

WPA PRESS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WISCONSIN POTTERY ASSOCIATION

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A Letter of Congratulations and Thanks

My fellow WPA Members,

I would like to congratulate and thank you all very much for your role in the successful completion of our annual exhibit and sale. This incredible achievement could not have been done if it had not been for the help of so many of you.

Chris Swart, in charge of public relations for the event, once again saw to yearlong coverage in every antiques periodical that would help us, to meeting with dealers, to flyers in malls far and wide. Someone commented that they went on vacation out east and saw our flyers in malls all the way to the Atlantic Ocean. If you see Chris eyeing up your collection of Weller you need not worry—it's just early planning for next year's proposed exhibit. Thanks too to Nicol Knappen for the extensive article in the Antiques Trader and to Tim Zinkgraf for his coverage on the website.

Every year it seems we change our venue so that Glenn Clark, our Show Manager, can never get a year off from designing the physical layout of our show. He's already hard at work on the plans for the 2001 exhibit and sale at the Alliant Energy Center. As Show Manager he gets to deal with some pretty interesting (eccentric?) sellers, all of whom gave him rave reviews all around again this year.

Elaine Staaland, our liaison to the Marriot Hotel, once again hammered

out our contracts and believe you me, if you ever find yourself doing any hard-core negotiating you want Elaine in there pitching for you. Elaine leaves no detail to chance and made it all very easy for those of us on the Executive Committee.

Tim Holthaus, Treasurer, was again invaluable as our money man, giving selflessly of his time even while planning the concurrently running Ceramic Arts Studio Convention. With Tim as our treasurer we could be confident with our budget as thousands of dollars flowed out and yes, with room to spare, flowed back in. Special thanks too to Scott Grant who worked with Tim this year as he prepares to take over these duties in 2001.

Special thanks to Jim Riordan and his exhibit committee, including Rose Lindner, Tom Tompkins, Jim Tyne and Tim Zinkgraf. Special thanks to those who artfully displayed and engineered lighting for our exhibit, including Barbara Budig, Nicol Knappen, Tim Zinkgraf, Tom and Nancy Tompkins.

Thank you very much to everyone who contributed pottery for the exhibit. I thought it was a particularly interesting exhibit—I loved seeing other art work and photos of the artists as well.

Thank you Kari Kenefick for doing a great job organizing our army of volunteers and thank you volunteers! You've been so generous with your time and talents. Words can't express enough how grateful we are for your support. On to Exhibit and Sale 2001!

- Barb Huhn, WPA President

In This Issue

The *WPA Press*, Issue VI features:

- announcements about the WPA directory, upcoming meetings and a special speaker at the October MAPA meeting
- kudos to those that helped to make the 2000 Exhibit and Sale spectacular, with photos of the exhibit, the volunteers, and some of our special guests
- an interview with charter WPA members Barb Reed and Jim Riordan!
- a tribute to Tim Holthaus!!

WPA Calendar for the Remainder of 2000

October 10 -
American Studio Art Pottery, Part 2
By Paul Donhauser

November 14 -
Camark Pottery
By Nicol Knappen

December 12 -
Annual WPA Holiday Party

All meetings are at the Shorewood Community Center.



Men of the 2000 Exhibit and Sale. Glenn Clark and Scott Grant (left, and center, respectively) display their favorite pottery pieces during the sale August 26. Meanwhile, Jim Petzold stands watch at the Ceramic Arts Society table, sporting his best CAS T-shirt. Glenn, Scott and Jim were all overworked and underpaid, but their efforts resulted in the best Exhibit and Sale to date. Photos by Kari Kenefick.

MAPA October Lecture Announced: Margaret Carney to Speak

We recently heard from our friend, Roger Sexter, president of the Minnesota Art Pottery Association. He invites us to join them for a very special presentation at their meeting in October. Their speaker is Margaret Carney from Alfred University. Her talk is entitled "Great Moments in Ceramic History". Margaret curated the Charles Fergus Binns exhibit at Iowa State. The presentation will be **Thursday, October 12th, 7:30 PM** at the Richfield Community Center, 7000 Nicolet Ave., So., Richfield MN.

- B. Huhn

Editor's Note: Recall from the WPA Press Volume V, July 2000, that Alfred University was where Charles Cowan studied, under chemistry professor Charles Fergus Binns. In addition, Jane Adams from Hull House had a connection to Alfred University, as did many other notables in the early 1900s pottery movement in the U.S.

Exhibit Stats

For all of you who might be interested, here's the final figures for the exhibit:

- 27 contributors
- 418 pieces of pottery
- 3 photos
- 2 block prints
- 2 paintings

Nothing broken, nothing lost!

