



My long journey into amateur Watchmaking and Collecting

by Henri Bonet

As far back as I can remember, I was always fascinated by all sorts of mechanical devices. My best subject in school has always been physics. There is no question that my professional training as a mechanical engineer predisposed my interest in watches, especially when part of my course work also included micro mechanics. Even though my professional training gave me an excellent theoretical knowledge of mechanics, including horological devices, decades will pass before I realize how superficial theoretical knowledge alone can be. I could easily calculate gear ratios, torque and coefficient of friction, but that did not mean I could reassemble a wristwatch into a properly working timepiece.

Obviously I was clearly missing something. My lack of practical working knowledge kept nagging at me until it became an obsession. Well into my thirties I had only one wristwatch. Later on, I began purchasing others, simply because they included something interesting in their movement, which I promptly opened once I brought the watch home. By the time I reached my fifties, I had accumulated a modest collection of assorted wristwatches as well as an array of basic tools. In preparation for my retirement, I decided to study horology in earnest and I even took some correspondence courses.

It was around that time that I met and became friendly with my local watchmaker. We began spending a lot of time together discussing watches. My friend, who later became my mentor, was a self thought watchmaker who worked alone. He had acquired a well deserved reputation in the watch community, and he actually could fix anything in any watch. His shop was in a suburban area of town and he would receive watches for repair by mail from all over the country and around the world. These were mostly timepieces that other watchmakers had screwed up and given up on. There

were also very complicated vintage timepieces such as repeaters and chronographs, for which spare parts no longer existed. He could make a watch part for an antique timepiece that he had never seen before, simply by analyzing the function of the missing component.

One day, during one of our long conversations, I asked him if I could work with him as an apprentice, after I retire. His response was that he had in mind to ask me the very same question and that I could begin immediately in my spare time if I wanted to.

That is how I became an apprentice watchmaker.

Initially my mentor taught me how to use simple tools, especially screwdrivers and tweezers. He wasn't satisfied until I could manipulate the smallest pieces with absolute precision without loosing any of them. Luckily my mentor had boxes full of small disposable pieces specifically for that purpose. By the time I acquired reasonable dexterity, his supply of small pieces had dwindled appreciably. He insisted that I always use the proper size screwdriver in order not to damage any screw.

I also learned how to use the various kinds of lubricants and deposit a tiny drop of oil exactly on the center of a cap jewel. It took me a lot of trial and error until I learned not to over lubricate. Disassembling wristwatches was relatively easy, but reassembly was something else

altogether, especially wristwatches with three quarter plates. He wasn't satisfied until I could properly reassemble a wristwatch that had been disassembled by someone else.

My mentor could examine a non working movement and, within seconds, determine what was wrong with it. He taught me what to look for in simple, time only, wristwatches. It took me approximately three months until he trusted me with a customer's wristwatch.

At first, my job was to open the daily packages containing watches to be repaired and list all the entries in a log and schedule. Later on, I had to examine and dismantle the simpler timepieces, list the problems in the log (with his help) and place all the parts in the watch cleaner baskets. Once cleaned, I placed the parts in separate plastic containers so as to get them ready for him to proceed with the repair job.

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PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

By Mike Schmidt

Chapter 190's educational offerings have been well received. The two Field Suitcase Classes, FSW 101 September 12-15 and FSW 301 for Nov. 7-10 are now full. The next class to be offered is the FSW 202 "Advanced Lathe Class". The class is scheduled for January 9-12, 2009. The coordinator for this class will be Paul Skeels, 805 525 7325, Email: plskeelsatty@verizon.net.

For the year 2009 Chapter 190 will offer the F102, F200 and the F103 classes. If you have an interest in other Field Suitcase Classes please let Board members know or send me an Email: eaglecreekclocks@msn.com.

A one day presentation and workshop "DENTAL TECHNIQUES USED IN CLOCK CASE REPAIR" will be held Saturday November 1. from 10:00 AM -5:00 PM, and will be presented by Laurie Conti 805 813 2216, Email: Remember-The-Clock@mac.com. The workshop will be held at the Historic Dudley House in Ventura. And the fee is \$32.50 which includes materials, lunch and a tour of the Dudley House. This workshop is limited and will fill up fast. Additional details for Classes and the workshop can be found on the Chapter website.

