements, Monica Lynn Clements and Patricia Rosser Clements do not cover carnival insulators in their Pocket Guide to Carnival Glass with Price Guide. Also find out why these same authors include cobalt blue bottles but ignore cobalt blue glass insulators in their book Cobalt Blue Glass.

DK Publishing, Inc. (375 Hudson St., New York, NY 10014) prints Judith Miller's Collectibles Price Guide. It has color pictures of over 5,000 collectibles but not a single insulator.

Crown Publishing's House of Collectibles division puts out Harry L.

Rinker's 2001 Official Guide to Flea Market Prices. I found insulators listed in the index but not in the table of contents in the first edition of this book. Crown's 3 River Press division also puts out the popular Kovels' Antiques & Collectibles Price List 2003 which consistently lists information on insulators in each edition. I letter of thanks is due them.

Those publications with insulators listed in them will eventually get added to the NIA archives. The list presented here was uncovered during a trip to Borders Bookstore.

> With additional research, other publications will be added to the list and since many of these publishers have e-mail addresses and web pages, this updated information will be added to the NIA web page. Also, once we get the ball rolling on this, there will be some form letters put together and

an appeal will be made to internet users to send a version of them to various authors and publishers.

Rick Soller, NIA # 2958 Historian

#### FROM THE ETHICS CHAIR



Well, another National is behind us, and it won't be long before we can all get out there and hunt our favorite lines again. During the hot summer months, though, we all tend to concentrate our collecting activities around shows and other indoor venues, such as antique shops, flea markets, and our computers. By now, most active collectors have experienced at least some form of on-line trading, whether via sales lists posted to ICON and insulators.com, or through ebay.

Ebay is an excellent way for collectors to buy and sell insulators if proper caution is observed and a little common sense is applied. This brings me to a dishonest tactic making the rounds on ebay and, to a lesser extent, with other not-in-person deals, which I feel I should warn collectors about.

The scam works something like this: A seller posts his item on ebay. After some spirited bidding, the item sells for a premium price. The buyer is delighted to be adding a new piece to his collection, and the seller is tickled pink at the higher than expected price realized. Everyone is happy, right? Well, maybe not. Now, things start to get interesting. Shortly after the buyer receives his new insulator, the seller gets an email from the high bidder: Item arrived OK, but there's a slight problem. It seems that the piece changing hands has some damage that was not stated by the seller. Buyer likes the piece and wants to keep it, but feels he is due a "partial refund" for the undisclosed "damage". Seller is confused. He is sure he described the item correctly, including listing all damage of any significance. Still, he doubts himself, and reluctantly acquiesces to the pur-

chaser's demand, believing the discrepancy to be a good faith claim.

What has actually

taken place is a complicated, unethical scheme by the buyer, carried out in order to get an unwarranted reduction in the final price. See, the buyer had to bid extra high (due to competition from other bidders) to win the auction, higher in fact than he really wanted to pay. So, once the piece arrives, he inflates the severity of some inconsequential imperfection, and wrangles a retroactive discount from the by-now uncertain seller. The scrupulous seller, wanting to do the right thing, caves. At last, the buyer has acquired the piece for the price he really wanted to pay, but one he would NOT have won the auction with in fair bidding.

In over five years of ebay selling, this tactic has been tried on me twice. Other dealers have brought the practice to my attention as well. Beware of a buyer who wants to renegotiate the deal after the fact.

There are ways to avoid this. As a seller, be sure of your facts. Give a detailed and accurate description of what you are selling. For any damage mentioned in your item description, even small imperfections, you should provide corresponding clear photos, showing the exact extent of said damage. This negates any condition arguments that might arise later.

As a buyer – PAY ATTENTION. Carefully read the item description

What has actually taken place is a complicated, unethical scheme by the buyer, carried out in order to get an unwarranted reduction in the final price. and study the pictures. Don't let yourself be surprised by the condition of your new insulator when it arrives, because you did-

n't read the listing carefully enough. I always leave my ebay photos up long enough for the buyer to compare the listing pictures with what actually arrives at his door.

All this doesn't mean that there are never legitimate reasons for a refund, though. It is always a good idea to contact the seller *before bidding* to ask any questions you may have about the item for sale, and to find out what his return policy is. Remember, the best way to avoid a misunderstanding is through communication. Be satisfied with the answers to your questions before hitting the "Place Bid" button.

Good collecting,

#### Charles Bibb, NIA #6097 Ethics Chairman



## From the Treasurer

2002-2003 FINANCIAL REPORT NATIONAL INSULATOR ASSOCIATION 6/30/2003

Dudley Ellis, NIA #5085 Treasurer

Beginning Balance-General Fund 7/1/2002 Museum Exploratory Committee Authentication/Ethics Account		7797.41 972.01 1696.75
Revenues		
Donations	550.00	
Membership Dues	10198.00	
Miscellaneous Income	250.04 3151.00	
Product Sales	Total Revenues:	14149.04
General Fund Expenses		
Advertising	734.95	
Bank Charges/Taxes	0.00	
Marketing Products	1959.75	
Misc. Postage	1017.26	
Misc. Printing	715.14	
Misc. Supplies	822.98	
Misc. Professional Services	1233.40	
Crown Jewels Rebates	148.00	
Drip Points Printing	2316.79	
Drip Points Postage	1160.09	
Show Advertising Subsidy	974.82	
Show Awards	483.90	
Stationery Supplies	0.00	
Telephone	46.01	
Special Projects	724.47	
Education Disp Postage	203.55	
	Total Expenses:	12541.11
		0405 04
Closing Balance, General Fund:	0.00	9405.34
Museum Exploratory Committee Expenditures	0.00	972.01
Museum Exploratory Committee Balance	0.00	972.01
Authentication/Ethics Account Expenditures	0.00	1696.75
Authentication/Ethics Account Balance		1090.70

