



IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

By Ken McWilliams

Over the holidays I received an interesting e-mail from Karol Henrotte of Harrison Hot Springs, British Columbia. In it she said that a friend her fathers, from Downey California, sent him a Christmas card with a copy of an article that I had written on Grandfather clocks. Karol asked if I had an e-mail version of the article so she could make copies.

Karol went on to tell me about her father, Karl Johnson, who makes grandfather clocks. She described how he got started and about his mission to make one for each of his six children. I began to become fascinated with her story about Karl and after a couple more e-mails I decided that I would like to talk with him myself. She said that they would be visiting Karl on new years day and gave me his phone number.

I called on new years day and talked to Karl and Karol. What a joy it was to meet this delightful family. The following is the story of Karl Johnson, the Clock Maker.

Karl's family immigrated from Iceland and homesteaded a section in Manitoba Canada in 1885. They were grain farmers and Karl spent his youth doing the same. In the mid 1950s Karl became allergic to the grain dust and had to leave the farm. (Having grown up on a farm I too became allergic, not to grain dust but to all the hard work)

Karl operated a service station in Vancouver for about ten years then moved to Fraser Valley BC where he sold Nisan cars till he retired. He now lives in Chilliwack, BC just north of Seattle near the US/Canadian border.

About now you are probably wondering what has any of this got to do with clocks. Well, one day Karl got an ad

in the mail for a grandfather clock. He thought that he would like to have one but would prefer to make his own. He had no prior clock making experience or even any real interest in mechanical clocks. He started looking at

Grandfather clocks in stores and magazines and soon had an idea of what he wanted. Karl bought some oak wood and began creating his first clock. The movement, dial and pendulum were purchased from Colonial Clock Company in Ontario Canada. (They sell Hermle movements under their own name.)

It wasn't long before Karl was proudly winding his first Grandfather clock and setting the pendulum in motion. I say his first, because there would be thirty three more to follow. He made one for each of his children and soon other friends and family began requesting "Make one for me too, please."

When he started out the designs were simple but as his confidence grew each new clock would increase in complexity. (See photos) Karl would visit antique shops and look at every picture he could find to gather ideas for new designs then go home and create his version of it.

You will have to admit that making thirty four Grandfather clocks is quite an accomplishment. But there is an even more amazing part of this story that I haven't told you.

Karl was seventy five years old when he decided to make his first Grandfather clock. He is now 91 and has decided to stop making clocks, at least for a while.

As a side note, Karol's son helped his grandfather make one of the last clocks. Maybe the tradition will be carried on.

Like the title of this article says, "It's never to late." ■



Karl, the clockmaker, with some early designs



Karol and her clock

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PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

By Mike Schmidt

Happy New Year to All!

Beginning a new year is a time for us all to reflect and plan. You're Chapter 190 Officers and Directors are busy planning programs, events and educational opportunities for the coming year.

Chapter 190 begins the year with a very interesting program. The program for January is "What Makes Something a Clock" presented by member Bob Roan. Bob is a Post Modern Physicist working and living in Santa Barbara.

In January, a Field Suitcase Class FSW 200 "Fundamental skills for Clock and Lathe" is full and scheduled. A second FSW 200 class is planned for April to accommodate five NAWCC members who were not able to sign up for the first class. If you would like to attend this class contact Paul Skeels (805 525 7325). Other FSW classes will be announced and offered after January.

A Chapter Annual Mart is in the plans for the May meeting. Look for coming attractions!

As part of the yearly planning, your help is needed to keep it all interesting. We would like to know what you collect, study, and do as your particular passion in horology. We need articles for the newsletter or just a personal story about a clock, tool, watch or how you got started collecting. If you have an idea about giving a program or sharing please let me know. Assistance is available to help with any presentation. We all learn from each other. I think that's what this is all about. From time to time we may need a little help (labor) with some of our events.

Thank you to the large group of members who have already renewed their memberships for 2008. The support is appreciated. The yearly dues and meeting fees collected are used to be pay for the rent, liability insurance, mailing the newsletter and other bills incurred. A financial statement of income and expenses for the year of 2007 is available by request and will be posted at the January meeting.

