



The Fascinating World of Alarm Wristwatches

by Henri Bonnet

One of the most intriguing mechanical wristwatch complications is no doubt the alarm function. Not only is an alarm function very useful in a wristwatch, it is a feat of horological and acoustical engineering, arguably, without equal. Unlike the typical alarm function in electronic wristwatches which is virtually inaudible, its mechanical counterpart is, for the most part, loud and clear, and as a result, very functional and practical.

Mechanical alarm wristwatches come primarily of two different types: the hammer and gong type and the hammer and acoustical membrane type. The former emits very soft pleasing tones, and is found primarily in repeaters where they chime the hour, half hour and the quarter hour. A gong based alarm wristwatch is unlikely to be able to wake up its owner from even a very light sleep, since it isn't loud enough for that purpose.

On the other hand, the hammer and acoustical membrane type alarm wristwatch is designed to wake up its sleeping owner just as would a regular alarm clock. All one has to do, is to set the alarm to the desired time, and place the wristwatch on a night table a foot or two away. At the set time, the alarm will go off and ring for approximately 15 to 18 seconds, long enough to wake up its owner. Of course, such an alarm wristwatch can be used during the day as an appointment reminder, in which case it is worn on the wrist and the wearer is alerted by the vibrations it produces, as well as acoustically, albeit at a more subdued level.

Years back, when I was traveling around the world on business, I wouldn't leave home without my reliable mechanical alarm wristwatch on my wrist. My preferred alarm wristwatch

was the one that also incorporated automatic winding as well as a calendar.

Several Swiss and other manufacturers produce mechanical alarm wristwatches of various quality and effectiveness. The most important aspects of a mechanical alarm wristwatch are twofold: the loudness of the alarm and its duration. Since for me, an alarm wristwatch was an important business tool, I made a relatively intensive study of the subject and even measured their loudness with a decibel meter. Over a thirty year business career I did acquire several examples of mechanical alarm wristwatches. Some were very good and a couple of them being simply outstanding. In all fairness, I must mention that I have also purchased several electronic alarm wristwatches when they became available, in the mid to late seventies.

From a practical viewpoint, however, electronic alarm wristwatches have proved to be disappointing and I haven't come across any of them capable of waking up even a light sleeper. Neither, were they very useful as appointment reminders since their chime is not only very weak, it produces no vibrations that could alert the wearer, when worn on the wrist. One of the alarm wristwatches I own even chimes in four different melodies. Although the duration of the chime sometimes exceeds that of its mechanical counterpart, its loudness is by and large insufficient to make it really practical. Here are some examples of several mechanical and electronic alarm wristwatches that I have used over the years:

The Gubelin Ipsovox, (Photo A) is by far my favorite alarm wristwatch. It was produced in the mid-fifties by Jeager Le Coultre and it is equipped with an 18,000 bph (2.5 Hz) bumper



A



B



C

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PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

By Mike Schmidt

To all NAWCC voting members, yes that's you and me. In the February BULLETIN you will receive a form to vote for Directors of NAWCC. The National Association, like everything else in our economy, is experiencing hard times, and has been facing some difficult decisions. Deciding who to vote for can be perplexing, unless you are involved in the total workings of the NAWCC. As a result a lot of members do not bother to vote. You are not required to vote for any or all of the Directors, but you should consider voting for those that you believe will represent your point of view. California has about 20% of the NAWCC membership, more than any other state. We have not had any representation for a very long time. There is a California member running for Director and one for the nominating committee for the 2009-2013 term of office. Please give our very qualified California members careful consideration.



Another candidate I put forth for your consideration is Mike Dempsey for Director. Mike is currently chairman of the Education Committee and has been instrumental in supporting and bringing the FSW Field Suitcase Classes to the local chapters. For Chapter 190, education has been a catalyst to our chapter growth. The chapter has completed its 8th FSW class with seventy-seven students attending these fine classes.

There are many fine knowledgeable candidates running for Director, who give a lot of time, work for free, and have some hard tasks ahead of them. Please give all of them your careful consideration and please vote.