The monthly meeting workshops keep growing in attendance. The August workshop "Using the Microset Timer" was attended by 22 members and guests.

The workshop for Sunday September 21 at 10:30 AM will be "Bench Guide to Barrel Springs." The demonstration and discussion will be led by Ferdinand Geitner.

Collecting, learning, and appreciating or repairing horological items, whether it is clocks, watches or tools, is the driving force that keeps our collecting interest or passion alive. As we build collections, achieve skills and share with others, the best resource for horology is a personal library of horological books and publications. When you begin collecting you start with acquiring books that pertain to your current interest. As the years go by, your interest and library may broaden. I find that after collecting clocks for 28 years I spend a great deal of time researching all kinds of horological information. Often, after a chapter meeting, I find that some information I picked up from a conversation with a fellow member, a program, workshop or a timepiece will start me on a search for additional information. I guess that the pursuit of knowledge is what keeps your mind active and well. Anyway I find it great fun to learn something new.

The foundation to a good horological library is the NAWCC "BULLETINS" and Supplements. The amount of detailed research published and compiled for over sixty years by thousands of NAWCC members is valuable. If you have a personal library of "BULLETINS" the information is easily accessible thru the NAWCC "BULLETIN" index search. You can go to the NAWCC website or you can use the link provided on the Chapter website.

If you are a long time member of NAWCC you may have saved your "BULLETINS" and Supplements. If you are a recent member you may wish to start acquiring back issues. You can often find back issues at chapter meetings or marts. I also see them on ebay and at flea markets. We have several members of chapter 190 that have want lists and you will see them searching thru the meeting tables looking to complete their library.

There are several of the Bulletins that members will keep in duplicate, because they are used as a frequent reference.

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(Presidents message continued from previous page)

The Bulletin Supplements #1 thru # 20 which were issued over the years are extra softbound publications. They were research papers on a specific subject of Horology. They were a free addition to the "BULLETINS." All the newer supplements now available can only be purchased thru the NAWCC bookstore. Several of the old Supplements and many early issues of "BULLETINS" have increased in value. As new and old NAWCC members collect the "BULLETINS" and Supplements, bidding on Ebay has pushed up the \$ value for certain back issues.

The show & Tell for September will be "Banjo Clocks" If you have a Banjo bring it to the meeting. We will have a prize for the smallest and largest Banjo clock. Of course any clock watch or horological items is welcome for Show & Tell.

Remember, you never know when or what you are looking for, or not looking for, will appear at the mart. Some of best clocks and watches in your collections came from other NAWCC members. Bring something to sell or trade at the Mart.

See you all at the meeting.

Mike

(Long journey ... continued from page 1)

Soon, with my mentor's constant teaching, I became good enough to begin to reassemble simple timepieces, replacing mainsprings and lubricating the jewels. I then learned how to test the watches on a Vibrograf and make the final adjustments. Before long, I could service quite a variety of simple wristwatches and even repair quite a few. I became so adept with simple timepieces that I could service those in record time. I was quite proud of my output because it made more time available for him to teach me the more complicated wristwatches with automatic movements and calendars.

My goal was not to become an expert watchmaker but simply to better understand the working of wristwatches through hands on experience. There is no question that the best way to learn something, especially watchmaking, is by personal hands on experience. Obviously I had been extremely lucky to know a competent watchmaker willing to spend the time teaching me. Actually, my mentor enjoyed teaching me and he had quite some fun watching me struggle with watches that simply refused to keep good time. That is when he began to teach me why and how to replace various components, all else having failed. That is when I learned to use a staking set to replace cracked jewels and worn pivots.

There was so much to learn that I couldn't wait to get to work the next morning. After a year or so my apprenticeship came to an end when my wife and I moved out of town to retire in California. Of course, there may be people in our own chapter with specialized knowledge in watchmaking that may also be willing to mentor another member one on one. Any of our members would be very lucky to benefit from such an opportunity.

