



TIMEPIECES OF QUALITY

By Henri Bonnet

The first and most important wristwatch that I have ever owned, I purchased over 45 years ago and is still in my possession today. It runs well and has been serviced only once. The year was 1961 and it ushered in a decade which in my mind represents the golden age of the Swiss watch industry. It was a time when the average person could buy a quality wristwatch at a reasonable price and be assured of prompt and courteous service.

Over the years I have acquired multiple examples of quality wristwatches of that period from the best watch houses of Switzerland. What made those watches so special and why, in my mind, they are the very definition of quality timepieces? To begin with, the wristwatches of that era were designed not only to perform, but also to look like quality products. Their subdued, understated elegance gave those watches an aura of authority that is unequalled



The Longine, Conquest Calendar, my first wristwatch, simple, functional.

in contemporary products. whether made of precious metal or steel, the cases were designed with geometrically pleasing proportions of size and thickness, and attention to details were obvious from all angles. The dials, hands and markers were simple and easy to read at a glance. The make of the watch was unmistakably recognizable even from a distance. What is more, they kept good time and felt very comfortable on the wrist with their leather straps.



The Piaget Protocole, a dress watch of understated elegance.

Those watches were relatively simple and usually had 17 or 21 jewels. Most of them had a sweep seconds hand and a date window. Due to their relative simplicity they were readily serviceable by your average neighborhood watchmaker. Spare parts were always locally available and turnaround service time was swift.

Names like Longines, Omega, IWC, Doxa, Juvenia, Jaeger Le Coultre, Eterna, Mido, and Zenith were in themselves your best guarantee of quality. These watches were visibly made to last, whether self winding or manual, and history has shown how well they have served their owners over the years. They were devoid of useless complicated functions and the term "sport watch" had yet to appear in their vocabulary.



The Gubelin Ipsovox, alarm wristwatch made by Yeager Le Coultre

The sad reality is that watches like that are only available today as vintage pieces and are often sold or traded in questionable mechanical condition. Good samples of these wonderful timepieces are sometimes available, with any luck, but are indeed very rare.



The Gubelin Doctor's watch, relatively small and very comfortable to wear.

When they do turn up, they fetch many times their original cost since they are highly prized by most knowledgeable collectors. To buy a new watch of that level of quality, today, one would have to move up to the high grade manufacturers, such as Patek Philippe, Vacheron & Constantin, Audemars Piguet and the likes. The inventory of timepieces akin those of the 1960's is very limited and the price can no longer be described as "affordable" to the average person.

I am often asked by friends about what it is that makes a wristwatch a quality timepiece. To me the answer is simple: look into the products of the 60's. A quality wristwatch is a timepiece with an appropriate ratio (one could say a golden ratio) of performance and esthetics to price. By my definition, a well made, highly finished, chronometer, by a top of the line Swiss house (and serviceable only by them) carrying an exorbitant price tag, could hardly be described as a quality timepiece.

Quality in my mind is always relative, and as such is always a ratio, sometimes defined as value.

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Officers and Board of Directors

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(805) 988-1764 • EagleCreekClocks@msn.com

VICE PRESIDENT

Ken McWilliams

(818) 718-8300 • internut@socal.rr.com

SECRETARY

Paul Skeels

(805) 525-7325 • plskeelsatty@verizon.net

TREASURER

Dona Gaglini

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DIRECTOR • Membership

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(805) 497-8381 • gfgaglini@adelphia.net

DIRECTOR • Education

Ferdinand Geitner

(805) 565-9097

DIRECTOR • Hospitality

Dutch & Dorothy Friou

(805) 985-6438 • dmottar@yahoo.com

EDITOR

Ken McWilliams

Web Site:

www.nawcc-ch190.com

WEBMASTER

David Coatsworth

dave@biswebdesign.com

E-Mail For Newsletter:
internut@socal.rr.com

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

By Mike Schmidt

Chapter 190 has started the fall season having completed its second Field Suitcase Class. Under the tutelage of Ray Marsolek, ten students completed FSW 101, the beginning clock class. I personally took this class, and was able to improve my repair methods and add new skills to my repair knowledge. Ray is an excellent teacher and we all learned a lot. We also want to thank Jim Chamberlain, who gave a program on escapements and assisted Ray with individual students.



The next class to be offered in January 2008 is FSW 200 class "Fundamental Repair Skills Class". The instructor will be Ray Marsolek. The skills learned in this class are more than just fundamental and will help in both clock and watch repair. This class is a prerequisite to the FSW 201 Lathe Class.