- Tom and Nancy Tompkins, WPA

2001 Membership Directory

We will be putting out a new directory of our members in January. It will include name, address, telephone number and e-mail addresses. Because we recognize that some of you may not want this information distributed we are requesting that if you do not want some or all of this information in the directory that you please contact us and let us know. If you have had any changes in this information in the previous year please let us know that too. Thank you!

-B. Huhn

An Interview with WPA Members Barb Reed and Jim Riordan

In this edition of the WPA Press I'm delighted to present an interview with Barb Reed and Jim Riordan. Barb and Jim are charter members of the WPA and Jim served the club as an officer for two years, 1998 as vice-president and 1999 president. I'm also pleased to say that Barb is a cousin of mine (first cousin, once-removed). Barb has introduced me to many new things, antiquing being the most fun.

Due to very busy schedules, our annual show and sale, and that darn cold that hit after Labor Day, Barb, Jim and I weren't able to meet in person to conduct the interview, but rather through email and the telephone.

Barb and Jim have widely ranging collecting interests and have been in the business, initially as collectors and eventually as dealers, for about 15 years. You might also find it interesting that they are newlyweds (of 2.5 years), after an extended 17-year engagement!

Both Jim and Barb credit Barb with being the first antique collector in the family. Barb began collecting while in high school. As Barb tells it, "I developed an interest in old things when I



Pottery of the 2000 Exhibit and Sale. Just a few reminders of the fabulous exhibit put together by our Exhibit Committee this year. The bowl on the left is Norse Pottery, the center photo contains pieces attributed to Francis Moody, and on the right is a photo of Eugene Deutsch in his studio making pots, along with several finished pieces by E. Deutsch. Photos by Kari Kenefick.

was in high school” (Rio High School, that is). “I liked the stained glass that I saw in older homes and felt comfortable around older furnishings”. She notes that she “didn’t feel the same warmth from newer things”. Barb commented that she liked a lot of her mother’s old dishes and planters, and the gardenware that her mother had.

Barb left home in her late teens and started buying old ivory-colored planters and vases, not knowing what they were or their value. She used these for house plants and for general decorating. Barb did her early antiquing at antique or buy-and-sell shops. When Jim came into the picture, they did their shopping expanded to estate sales and auctions. They began to learn, through books, how to identify various potteries, and began to shop more specifically for art pottery. Barb notes that meeting other antique fanciers and friends to talk about pottery, helped them to learn. She noted that some of her first acquisitions were Hull apple cookie jars (she has a bookshelf full of these!) and McCoy floral vases.

Jim, a later entrant into the field of antiques having started just 15 years ago, has by all accounts made up for lost time. Barb may have started before him, but Jim shares her passion for “old things”. As he points out, Jim was a history major in college and believes

that his interest in antiquing is due in part to his interest in how things were in earlier days. In addition, Jim’s mother did some collecting. Jim admits that he wasn’t interested in pottery when he met Barb, but he soon took a fancy to pottery and Maxfield Parrish prints. While Barb was collecting McCoy pottery, Jim started picking up a few pieces of Roseville, which he says were priced very reasonably back then. In addition, he describes Roseville in the late 1980s as “plentiful”. While shopping for Roseville Jim says that they saw other pieces of pottery that they couldn’t identify, but found attractive. By buying at auctions Jim said that they ended up with boxes of pottery (selling by the lot, box- or table-full is common at auctions) that they could not identify, resulting in their buying books about pottery and taking an interest in more types of pottery.

Jim talked a bit about the competitive nature of antiquing and pottery collecting in particular. He said that he thinks it has changed, but doesn’t seem troubled by this. He noted that the internet and various magazines (Martha Stewart Living, Country Home, etc.) have made more people aware of antiques - more people are intrigued by collecting older things. We discussed whether magazines and television started the increase in interest in antiques, or if the magazines simply perpetuated this trend. Either way, antiques, collect-

ing and ‘shabby chic’ have certainly reached more people due to the attention from magazines and television programs (we certainly must include Antiques Roadshow on the list). However it started, there are certainly more people interested in antiques than there were in the 1980s.

As someone that has attended a few auctions, but maybe fewer than he used to, Jim talked about auction crowds – and about the many variables in how the auction goes – weather, the auctioneer(s), the size of the crowds – he observed that larger crowds generally assure higher prices at auctions.

As far as where they shop, Barb and Jim noted that while they initially shopped largely auctions and garage/yard sales, they now especially enjoy flea markets, and manage to find at a new one to attend each year, shopping the antique malls and estate sales as well, while out “wandering” as Barb calls it. Jim and Barb do some shopping online - but Jim says this is occasional (those that know Jim know that he likes to travel - perhaps the lure of the outing cannot be matched online).