Although I enjoy working on wristwatches, arthritis in my hands has prevented me from doing much of the more delicate work, so I now concentrate mostly on collecting. I collect wristwatches that appeal to me for technical rather than cosmetic reasons, and quality is always a prime consideration for any of my purchases. I seldom buy used watches, except for very special high quality vintage timepieces, when I can find them.

To me, a watch's prime purpose is to keep good time and do so over a long period, with minimum maintenance. I don't have much appreciation for watches whose timekeeping function is incidental or secondary to cosmetics, fashion, or other non-horological purposes. I wear all the wristwatches in my collection and I prefer self winding movements with a calendar. Perhaps my most unusual wristwatch is the one pictured on page one. It is an Italian made automatic Carlo Ferrara whose hands move in a kind of elliptical track.

It has never been my goal to become an accomplished watchmaker, but rather to better understand, in considerable depth, the working of wristwatches. To achieve that, one needs a good balance between theory and practice. ■

The next Meeting & Mart for Chapter 190

is September 21, 2008

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

"The History of Timekeeping"

Presented by Ken McWilliams

***We have always had a fascination with time.
Timekeeping from the dawn of man to present day
will be covered in about 25 minutes.***

SHOW & TELL

"Banjo Clocks."

Prize for the largest and smallest.

Welcome New Members

**Richard Brinser,
Camarillo**



Tales From the Bench

by Ferdinand Geitner

Is it a Clock or a Pocket Watch?

In the last 100 years many decorative flat 8 to 10 inch high desk clocks were driven by 8 Day Pocket watches. They were wound through the back directly on the barrel arbor, usually made in France or Switzerland.

(See pictures below as an example.)



The following pictures show a Desk Clock with elaborate Champleve Enamel Decoration and a timeless dial and hands. On closer examination one cannot avoid to notice the large, almost out of place, older type Solar Cell at the back of the domed enameled top.

The Name "Patek Philippe" on the Dial oozes quality and one is not disappointed after opening the case and viewing a precision, mechanical Pocket Watch somehow attached to a jeweled, battery powered winding mechanism.

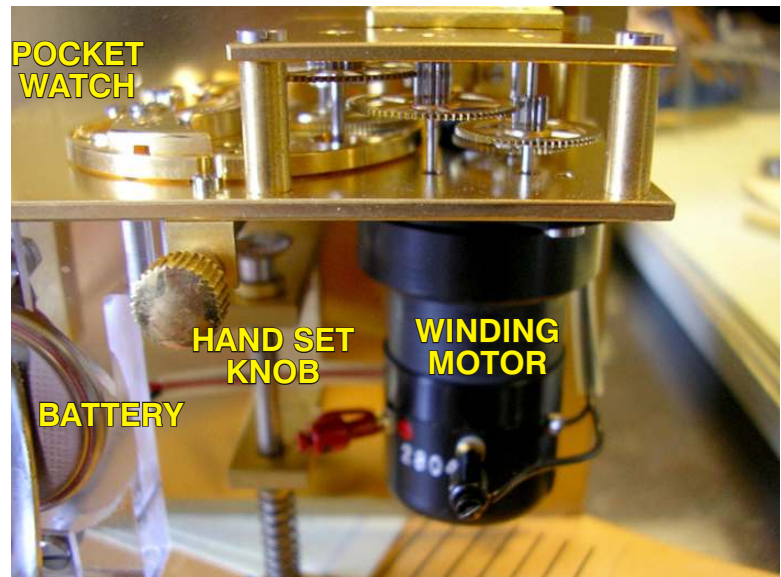
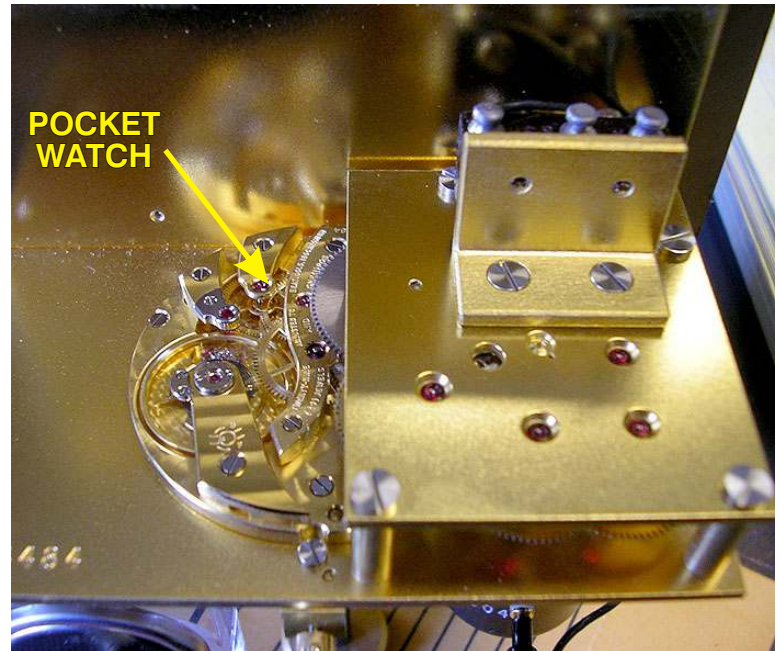
The fully jeweled Pocket Watch lies flat on its back (Dial down) but in place of the cannon pinion is a flat beveled gear that engages with a geared shaft at 90 degrees below the movement which goes through the dial for the Hands.