The tower clock project in Santa Paula has been a defining moment for Chapter 190. It has been especially rewarding for those who were fortunate enough to participate in the restoration. The continued preservation of this historic clock is especially important to the citizens of Santa Paula. Our new chapter has established itself as a contributing member of the community and the preservation of horological history. This will do well to further the goals of NAWCC and Chapter 190.

A three hour watch workshop is to be initiated October 21st at 9:30 a. m. This workshop is prior to the regular meeting. Interested participants will decide the format and topics to be covered. Please email or call Paul Skeels if you wish to request a topic.

The lunch fare has been a great success with more attendees participating with each meeting. The optional lunch is \$5, kids free.

Our program for October is "Seth Thomas Tower Clocks" and will be presented by Ken McWilliams. This program will have additional material and will compliment the special program given October 6th at the Santa Paula Odd Fellows Lodge.

The Show and Tell for September will be the letter "C" anything horological that starts with the letter "C". Clocks with Columns, Chronometers, Cartier, Crown, Cottage Clock, Chess Clock, Carriage Clock, "Comtoise", Cuckoo Clock, Etc.



Happy Birthday
Jim Ingersoll, Richard Schall
Lynn McWilliams

Tales From the Bench

by Ferdinand Geitner

Most people have seen or heard about the Congreve Rolling Ball Clock, but not many people know that Sir William Congreve was not the first to build a Rolling Ball Clock. Clocks were designed and built by Nicholas Grollier de Serviere and Johann Sayller with one and some with more balls as early as 1730.

Sir William Congreve was born May 20, 1772 and was a prolific inventor for the army. He was inspired by the Tipu Sultan in India who used rockets against British Troops to work on similar devices and in 1805 his rockets were used against the French Fleet at Boulogne.

In 1809 the British Parliament authorized him to form



two rocket companies for the Army which were used in the War of 1812, the Battle of Leipzig in 1813 and during the Napoleonic Wars. "The rockets red glare" in the American National Anthem describes their use on Fort Mc Henry.

Congreve was not a clockmaker and employed Gravel and Tolkein to build his first design of a weight driven clock using a tilting table which he presented to the Prince of Wales in 1808. His second model was spring driven and built by John Moxon, currently in the Buckingham Palace Collection.

The Congreve Clocks were (and still are) unreliable timekeepers as the speed of the ball is greatly dependent on the cleanliness of the ball and track. A Fusee was used to keep the power to the tilting table as even as possible because the time taken to lift the table to reverse the ball affects the overall timekeeping. The most common styles

today have either a slotted table which is wider and takes around 30 seconds to traverse or the milled, solid (narrower) table which takes about 15 seconds.



Many copies have been made in England, as recently as 1970 by Dent, also in Switzerland and more recently China. Due to the mesmerizing effect of the moving ball and tilting table, Watch & Jewelry Stores used to keep one running in the window to attract customers.



(Timepieces of Quality, continued from page 1)

To me, quality is never absolute. With enough time and resources, I suppose that a good watch manufacturer can produce a "superlative" timepiece, until another manufacturer surpasses it, and so it goes.

Those timepieces, with their obscene price tags, to me, can only be relegated to the realm of curiosities. What good do those timepieces do, if very few people can afford to buy and wear them? A genuine quality wristwatch is indeed timeless in its performance, appearance, as well as to its availability to people like you and me.

The photographs shown are some from my collection and are representative of what I call "quality timepieces." You'll be the judge. ■



The Le Coultre wristwatch, fancy lugs, light and comfortable on the wrist.

SEPTEMBER PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

by Jeanette Barcroft

The following is a synopsis of the program “The History of American Pocket Watches” presented by Dave Coatsworth at the September meeting. It covers the development of industrial watchmaking in America from 1850 to 1880.

From 1809 to the 1860's American watch making consisted mainly of small shops which assembled imported parts. This began to change around the mid-century as the Industrial Revolution gathered momentum, and the idea of making American watches with American-made, interchangeable parts took hold.

Aaron L. Dennison, who designed machinery for making boxes, tags, etc. for a company known today as Avery Dennison, was one of these early entrepreneurs. A forward-thinking man with a gift for attracting investors, he, along with Edward Howard (already a successful entrepreneur making clocks and scales), began the American Horologe Co.



which went through a couple of name changes (Warren Mfg. Co., Boston Watch Co.) before succumbing in the depression of 1857. It was bought by R. E. Robbins who formed Tracy, Baker and Co. It went through more name changes to become the American Waltham Watch Co., surviving well into the twentieth century and making about 35,000,000 watch movements.

Many of these early companies grew out of each other. Machinery was often bought from one failed company to be used in a new startup company, and skilled craftsmen often worked for several companies throughout their careers. Dennison, for example, became superintendent of Appleton Tracey, Co., which, under new ownership, was the company he had founded a decade earlier.