The early, before meeting, workshops have had a very good attendance. A lot of information and assistance have been shared. The next two hour workshop on Sunday, January 20th at 10am, will be "Balance Wheel Clocks". This appears to be a subject of great interest, so bring your knowledge and questions.

The chapter lunch has met with great success and will be continued in 2008. In the month of November we had 27 members and guests enjoying the croissant sandwiches, salad and dessert. The optional lunch is \$5. Refreshments are still available as part of the \$3 entry fee.

See you all at the next meeting.

Mike

Happy Birthday

Wayne Callaway, Katherine Demny, George Finn,
Sylvia Griswold, Richard Henderson, George Labraque,
Rock Newton, Zaki Salahuddin, Beverly Schmidt,
Paul Skeels,



Tales From the Bench

by Ferdinand Geitner

Recently I was confronted by a complex mechanism of “lower quality” manufacture which brought its own unique problems, a Skeleton Clock with a Grasshopper Escapement and two Compound pendulums geared together, copied (probably in China) from an original, very visually enticing design. Not many people are familiar with the grasshopper escapement so I'll give a very brief description.

Instead of a solid Anchor (Pallet/ Verge) there are two completely separate Parts, incoming and outgoing locking surfaces, in this case hinged eccentric on two separate Anchor shafts geared together at the back of the clock, engaging into the escape wheel in the same alternating way as a normal Anchor, except for the fact that there is no impulse angle (surface).

One locking surface is engaged on the escape wheel and as the wheel pulls it forward (on the eccentric shaft) the other pawl (locking surface) drops into the path of a tooth and begins to engage, locking onto the tooth and slightly recoiling (pulling back) the escape wheel. At this point due to the eccentric pivoting of the levers the first one just drops out of the wheels path and the second one gets pushed forward and so on.

The big advantage of this type of escapement is that it is (should be) frictionless.

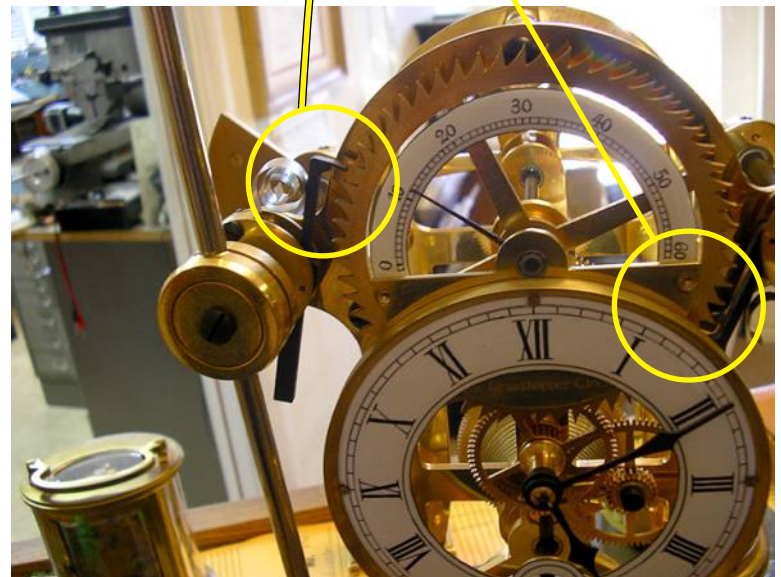
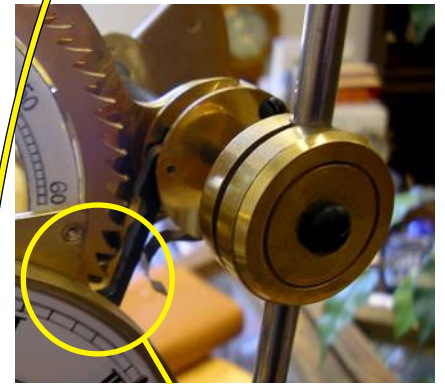
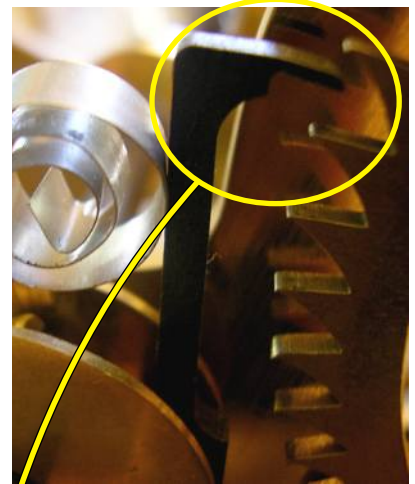
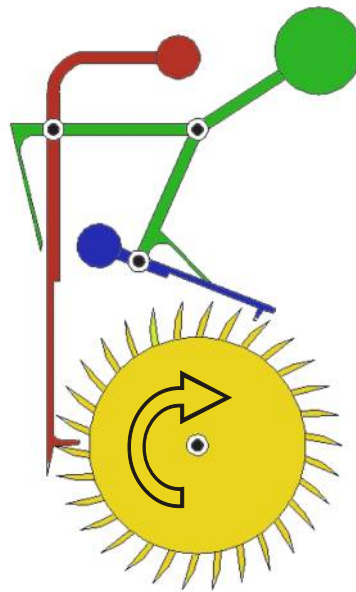
There is a fine spring behind each locking surface which has to be in exactly the right position to just hold the pawl in a position to catch a tooth as it comes along and the pendulum swings in that direction.