If you have seen Jim shopping, you know that he has a strong interest in dinnerware pieces. He says that he continues to learn more about it and finds that dinnerware has every bit as much historical appeal as pottery has. As an



Celebrities of the 2000 Exhibit. WPA's Nicol Knappen looks on, assisting as Burdell Hall (center) speaks at the Exhibit, August 26. Eugene Deutsch's daughter Jayne (right), photographed with her father's pottery, was an unexpected guest for the afternoon. Photos by Kari Kenefick.

example Jim notes that chintz dinnerware/china was popular circa the 1930s and 40s, a time that saw a zenith in creativity in the U.S. dinnerware, pottery and other home goods markets. Brands such as Fiesta and LuRay originated at this time, and have seen a resurgence in popularity in the past five years (of course Fiesta is currently in production, as well).

Barb and Jim emphasized that they are optimistic about collecting pottery - that there are still lots of good deals, especially for those that study the books and continue to learn about new pottery types and newly discovered pieces of existing collections. Barb suggested that collectors be true to their collecting interests, saying "If you have something you like and that you are happy collecting, go with that instead of trying to follow the trends, because trends change."

Jim talked a bit about the early days of the Wisconsin Pottery Association. Barb and Jim knew Dave Auclair from work and chanced to talk to him while waiting to get into an estate sale in Maple Bluff one morning. They discussed a regular get-together, during the winter months when they wouldn't see each other as much at sales, just to talk about pottery. Betty and Dave Knutzen, Chris Swart, Jim Holthaus and Jim Petzold, Nicol Knappen, the Fiscuses and Rose Lindner were other

early members. This group met at the Knutzens for the first 4-5 meetings, and exchanged stories about their collecting trips and experiences. Jim credits Nicol for pushing to establish a club, augmented by Tim's expertise in the organizational structure of not-for-profit groups. The group moved, at Terrance's suggestion, to the Shorewood Community Center, sometime in 1994, as Jim recalled.

In terms of early WPA presentations, Jim recalled a wonderful presentation by the Fiscuses about Frankoma pottery. This stimulated the idea of learning by having regular presentations at the club meetings, an idea that coincided nicely with the club's educational mission. Dave Auclair gave another early WPA presentation about experimental Roseville pieces (Jim noted that some "drooling" went on when Dave brought out his collection).

Speaking of Dave Auclair, he was club president for the first two years, with Jim P. and Tim serving as secretary and treasurer, respectively. Once again, Tim was the driving force behind the tax-exempt status of the club. As the organizational structure was established and regular presentations were scheduled, the size of the club began to increase.

Jim told the story of the predecessor to the club's annual show and sale - a

Ceramic Arts exhibit that was held at the Forum during the monthly flea market. He told of how the charter members kicked in \$20-30 to buy the lumber to build the exhibit. Jim noted that Glenn Clark was involved with the set-up of that 1994 exhibit at the Forum.

Ruben Sand was invited and flew in from California and Betty Harrington was at this fall 1994 exhibit. Thus began the Ceramic Arts and WPA collaborations for our annual fundraiser.

Because they didn't make any money at this first effort, the club did not have another exhibit until 1996, when the WPA event coincided with the Ceramic Arts Society's annual convention in Madison.

But we digress - Many thanks to Barb and Jim for a look into their
- Kari Kenefick, editor, WPA Press

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### Sleepy Eye Stoneware

On September 12, 2000 WPA members met for our September meeting. While much of the discussion and excitement that night was due to a successful and smoothly run Exhibit and Sale just three weeks earlier, there was also a good number of members pres-



**Volunteers of the 2000 Exhibit and Sale.** Tom Ploessl (left), Gordon and Emily Lanphier (center) and Catherine Reichel and Nicol do their time donning those fluorescent vests, at the 2000 Show and Sale. Photos by Kari Kenefick.

ent due to the evenings presentation on Sleepy Eye Pottery. Here is a brief synopsis of what Mr. William Engel presented on this much collected stoneware.

Old Sleepy Eye was a Native American Indian chief – Sleepy Eye is also the name of a town in southwestern Minnesota (located on US Highway 14). Old Chief Sleepy Eye was affectionately chosen as the mascot for a flour milling company in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota. The Sleepy Eye stoneware was designed and decorated with Old Chief Sleepy Eye’s likeness and used as a promotion for selling flour; the pieces of pottery were given away with 50lb. barrels of flour. However, the government intervened in the give-aways, perhaps because the rather heavy pottery pieces had a negative affect on the amount of flour that was contained in those 50lb. barrels. The stoneware pieces were later sold, printed with advertising, to grocery stores and such.

Western Stoneware of Monmouth, Il originally produced the Sleepy Eye stoneware. Monmouth Pottery later bought the Western Stoneware plant, which at one time had the largest contract for pottery ever signed in the United States. Redwing pottery eventually surpassed this Sleepy Eye contract.

The Sleepy Eye Stoneware pieces included buttercrocks and steins, which were made around 1890. William

Engel described some of the pieces as “Flemishware” – some of these pieces were marked as such on the bottoms. The Flemish-styled pieces were white with blue heads of Chief Sleepy Eye. Some pieces also had blue borders or trim around rims. Certain pieces also had an Indian chief’s head done in relief on the handle. In addition to the blue and white pieces, designs included white with brown decoration.

