



The Price of Quality

by Henri Bonnet

Have you ever wondered why a vintage Patek Philippe wristwatch from the sixties would fetch over \$800,000 dollars at auction, while virtually none of the other major brands, when sold at auctions, hardly command even a fraction of that price? This question can be answered in one word: quality. Auctions are very potent indicators of quality timepieces. Most people who bid at the major auction houses such as Sotheby, Christie, or Antiquorum can certainly afford such timepieces, and money isn't a major consideration. Quality is. At auctions like these, Patek Philippe wristwatches always feature prominently, and as a brand they always fetch the highest prices. The highest price ever paid for any timepiece was for a Patek Philippe (eleven million dollars). Obviously, the well to do watch connoisseurs have no need to compromise and they consistently choose Patek Philippe over all other major brands. Why? Since its inception, Patek Philippe has always sought to create the highest possible quality watches. What's more, the company has consistently managed to offer elegance in their timepieces, especially in wristwatches, unmatched by any other brand.

A new contemporary Patek Philippe wristwatch hardly looks any different from a vintage one from the fifties or the sixties. The company has always refused to compromise its integrity as a result of fashion or market conditions. Patek Philippe wristwatches aren't exactly inexpensive for the average buyer, but one must remember that superior quality never is. In short, well-to-do people who could afford to buy any watch, prefer to buy a Patek Philippe. That is a message that is hard to ignore for those of us who value quality above all else.

A Patek Philippe's value isn't solely due to what the company did, more than a 150 years ago, but to what it did between then and now. To this day, you won't find any Patek Philippe wristwatch that is grossly oversized or one

that features fanciful or frivolous mechanisms not directly related to good timekeeping. While all other major brands today are part of large conglomerates, Patek Philippe is still family owned and managed. In that respect it is unique among the major Swiss brands. Holding a Patek Philippe wristwatch in your hand is sufficient to appreciate the quality that went into its manufacture, from the movement, to the dial, and the case.

Patek Philippe did, and still does, make a variety of different models, and each one is a masterpiece of horology and always exhibits understated elegance in addition to unmatched quality and reliability. The name of each original purchaser of a Patek Philippe watch is entered into a special archive, which includes the names of famous personalities, heads of state, even monarchs and popes, among others.

Such a watch, when resold, can always be traced to its original owner, decades or even centuries later. The company, in its present form, was started in Geneva in the mid 1800's. The firm was originally founded by Antoine Norbert de Patek and Jean Adrien Philippe. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the company's founders in detail. For the purpose at hand, it would suffice to say that the founders were keenly committed to quality, beauty, and reliability of the timepieces they were set out to manufacture.

From its early days Patek Philippe produced numerous innovations, some of which are taken for granted today. A good example of that is the crown winding mechanism, when all pocket watches at the time had to be wound by a separate key. The crown winding mechanism is not solely a matter of convenience, but it makes possible the exclusion of harmful dust and humidity from the movement.

Following the death of Patek Philippe's founders in the late 1800's, the company was purchased by the Stern brothers, whose descendants still own and manage the company today.



A Patek Philippe 2523/1, from the 60's, recently sold for over \$800,000.00

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PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

By Mike Schmidt

Sunday July 26 is Chapter 75's Annual Mart. As always, this is one of the best of the older Marts for NAWCC members. There are always some exceptional offerings along with good fellowship. Many of Chapter 190 members have been going home with some great buys at the Annual Marts put forth by our Southern California Chapters.