The problem in this case was the springs where wide coil springs that pushed the pawl into place but then, due to the material and strength, instead of giving gently way and letting the pendulum do its thing actually accelerated it out again, therefore regulating the clock to keep time was impossible.

Another problem was that the Pendulum, anchor and connection components where screwed with roughly machined locking screws onto the shafts (not very secure) and misaligned very easy which caused the escape wheel to occasionally miss the locking surfaces and spin free bending the locking surfaces as they came

in and caught the teeth, which also bent at the tips of course. You guessed it, the locking pawls (surfaces) where not hardened and also not at the correct angle to lock a tooth firmly in the first place.

The cure to all, just filing the locking screws wider and flat at the ends so they hold fast, change the pawl springs to fine wire springs so the pendulum barely notices them and they don't interfere with the pendulums free motion, put the locking surfaces at the right angles so they lock securely on contact and making sure the levers are in the right position to catch the teeth when they are supposed to. “Elementary Basics”. ■



THE VANISHING WATCHMAKER

by Henri Bonnet

There was a time when your neighborhood watchmaker was a highly respected member of your community and to whom you could entrust your favorite watch for servicing or repair in total confidence. You could actually talk with your watchmaker personally, just as you would with your pharmacist or your car mechanic. Young people desiring to go into the trade could apprentice with a local watchmaker and become as competent as if they had graduated from an out of town horological school. Your local watchmaker could service or repair any watch at a reasonable cost, and return it to you promptly, in excellent working condition. You could even bring it back to him for further adjustments, if needed, without any charge. Your friendly local watchmaker would also sell quality watches and you could go to him at any time for advice on buying a good watch for yourself, or one for your son as a graduation present. He would always greet you with courtesy and good humor.

Sounds like a fairy tale doesn't it? Sadly, such a person has become an endangered species and has now gone the way of the milkman.

As a result, servicing or repairing your prized Omega Constellation has become nothing short of a nightmare. Today, with few exceptions, you can no longer talk with the person who will actually repair your watch since the job will be handled by someone that you will never see and in many cases, doesn't even work in the same town. You have no knowledge as to who is going to service your watch, his or her level of competence, and have no guarantee as to the quality of the workmanship. You may have to wait several weeks or more, and pay a small ransom before you can get your watch back. Sound familiar?

Today, a young person wishing to become a watchmaker, has practically nowhere to go for apprenticeship, and usually must leave town for a couple of years in order to receive the necessary training and education. Instead of earning even a modest salary as an apprentice, he will have to spend a sizable sum of money on tuition and board. What can such a young person expect, once he comes back home with his diploma in hand? In many instances he or she will never again come across the mechanical watches they learned to service and repair at watch school. In many cases, the mechanical watches

produced today no longer conform to any commonly discernable technology standard and by and large, can only be repaired by their manufacturers. Spare parts once available to any watchmaker, are now made available only to authorized service centers, to which watches must be shipped for repairs.