Some Sleepy Eye pieces were made by the Weir Pottery – these pieces are probably the most valuable today. The Weir pieces are marked “Weir” inside of a circle on the bottom.

Mr. Engel discussed how to spot reproductions of Sleepy Eye pieces – many have a hole or indentation on the inside where the handle is attached, say for a stein. Sometimes the holes have been filled in, but a black light will reveal these “repaired” pieces.

It was interesting to learn that Sleepy Eye collectors fancy stoneware and pottery from a variety of manufacturers, referring to it all as Sleepy Eye and Sleepy Eye shows and swapmeets contain a variety of pottery makes. Mr. Engel mentioned that there are two Brush-McCoy pieces that have Indian heads on the handles (and that these pots are included as Sleepy Eye pieces). Some believe that this was due to a Monmouth designer that also did work for Brush-McCoy.

We were shown several pieces of stoneware or pottery with the “ugly Indian” design. These pieces featured a less attractive Indian and were made sometime in the 1930s. We also saw an Indian head pitcher, white in color with a blue glazed design and a maple leaf on the bottom. These pieces had the “sucked in” handle marks on the inside. Monmouth has been known to make pieces with maple leaves on them. In addition, Whitehall pottery is known for unglazed bottoms, which these pieces had. Mr. Engel also showed sugar bowls – some white with blue and also burgundy pieces.

Redwing did two mugs for Sleepy Eye. For these pieces, the Indian head was accompanied by a saying.

Some of the examples of Sleepy Eye stoneware that Mr. Engel showed the club included a couple of mugs that featured Chief Redwing (who came before Sleepy Eye) – these mugs were signed by the artist. In addition, we saw a series of 9” vases with a dragonfly and cattails done in relief. This vase was done in approximately seven different glazes, including a black design on white, and an all black vase. These pieces were created by Monmouth, but once again, are included as Sleepy Eye stoneware.

Many thanks to William Engel for his excellent presentation on Sleepy Eye Stoneware!

-K. Kenefick



**Dealers of the 2000 Exhibit and Sale.** Unidentified, but having a good time, these dealers were happy to pose for a snapshot at our August 26 day of pottery. The woman on the left revealed a lovely Fulper mark (center) on her dark blue bowl. Photos by Kari Kenefick.

### Letter of Commendation

*The following is the text of a letter that was presented to Tim on behalf of the WPA for his years of direction and outstanding service to the club.*

Dear Timothy J. Holthaus,

On behalf of the membership of the Wisconsin Pottery Association (WPA) we hereby recognize your outstanding contributions for the organization as treasurer for the WPA from its inception in 1993 to the present. We would like to recognize your following achievements for the WPA:

- You have been the consistent resource that all preceding presidents and current officers have relied upon for your knowledge and experienced advice.
- You wrote the by-laws and established the WPA's non-profit status as an organization.
- You consistently balanced the WPA's financial records each year and provided the membership each month with an accurate and complete financial report.
- You facilitated the link with Wisconsin's most recognized historical research organization, The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, making the WPA an 'Affiliate Member' of their organization.

· You organized with the help of other WPA officers, a successful drive for a historical marker for the Ceramic Arts Studio, which stands today on the site of the original studio on Blount St. in Madison.

· You along with Jim Petzold, provided the liaison with the Ceramic Arts Collectors group and the WPA membership which together lead to the success of five outstanding pottery shows and conventions.

In addition to these achievements, you were a close personal friend of Betty Harrington the chief designer of Ceramic Arts Studio, and a trusted and reliable colleague to all of the members of the Wisconsin Pottery Association. We all owe a debt of gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Holthaus for his outstanding and diligent work on behalf of the Wisconsin Pottery Association. His contributions to the WPA are numerous and have not been surpassed by any other member. Thank you Tim!

Barbara Huhn, President Wisconsin Pottery Association

James Riordan, Past WPA President

August 26, 2000

### A Note from the Editor

Contributions to the *WPA Press* are always welcome. The newsletter is printed quarterly, with the next edition due to print sometime in early 2001. Contributions can include a trip you took that involved pottery collecting, or visiting a museum or flea market/sale. Contributions are generally due 4-5 weeks before the newsletter prints. We discuss the newsletter briefly at monthly WPA meetings as well, and it is available online, in either html or pdf, at the WPA website, [www.wisconsinpottery.org](http://www.wisconsinpottery.org)

The Press generally includes a feature on some member of the club, either new or old. If you would like to be featured, or have a request for an interview with a particular club member, please let us know - suggestions are always accepted!

Thanks for your feedback - keep up the good work!

Kari Kenefick, *WPA Press*