The following candidates, listed in alphabetical order, are running to fill the four open positions on the Board of Directors for the 2009-2013 terms of office: Michael Dempsey (WI), Phillip Gregory (TX), Gary Landis (AL), Robert Linkenhoker (CA), Thomas McIntyre (MA), Fortunat Mueller-Maerki (NJ), Joanne Orr (OK), Timothy Orr (TN) Ruth Overton (MO), Jerry Thornsberry (MO), Gene Volk (NC)

The following candidates are running to fill the open position on the Nominating and Elections committee for the 2009-2013 terms of office: Kermit Duckett (TN), Mary Ann Wahlner (CA)

Your ballot will be located in your February Bulletin. Please follow the instructions on the ballot and vote within the specified time frame as shown on the ballot. **NOTE: You must put your NAWCC membership number on the front of the envelope or it will be discarded.**

Mark your calendars for the Chapter 190 Annual Mart for Sunday May 17. The 2nd Annual Mart will be held again this year at the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) hanger located in the Camarillo Airport.

I hope that you all had a chance to attend the Greater Los Angeles Regional. Please bring and share the clocks, watches, tools or books you purchased. The prize for the best show & tell will be a special 2009 NAWCC David Weiss Calendar. We all want to hear about your GLAR experiences and see your interesting great buys.

See you all at the meeting, *Mike*

FACES SEEN AT THE JANUARY MEETING



GREATER LOS ANGELES REGIONAL 2009



One of two tables full of Morbiers



Lots of clocks and watches



Looking for a movement?



Tom McIntyre presenting one of the many free programs



Elvis doing his thing at the awards Banquet.



Laurie giving Elvis some pointers on how to move.



Continued from page one

type automatic movement featuring a calendar as well. The case is solid 18 carat gold of 37 mm diameter. The alarm function is one of the loudest I have ever heard, emitting about 70 to 75 decibels at a two feet distance, more than enough to wake up the average sleeper. The alarm duration is between 15 to 18 seconds. (As a reference, busy street traffic is about 70 decibels and a front seat at a large orchestra about 98 decibels).

The Eterna-Matic ReveH, (Photo B) is rather unusual, and indeed quite unique as far as mechanical alarm wristwatches go. It is equipped with a 28,800 bph (4 Hz) automatic movement that simultaneously winds the



timekeeping as well as the alarm functions, when worn on the wrist. It has 31 jewels and fine micro-metric adjustment. In addition, it features a calendar and day of the week windows. The case is stainless steel of 38 mm diameter. Because it is fitted with a sapphire back, the alarm function is not as loud as the Ipsovox.

The Revue Thommen Cricket, (Photo C) dates from the mid-seventies and is equipped with a manually wound movement of 21,600 bph (3 Hz). The case is stainless steel of 34 mm diameter. It produces a sharp and very loud alarm sound of about 70



decibels at a two feet distance. The calendar is very easy to read thanks to its magnifying window.

Here are three typical examples of electronic alarm wristwatches of various designs and price tags: the Breitling Navitimer, (Photo D), the Casio AX-1, (Photo E) and the Tissot model 1853 (Photo F).

Although these timepieces represent a good cross section of various electronic alarm wristwatches

available nowadays, none of these watches produce a loud enough signal to be discernible above normal daily ambient noise. Therefore, none could be used as an appointment reminder, not to mention, as an alarm clock. As can clearly be seen, there is really no substitute to a good mechanical alarm wristwatch for those of us serious about waking up on time when out of town, or punctually keeping their appointments. This is indeed a tribute to the genius behind good old mechanical timepieces. What do you think? ■



**The next Meeting & Mart for Chapter 190
is February 15, 2009**

Sellers may start setting up at 11:30

The Mart is open from 12:00 til 1:15

The Meeting starts at 1:15

PROGRAM

"Wristwatches, One Man's Favorites"

Presented by Henri Bonnet

**Henri will show us and tell us about some of his
favorite wristwatches.**

SHOW & TELL

"What you got at

The Greater Los Angeles Regional"



This month's Mini-Workshop will be

"Pocket Watch Repair"

Ferdinand Geitner will be the moderator.