Here are some recent quotes heard at NAWCC Marts

"You just never know when that special clock, watch or part that you have been looking for may surface", "That special item that you just can't pass up", "If you don't buy it now you may never see it again", "I have too many clocks to work on now", "I have come just to look not buy", "prices are to high", "prices are to low", "You offered what?", "I can't sell it for that, I have more then that invested", "I will wait to the end then offer him less", "You should have seen the one I missed", "You got to be kidding", "Make me an offer" "Sell what? "Eureka"



Before each meeting your president sends out a meeting reminder. This usually is about two weeks before each monthly meeting. I sometimes add other things to this announcement, such as morning workshops, FSW classes and announcements that some special horological items will be offered at the monthly Mart. As most of our membership is electronically functional (e-mail), this has become our Chapters portable Bulletin Board. So, with your help, I will expand it. If you have something you need to announce prior to the monthly meeting, items you are bringing to sell or want to buy, help, parts or anything else you wish to put on the Bulletin Board, send me an e-mail. Some of our professional members use this to interface with their member customers to be available for repair work. It's your Bulletin Board to inform other members.. Send me messages to EagleCreekClocks@msn.com.

Wristwatch Collectors- Many NAWCC members keep asking me about classes or workshops for wristwatches. If you are interested in repair classes, send me an email. If there is enough interest, I will work to find instructors and schedule some classes or workshops.

The Show and Tell for June was wonderful. Many members turned out with some really neat clocks, watches, movements and reverse painted glass. If you missed it, you will have to read about it in the Bulletin Chapter Highlights. I am looking for some great sharing for this July meeting. The program for the meeting will be presented by Ferdinand Geitner. The topic is "French Morbier Clocks". Please bring your Morbier to share or any other clocks, watches, or movements. It will be fun and we will give out some nice door prizes.

Mike



Happy Birthday

Sue Brown, Eric Markarian, Mike Schmidt,
Kathi Sheffery & Kim St Dennis

Philippe, the firm's president, is the third generation of Sterns, and his son, Thierry, is poised to follow in his father's footsteps. Patek Philippe is one of the few watch companies which take after-sale service seriously. Patek Philippe has set up a service and repair organization second to none. By entrusting a Patek Philippe wristwatch to its service division, one can be confident of an absolute top quality job, practically unavailable anywhere else.

Today all Patek Philippe watches can be serviced, repaired, or rebuilt to near original condition. Patek Philippe still keeps one of the largest inventory of spare parts for practically all of its watches. To this day, the company pledges that it will service, repair, or restore any of its watches made since the mid 1800's. I know of no other watch manufacturer who can make such a commitment.

Since 1886, quality timepieces made in the canton of Geneva were awarded the Geneva Seal which was stamped on each and every movement that met certain quality standards. The Geneva Seal hallmark stamped on a quality watch has been a coveted accolade sought by most quality timepiece manufacturers in the canton of Geneva. Patek Philippe's mechanical timepieces all displayed the Geneva Seal of quality. In the past few years, however, it became obvious to Patek Philippe that the Geneva Seal no longer represented the standard of quality the company was building into its timepieces. (See my article in Chrono Times of October 2008 titled, "The Vanishing Swiss Watch"). The general decay of the meaning "Swiss Made" during recent decades, which had previously been the quality symbol of the Swiss watch industry, was of great concern to Patek Philippe. Not only had the Geneva Seal recently been awarded to timepieces made outside the canton of Geneva, the seal itself, though representing general craftsmanship levels, did not require any performance standard of the timepiece itself. In other words, the Geneva Seal regulations did not mandate that a watch receiving its stamp met any specific accuracy requirement. In view of all that, it is no wonder that Patek Philippe decided to drop the Geneva Seal altogether and substitute for it one of its own. Therefore, beginning in 2009, all Patek Philippe mechanical watches will bear the Patek Philippe Seal as an indication of superior quality of execution as well as of accuracy and reliability, in lieu of the Geneva Seal.

Thus Patek Philippe has become unique among the major Swiss brands to assign to its watches a quality standard surpassing that which was required by the 123 year old Geneva Seal.

With this move Patek Philippe has once again managed to stay on top of the quality curve of the entire Swiss watch industry. True to its motto, a Patek Philippe

wristwatch will remain a superlative timepiece not only for today, but for generations to come. As a proud owner of several Patek Philippe wristwatches, I fully concur. And remember, that all those well to do people paying the highest prices for vintage Patek Philippe mechanical wristwatches, couldn't be wrong! What do you think?