Perhaps, the young watchmaker may occasionally, get to work on a vintage timepiece, if he is lucky, and has earned the trust of the customer. It is conceivable that most of his time as a watchmaker will be spent changing batteries in electronic watches, or adjusting metal bracelets. He will probably not even get to fix electronic watches since their movements are not designed to be repaired, but to be replaced instead.

On top of all that, his salary will most likely be modest at best. Is this the kind of future that would entice a young person to become a watchmaker? Competent watchmakers, should you be lucky enough to know one, are immigrants who have learned their trade in the old country. However, people like that are for the most part senior

citizens now, and are not being replaced by younger newcomers. It seems to me that the mechanical watch industry is going to suffer as a result, to say nothing about those of us who wear only mechanical watches.

Even a decent electronic watch is no longer inexpensive, some of which you can no longer find batteries for.

By taking mechanical watch repairs, for all practical purposes, away from the community and back to the factory, I believe that the watch industry is shooting itself in the foot.

Have you ever tried to ship a watch, especially a prized one? Have you heard the horror stories of watches lost in transit, or stolen? Even if insured, have you ever tried to collect? Of course a prized timepiece is by definition irreplaceable at any price. True, there seems to be a resurgence of interest in mechanical timepieces, but most of those products are no longer affordable by the average person. It seems reasonable to assume that most people, not being able to purchase mechanical watches anymore, or service those they have, will eventually wear only electronic ones. As a result of all this the entire mechanical watch industry itself may soon be gone. That would sure be a sad day for many of us. With today's lifestyle, however, why does anyone need a watch to begin with, when one can tell the time with a glance at his cell phone? You'll be the judge.



NAWCC Field Suitcase Workshops

by Paul Skeels

Field Suitcase Workshops are an important component of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors, Inc.'s educational program. Each FSW is a 32 hour, four day hands-on educational and training course covering a specific horological topic. The course content is developed, and the instructors are certified, by NAWCC. The National Coordinator for the Field Suitcase Workshop program is Pam Tischler of Plano, Texas.

Local chapters sponsor FSW's with the concurrence of the National organization. The great majority of FSW's have been presented in the East and Midwest, so it is exciting for Chapter 190 to be able to offer these courses locally. Chapter 190 has already sponsored two Field Suitcase Workshops. In May, 2007 the F301 Basic Pocket Watch Repair course was taught by our very own member, Ferdinand Geitner, to twelve students on four consecutive days. In early September, 2007 the F101 Basic Clock Repair "The American Kitchen Clock" course was taught by Ray Marsolek of Arroyo Grande to ten students on two weekends. For both classes the Chapter rented a classroom on the Ventura College campus. The instructors received rave reviews from their students.

The Field Suitcase Workshops are not free. The instructors and some of the tools and materials are paid by NAWCC, and the sponsoring chapter must provide a suitable classroom. Tuition for NAWCC members for most of the Workshops is \$275. Chapter 190 assesses a supplemental charge to cover Chapter 190's cost of classroom rental and incidental expenses. Also, each student must provide his or her own individual tools in compliance with a list that is provided for each course.

For more detailed information about the Field Suitcase Workshop program, please check the NAWCC website. This will provide course descriptions and tool lists as well as dates and locations of upcoming Workshops around the country.

Chapter 190's third Field Suitcase Workshop will be F200 Fundamental Skills for Clock Repair and Lathe Preparation. Due to a number of scheduling constraints that prevent us from offering the course on two weekends, this course will be presented on four consecutive days: Friday through Monday, January 25, 26, 27 and 28, 2008 at Ventura College. Our instructor will once again be Ray Marsolek. The class is now full, but if you are interested in enrolling in a second F200 class to be presented in April, 2008, please contact me at 805.525.7325 or at plskeelsatty@verizon.net. ■



Here are some other events that are taking place in Southern California.

Sunday Jan 27th The San Fernando valley, Ch 75 is having its "Horology Bowl"

Any collectable may be sold at the mart, not just clock & watch related items. Just about anything goes. As always, seller tables are free to members. The mart opens at 12:00

**For directions see our website:
www.nawcc-ch75.com
Questions? Contact Ken McWilliams**

Fri, Feb 8th & Sat, Feb 9th.