12074.10

## FROM THE PROMOTIONS CHAIR

The Western Regional Show was well-done. I had the opportunity to utilize my video camera there for interviews with collectors from many parts of the country. At-thesame-time, I recorded a wealth of video images of lovely glass and porcelain insulators and go-withs. I also managed to tape the fabulous displays presented. I think , after some creative editing, the results will aptly show the delightful and professional atmosphere of the event.

The above segment will be included on the final tape to be offered to the N.I.A. membership sometime this winter. Future tapings, to be included, will offer the upcoming Yuhas and Merzoian Brothers tailgaters, the Tulare show, and many interviews with "heavyweight" and "quiet" collectors from our hobby. I will try to feature words, collections, and the faces behind them. Other features "in-the-can" are the Yuma and Rhode tailgaters, Cayucos, and lots of footage of a large variety of collectors and collections.

Tom and Lynda Katonak and I spent several hours in San Jose going over promotional ideas for our hobby. I will offer various versions for use of this video project (by the N.I.A.)to be used for news media purposes (TV), advertising spots, and public relations. We also discussed setting up an educational curriculum to be offered to interested schools. We hope to have pilot programs going in Albu-

querque and here in my home town (Porterville, Calif.) where I teach third grade. Other areas for possible promotion would be city Chambers of Commerce, libraries, and service clubs (don't they always need speakers?). We agreed that the hobby needs innovative ideas to stimulate new and prospective collectors. We need fresh and active collecting. I'd also like to purpose occasional "nocash/trade only " tailgaters. If you have ideas and/or suggestions, please let me know : bobmerzoian@mac.com or (559)781-6319

**Bob Merzoian**, NIA#3941 Promotions Chairman



Did you meet someone new at the show? Did you recognize someone by his or her name badge? Did you meet a fellow collector from your area? If you would like to be recognized more easily by your fellow collectors, then order your ......

<u>NIA engraved name badge today</u> -->>> order form on the back page!



## Fall into Fall with a nice embroidered denim long or short sleeve shirt or embroidered sweatshirt!

The NIA board and its chairpersons work very hard to keep this publication informative and you updated with the associations needs, issues, show updates, as well as, advances in education, promotion and research of the insulator hobby.

By supporting product sales, you directly affect the income that is directed to the betterment of this hobby!

<u>Product suggestions are always welcome as are special orders for sizes, brands or</u> <u>styles!</u>



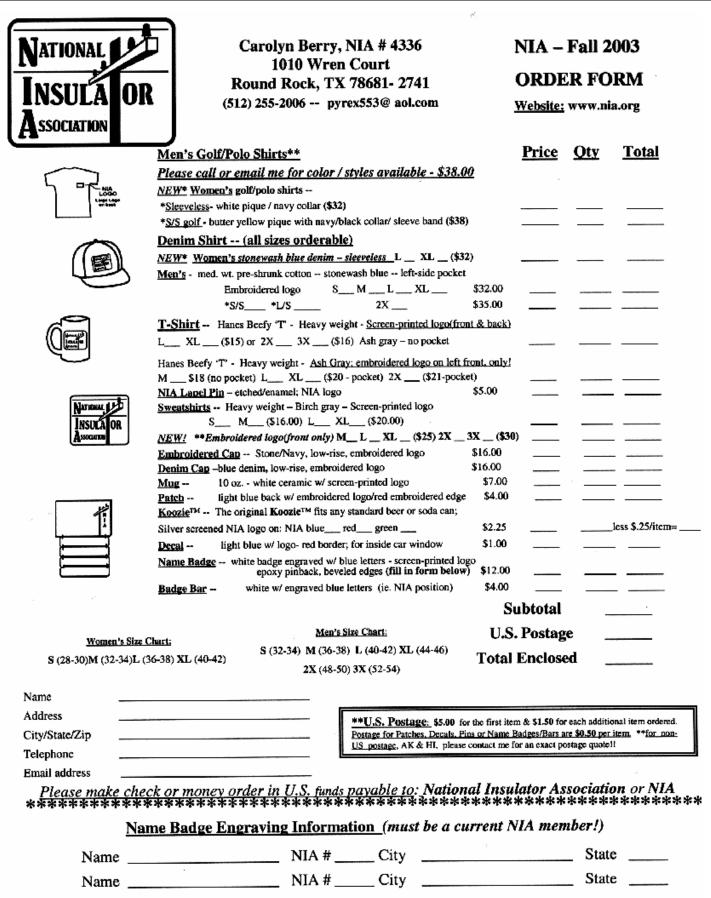


Carolyn Berry – NIA #4336 Product Marketing Chairman

## 2003 NATIONAL INSULATOR ASSOCIATION

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