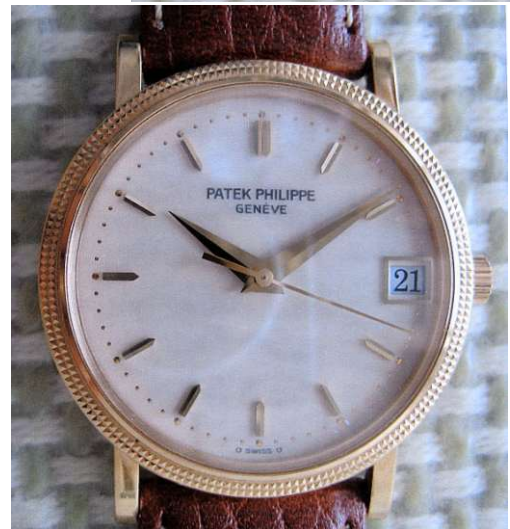
Below are pictures of three of my prized Patek Philippe wristwatches. (A) An automatic annual calendar wristwatch that needs to be reset only once a year (in February). (B) A black Aquanaut automatic wristwatch, fully



A



B



C

A Little Clock History

By Ken McWilliams

We humans have probably always been aware of the passing of time and the desire to measure its passing. Every timepiece from the \$5.00 quartz wristwatch to the most elegant grandfather's clock owes its existence to more than 6,000 years of thinking about time and tinkering with devices to accurately mark its passage.

We probably started by recognizing seasons, breaking the year into quarters. This satisfied our needs, since knowing the hour would be of little use. As early civilizations grew, and became more complex, their need for order required a more precise measure of time. The early Egyptians originated the division of each day into two measurable parts, morning and afternoon. They used the position of an object's shadow to mark high noon, thus splitting the daylight into two equal parts. Later, this concept was expanded and divided the daylight into 12 hours using the sundial. Other early timekeeping devices include the hourglass, indexed candles that burned at a fixed rate, and water clocks.

Early Mechanical Clocks

In medieval times, the regulation of a monastery's call to prayer was accomplished by means of mechanical tower clocks. This revolutionary device soon synchronized the rhythms of entire cities. World views of cultures were influenced by the type of clocks they used.

The very first mechanical clocks, which didn't have pendulums, were developed in the last half of the thirteenth century, probably by monks from central Europe, and were placed within the church. They did not have dials or hands and only struck bells on the hour.

These mechanical devices were placed in the church belfry in order to make use of the existing church bell. It was over 100 years before visible dials and hands were added. These early clocks were very large and were made of heavy iron frames and gears forged by the local blacksmiths.

In 1580 or so, the astronomer, Galileo, observed a swinging lamp suspended by a long chain from a cathedral ceiling. He studied its swing and discovered that each swing was equal and had a natural rate of motion. Galileo later found this rate of motion depended upon the length of the chain or pendulum. Years later in 1640 he designed a clock mechanism incorporating the swing of a pendulum, but he died before building his clock. (The famous "Galileo clock" was actually built by his son and his last student, after his death.)

Later, in 1656, Christian Huygens added a pendulum to a clock mechanism of his own design and found it kept excellent time.

Regulating the speed of the movement was done, as it is today, by simply raising (to increase the rate) or

lowering (to decrease the rate) the pendulum bob.

Huygens invention allowed clocks to be accurate to as little as + or - three minutes per day instead of the previous quarter to half an hour per day. The use of a minute hand resulted from this increased accuracy.

By 1670, with the introduction of the anchor escapement, the accuracy was increased to as little as a few seconds per day.

By the first part of the fifteenth century, small domestic clocks started to appear, probably made by the local gunsmiths or locksmiths. After 1630, a weight-driven lantern clock became popular for the home use of the very wealthy. When the swinging pendulum was added in 1656, clocks became more accurate. Very early clock movements were mounted high above the floor because they required long pendulums and large cast-iron weights. In reality, they were nothing more than simple mechanical works with a face and hands. These were referred to as "wags-on-the-wall." The long-case, or grandfather clock actually evolved from these early wags-on-the-wall. Wooden cases were used simply to hide the unsightly weights and cast-iron pendulum.