THE GREATER LOS ANGELES REGIONAL

This is one of the largest Watch & Clock Shows in the country.

Once a year Chapters 75 & 133 rent the Pasadena Convention Center for this show.

Membership in the NAWCC is required for admission Friday the 8th, but Saturday is open to the public as are all programs.

The public display this year is;
Vienna Regulators

**For info visit: www.nawcc-glar.com
Questions? Contact Ken McWilliams**

CLASSIFIED PAGE

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

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

- Watch Repair Tools -

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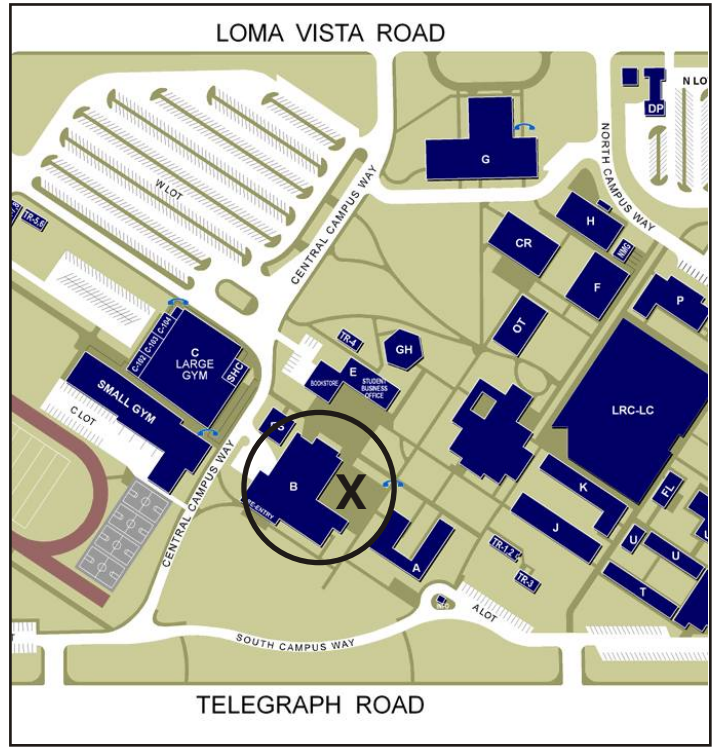
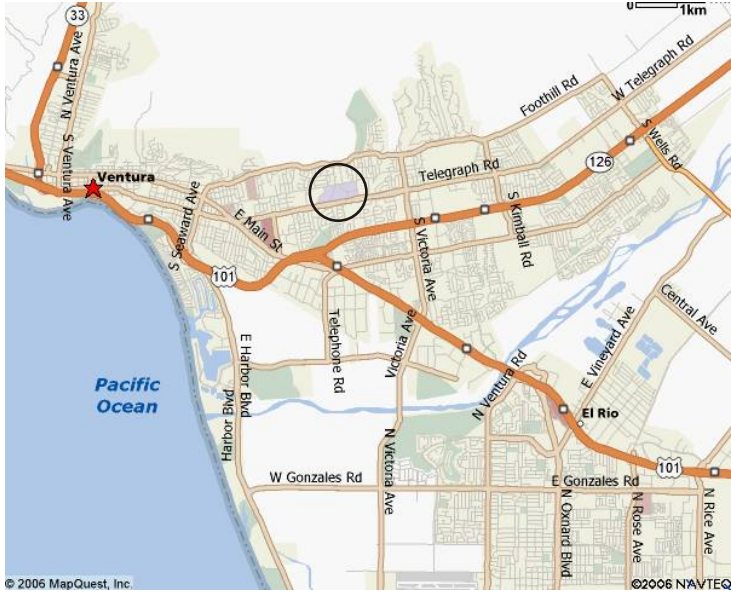
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The Chapter 190 meetings are held the third Sunday of each month. (No meeting in December)
We will meet in the cafeteria on the Ventura College campus. The cafeteria is located in building "B", east of the gym and athletic field.



Hope to see you there!

January 2008 Issue

JAN 20
NEXT MEETING

Chrono Times
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 17738 Superior St. Unit 21
 Northridge, CA 91325