Edward Howard formed Howard & Rice in 1857 out of equipment and stock from Dennison's failed Boston Watch Co. and managed a successful company for the next quarter century. Undergoing the typical name changes, the company made over 100,000 watches under the “E. Howard” name until it was dissolved in 1902.

After the Civil War, a resurging prosperity sparked the growth of many new companies. One of the most successful of these was the National Watch Co., (later called the Elgin National Watch Co.) established in the then “western frontier” of Elgin, Illinois, using personnel recruited from Waltham. At this time Illinois was a vital, growing area with many roads throughout and more than enough rail traffic to support industry. In its nearly century of existence National produced some 55,000,000 movements.

While many other companies survived only a decade or

so of this post-war period (U.S. Watch Co., Newark Watch Co., Lancaster Watch Co.) others were more successful as entrepreneurs became more experienced in starting new companies. However, competition was fierce as low-cost jeweled watches and even lower cost “dollar” watches began to dominate the market. The Illinois Springfield Watch Co. made over 5,000,000 movements before it was sold in 1927 to the Hamilton Watch Co. which continued to use the name. The Rockford Watch Co. made some 1,000,000 movements from 1873 to 1915. Adams & Perry Watch Mfg. Co. begun in Lancaster, Penn. in 1874, continued into the twentieth century (after several reorganizations) under the name Hamilton Watch Co.. Another twentieth century survivor is the Hampden Watch Co., started in Springfield, Mass in 1877 and moving to Canton, Ohio in 1888. By 1930 when it was sold to the U.S.S.R. it had made 4,000,000 movements.

By the early twentieth century, however, the market for pocket watches began to dry up, as European-, and particularly Swiss-made wrist watches became more popular. By the time American manufacturers got into making wrist watches, they had “missed the boat”, and the heyday of pocket watches was over. ■



Dave presenting his PowerPoint program



Virginia, Jim, Dutch and Dave admiring the bushing machine.

Upcoming NAWCC Chapter Events

Santa Anita Chapter 116

Halloween Supermart

9:30 am Sat. Oct 20, 2007

365 Campus Drive, Arcadia

Info: 626 339-8129

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San Joaquin Valley Chapter 118

The Big Fresno Mart

9:00 am Sat. October 27, 2007

American Legion Post 509

3509 N. First St, Fresno, Ca

Info: 559 435-0216

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San Diego Chapter 59 **Southwest California Regional**

9:00 am Nov. 16th & 17th, 2007

Del Mar Fairgrounds

Del Mar, Ca.

Info: 619 670-5982

The next Meeting & Mart for Chapter 190

Will be October 21, 2007

Sellers may start setting up at 11:30

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

The Meeting starts at 1:30

PROGRAM

“Seth Thomas Tower Clocks”

Presented by Ken McWilliams

SHOW & TELL

Anything that starts with the letter “C”

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.

Mostyn Gale

By George Gaglini

Mostyn Gale graduated in 1981 from the University of California, Santa Barbara with a degree in Electrical Engineering. He was immediately recruited by Raytheon in Goleta, California. Today, he is the Systems Engineering Manager for that company.

Among the many projects he worked on or managed through the years are the development of night vision equipment for the military (in service today in Iraq, providing our soldiers with an advantage over the enemy) and programs and procedures for measuring tropical rainfall from outer space.



With what he calls a "tinkering personality," Mostyn has been interested in clocks all of his life. A jeweler friend of his family introduced him at an early age to the wonders of watches and Mostyn was hooked. Already a member of NAWCC and AWCI, Mostyn was delighted to hear about Chapter #190. He immediately became a member and attended the Chapter's recent Suitcase Workshop #101.

Like most of us, Mostyn is intrigued by the ingenuity and craftsmanship found in antique clocks. He relates primarily to case design, repair and restoration. With the basic knowledge provided in #101, his interest has expanded to the more complex functions of American and European clocks.

In the extensive reading and research he has done in the horological field, Mostyn discovered a clock with his name, the "Mostyn - Tompion." Thomas Tompion, a celebrated British clockmaker, produced it for the Mostyn family. Many consider Tompion's work to be the "pinnacle of pendulum clocks."

Maybe, at one of our future meetings, we will have the pleasure of learning more about or seeing one of these masterpieces.

Mostyn considers himself a beginner in the field of clocks, but what a beginner! He is poised to bring to horology the talents developed in Engineering School and as a professional at Raytheon. All of us in Chapter #190 will be the beneficiaries of his development and future clock making accomplishments. ■

Welcome New Members

Harry and Phyllis Larson



A Trip to Santa Paula

by Ken McWilliams

As most of you know, a group of volunteers from our chapter renovated the old Seth Thomas tower clock in the Odd Fellows building in Santa Paula. The building was built in 1905 after a fire destroyed the previous one as well as most of downtown Santa Paula in 1903.