The English and European clockmakers reigned supreme from about 1660 to the early 19th century when American clockmakers introduced inexpensive brass movements. Soon, almost every home had a clock of some kind.

The following are some features that can help in dating clocks

- Minute hands were introduced to longcase clocks ca 1663 - matching minute and hour hands were introduced ca 1775. However, clocks were still produced with only hours hands up until around 1820. Second hands began to be commonly added to longcase clock dials around 1780. Dots in the minute rings of brass dials were added ca 1785. Phases of the moon shown on clock dials were introduced in ca 1745.
- Paper clock dials were introduced in 1792 and applied to a wooden or metal backing.
- Painted dials came into general use on clock faces around 1800.
- Signatures on a clock's dial or movement can sometimes help to date a clock if you can find the maker's name and date of activity listed in one of the many guides to watch and clockmakers. However, a signature may refer to someone other than the clockmaker. 19th century retailers and distributors often put their own names on clocks as an attempt to "brand" their product. The actual movement may have been made by someone else. Until the 19th century, clock cases were almost always made separately from the movement and are rarely signed. Of course, a signature may be fraudulently added as an attempt to enhance a clock's value.

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- Gold electroplating was introduced in 1836 and became popular within a few years. It provided a safe alternative to the hazardous use of mercury in gilding metals, which was banned in 1799.
- Calendar movements were introduced to English longcase clocks around 1660. The first American patent issued for a calendar movement was in 1853.
- Machine made wood screws were introduced as early as 1806, in France.
- Reverse-painted glass tablets date from the early 1800's.
- Wooden movements were generally used in early American shelf clocks until around 1840, since up until then hand cast and finished brass movements were very expensive. Chauncy Jerome began manufacturing cheap 30-hour brass movements in the 1830's. By the early 1840's brass movements virtually replaced all wooden ones.
- Coiled wire gongs were used in English bracket (shelf) clocks beginning around 1840
- Chime rods, were introduced to clocks in 1890.
- Celluloid was patented in 1869. "Adamantine" celluloid veneer was patented in 1880. In 1882 Seth Thomas introduced clock models in Adamantine veneer finishes which mimicked marble, slate, wood grains, and other materials.
- Bakelite (an early nonflammable, moldable plastic) was invented by a Belgian born scientist, Dr. Leo Baekeland, who founded the Bakelite Corporation around 1910. It reached its height of popularity in the 1930's and 40's and was used in a wide variety of consumer products.
- Marking the country of origin was required after 1896 on clocks imported to the United States; e.g. "Made in England" or "Made in France", etc.
- The "Anniversary" trademark on 400-Day clocks was introduced 1901.
- Plywood was first used in clock making 1905.

There are hundreds of notable clock improvements over the centuries that can be used for dating clocks. These are only a few of some of the more notable ones. Many books have been written on the history of clocks that detail these. ■

CHAPTER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

FIELD SUITCASE WORKSHOPS

FSW 201 August 7-10 Beginning Lathe
Contact Mike Schmidt, coordinator (805) 988 1764
e-mail: EagleCreekClocks@msn.com

FSW 103 September 25-28 Introduction to Chiming Clocks
Contact Laurie Conti, coordinator (805) 813 2216
e-mail: Remember_the_clock@me.com

If you are interested in learning clock repair, or know someone who might be interested, we are compiling a list of students for a beginning clock repair class. Contact Mike Schmidt e-mail: EagleCreekClocks@msn.com

**The next Meeting & Mart for Chapter 190
is July 19, 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

"French, Morbier Clocks"

Presented by Ferdinand Geitner

*Ferdinand will bring examples of different Morbier clocks
and talk about the history of these clocks.*

SHOW & TELL

"A Morbier or one of your favorite clocks or watches"