**This is an open forum workshop and will be an
excellent opportunity for new and experienced
watch repair people to learn and contribute.**

The workshop begins at 10:00 am. Free to members

Chapter 190 Educational Opportunities

The next class to be offered is the FSW 102 "Time & Strike Spring Barrel." This class is scheduled for April 3-6, 2009. The coordinator for this class will be Paul Skeels (805) 525 7325,
Email: plskeelsatty@verizon.net

Check the Chapter Website for additional FSW Workshops and Chapter Workshops offered for 2009.

Congratulations to all the of students who have recently completed the FSW 501 2- day workshop "The Repair & Replacement of the American Strip Recoil Escapement." The instructors were Mike Dempsey & Fred Tischler. The 13 attending students were: Laurie Conti, William Frank, Mostyn Gale, Richard Henderson, David Lee, Steven Schechter, Kathi Sheffrey, Larry Smith, David Rubright, Jessie Lyman, Glen Webb, Paul Skeels, and coordinator Mike Schmidt. Auditing the workshop were FSW instructors Ferdinand Geitner and Ray Marsolek.

A big thank you to Laurie Conti for the January 17th workshop, "Dental Techniques Used in Clock Case Repair". Thirteen chapter members and guests learned how to make molds, carve, refinish, repair damaged corners, and replace broken or missing parts. The day was topped off with a nice lunch and a docent tour of the Historic Dudley House Museum.

Our meeting February 15th will be a great day for watch collectors!

At 10:00 A.M. a free, two hour workshop will be led by Ferdinand Geitner and will focus on pocket watch repair. This is an opportunity for those who have taken the pocket watch repair classes to bring questions and receive help. It is an open workshop and all are welcome to attend.

At 12:00 PM, the MART will feature many tables of watches, tools, and repair materials. The clock collectors will also have some goodies to offer

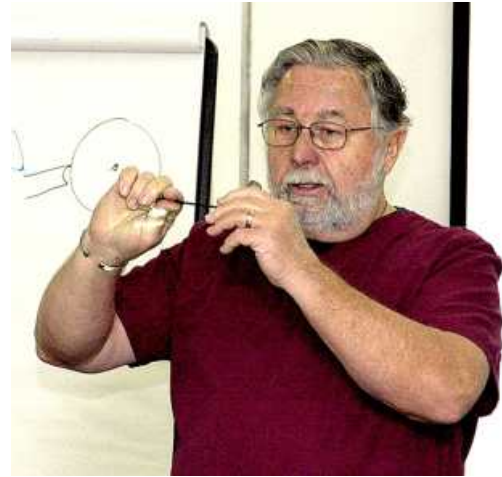
At 1:15 PM, a program will be presented by Henri Bonnet titled: "Wrist Watches - One Man's Favorites" This presentation will feature 13 of Mr. Bonnet's favorites from Bulova, Omega, Berney, Oris, Le Coultre, Eterna, Carlo Ferrara, Ball, Yang Chen

Ventura Chapter 190 people

Each issue of our newsletter will feature members of our chapter with a short biography or some of their horological interests to help us get to know them better.

Ray Marsolek

By George Gaglini



Ray Marsolek is a native of Southern California. He spent his early years in Long Beach where his parents' love of clocks and their extensive clock collection influenced him to attend clock repair courses at Cerritos College. Later, he joined Proctor and Gamble where he spent thirty-six years as a mechanic specializing in the design and maintenance of packaging equipment. Twenty-five of those years were in Southern California and eleven were in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Residing in the Huntington Beach area, Ray became an avid clock collector and repair expert. He built his collection by bartering his services for customer clocks. In many cases, rather than charging for repairs, he accepted one or more of his customers' clocks as payment. Ray's interest and passion for clocks increased to the point where he decided to enroll in the NAWCC School of Horology at National headquarters in Pennsylvania. Within a few days, the NAWCC instructor for Ray's class became ill and was hospitalized. Instead of canceling the class, the school officials asked Ray to step in for the instructor and teach the course. Class members were offered a tuition refund, but no one left and the class was completed with Ray in charge.