The October program will cover this in more detail as well as the history of tower clocks and specifically Seth Thomas tower clocks.

On Saturday, October 6th, we presented a program at the Odd Fellows hall in Santa Paula. The program covered the history of Santa Paula, the Odd Fellows building and the tower clock renovation.

A nice selection of clocks were on display thanks to the thoughtfulness of chapter 190 attendees.

We next enjoyed lunch at The Glen Ivy followed by a short walking tour and finally a visit to the Oil museum. It was a very nice day and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.

The following photos, taken by George Gaglini, document the events of the day.



Paul Skeels
MC



Dave Beavers
Grand Noble



Mike Schmidt
190 President



Dick Henderson
Clock Project



Ken McWilliams
Program



Early arrivals for the program



Ferdinand's Congreve Clock



Kathi setting up her clocks



Clock Tools & Books

LUNCH AT THE GLEN TAVERN INN



The Oil Museum



Oil Museum Plaque



Must be a bug on the ceiling



Checking out the Union Oil safe

CLASSIFIED PAGE

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

SERVICES OFFERED

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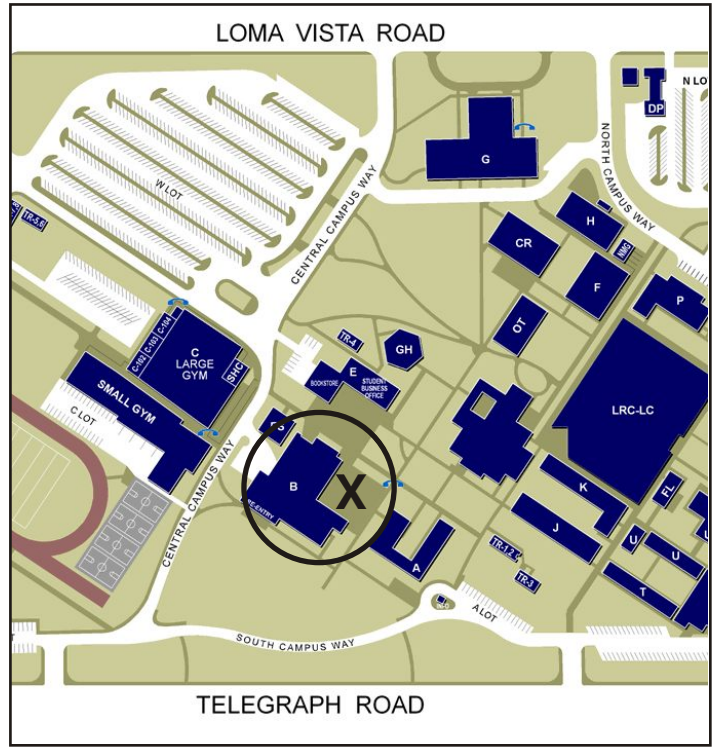
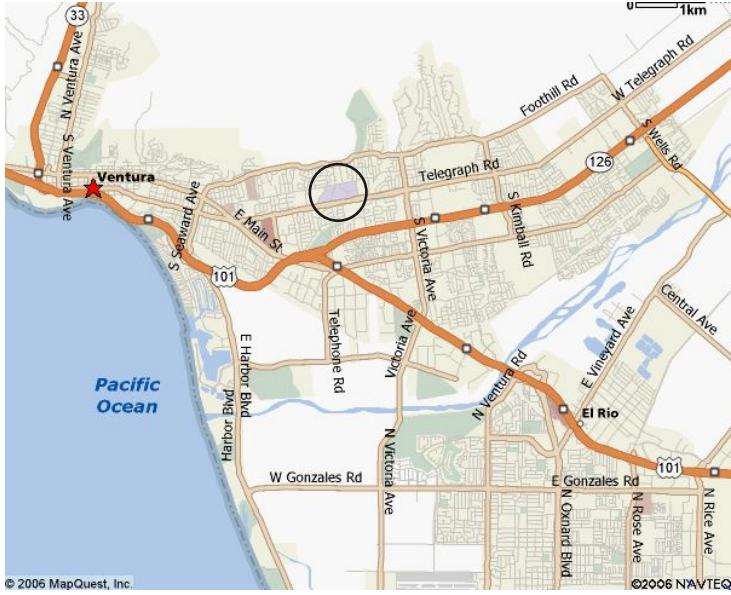
- Watch Repair Tools -

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**

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!

October 2007 Issue

OCT 21
NEXT MEETING

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