Chapter 75's Annual Mini Mart

Sunday, July 26th

**In the Granada Pavilion at
Granada Hills**

**See our website for more info
or contact Robert Gary at: 805 388-1694
e-mail: RobertsClocks@verizon.net**



*This month's Mini-Workshop will be
"An open workshop with
emphasis on answering clock and
watch repair questions."*

*This is an open forum workshop and will be an
excellent opportunity to learn and share knowledge.*

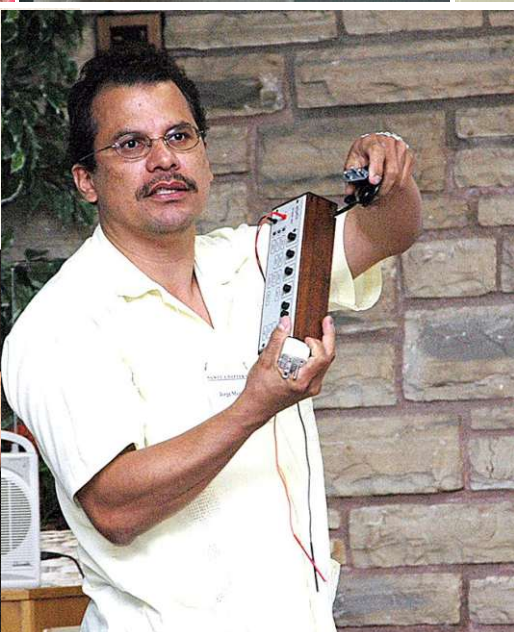
The workshop begins at 10:30 am. Free to members

Welcome New Member

**Sue Gary, and
David and Julie Delfinol**



Faces seen at the June Meeting



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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Tom McKnett

805-444-6383

- Chronometer -

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inner box and gimbals; outer box not essential.

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E-mail: giorgio@spanport.ucsb.edu

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

- Watch Repair Tools -

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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.

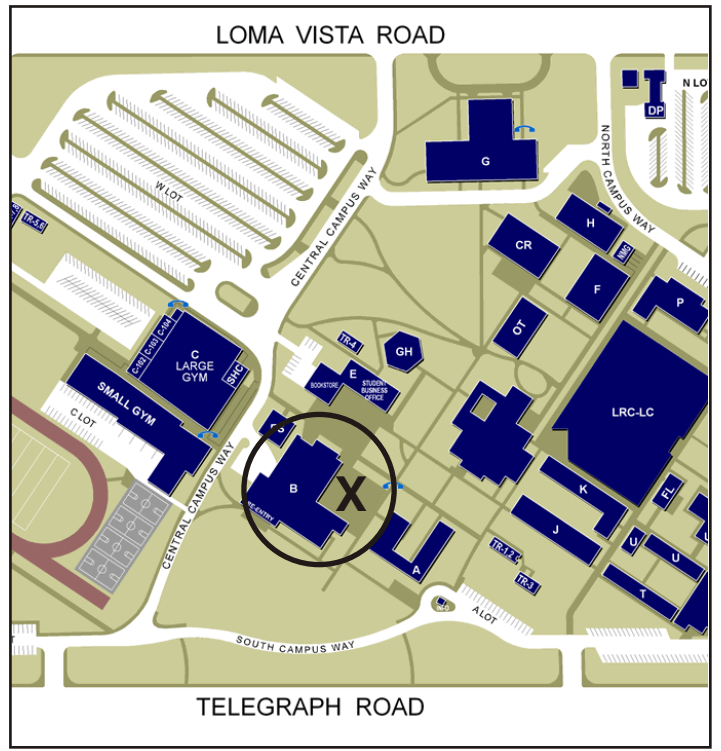
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The Chapter 190 meetings are held the third Sunday of each month. (No meeting in December)
We will meet in the cafeteria on the Ventura College campus. The cafeteria is located in building "B", east of the gym and athletic field.



Hope to see you there!

July 2009 Issue

JULY 19
NEXT MEETING

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