Soon he became a full-fledged instructor for the school, teaching week-long and month-long classes. He served as Chairman of the NAWCC Field Suitcase Class Program for three years and later became a West Coast area FSW instructor, working with Pam Tischler.

Today, Ray teaches more than eight FSW classes per year and travels to Florida, Oklahoma, Ohio, Arizona and other venues. When Chapter 190 was founded, he became an early member and accepted the Chapter's invitation to teach several FSW classes, the most recent one of which was in January, 2009.

Ray lives in Arroyo Grande with his lovely wife Alvina (who he has known since the second grade). They have two daughters and four grandchildren residing in Yorba Linda and Huntington Beach. When he is not teaching, Ray specializes in the repair and restoration of Vienna Regulators at his fifteen-hundred square foot clock shop in Arroyo Grande. ■



Happy Birthday

Dan McKinnon & Akhtar Mir

CLASSIFIED PAGE

This page is dedicated to advertising for Chapter 190 members. It is, of course, free to members.

SERVICES OFFERED

The Montecito Clock Gallery

Restoration, repair, sales of clocks and watches.

Ferdinand Geitner, mbhi, owner and operator

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FOR SALE

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dave@daveswatchparts.com

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French type-platform escapement (no pendulum)

Winding hole spacing of 38.9 mm, (1.53")

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piecrust bezel for an Ansonia clock.**

Contact:

Tom McKnett

805-444-6383

- Chronometer -

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inner box and gimbals; outer box not essential.

Please contact: Giorgio Perissinotto

E-mail: giorgio@spanport.ucsb.edu

(I'm teaching in Spain so there is no local California phone)

- Watch Repair Tools -

I'm just starting out and need just about everything.
I would prefer to purchase an entire collection of old
watchmaker's tools.

Please contact:

David Clarkin **Tel: 805-988-4384**

Antique French 2 or 3 dial calendar clocks.
Antique English 2 or 3 gear-train skeleton clock.

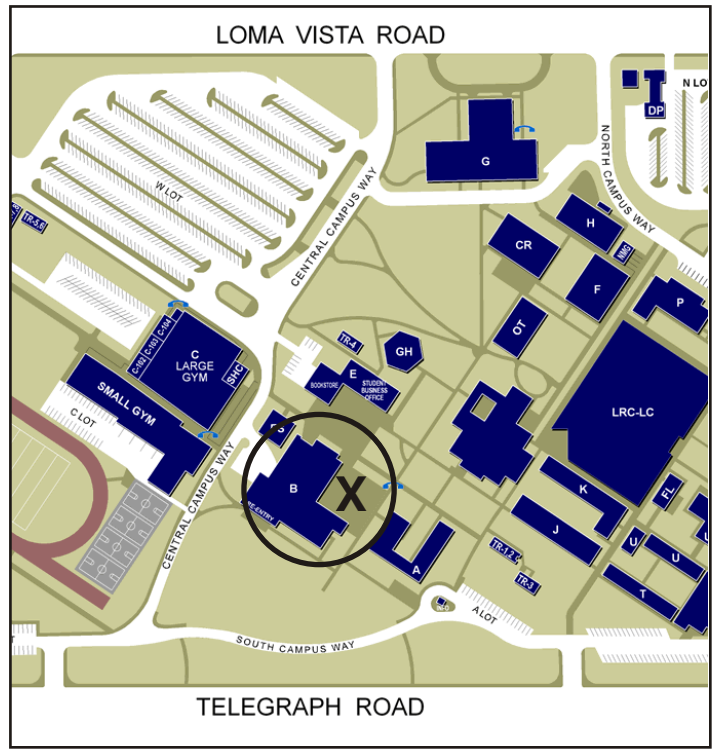
Loren Miller, **Pacific Coast Clocks**

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The Chapter 190 meetings are held the third Sunday of each month. (No meeting in December)
We will meet in the cafeteria on the Ventura College campus. The cafeteria is located in building "B", east of the gym and athletic field.



Hope to see you there!

February 2009 Issue

FEB 15
NEXT MEETING

If Undeliverable return To:
 17738 Superior St. Unit 21
 Northridge, CA 91325

Chrono Times