The Barrel Arbor is extended through the Ratchet Wheel with a thread which, during the winding process, pushes a nut and a hinged lever upwards onto a micro switch. The switch turns the motor on and off and in doing so, controls the winding of the Pocket Watch.

After a set number of revolutions of the Barrel, the Watch rewinds itself, driven by a battery which is recharged through the Solar Cell. (Almost Perpetual Motion.)

So, it's a Pocket watch Movement wound by an electric motor driven by a rechargeable Battery which is recharged through a Solar Cell, in a Clock case. And, of course, being Patek Philippe it is worth many thousands of Dollars. ■



FACES SEEN AT THE AUGUST MEETING



Happy Birthday

**Ed Armstrong, Paul Highfill,
David Rubright, Chip Stevens, Norma Zuber**



An interesting repair challenge

By Ken McWilliams

I received a very rare and interesting clock to repair last week. Because it is something that you don't normally run into I thought that this would be a good project to document and share with our members. I'll take lots of photos throughout the restoration process and either write an article or post it on our website.

The clock is a "Trumpeter Clock." It is a table clock and stands almost four feet tall, is about twenty inches wide and thirteen inches deep. Although it was made around 1880 the walnut case is in remarkably good condition. If any of you have Rick Orenburger's book "Black Forest Clocks" the same clock can be found on page 214.

It has an eight day, spring driven, heavy brass movement made by Emilian Wehrle with eight brass tuned horns. The mainspring for the music train is two and a half inches wide and the barrel is four inches in diameter. A brass pinned wood music wheel with brass lifters controls the reeds for each of the horns. Two large bellows supply air to the "Wind Chest" which provides a constant pressure to the organ reeds.

My customer recently purchased it from a collector in Boston who assured him that everything was in working order.

Unfortunately, he bought it sight unseen and "As is." The time train works but the music train does not and has not for a very long time. It has broken and missing parts and the bellows and wind chest leak badly.

I'm looking forward to seeing and hearing this historical old clock run again. ■



The trumpeter opens the double doors and plays on the hour.



The bellows are on the top, and the wind chest is below them. The round black object is the wood music wheel.



Six of the eight horns. The other two can be seen in the left photo.

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.

Jeanette Barcroft

By George Gaglini



When Jeanette picked up the 2005 Ventura College catalog for the Community Education Courses and saw the picture of a fine French clock on its cover, she immediately signed up for the class Ken McWilliams was teaching at the college. After a few months she became a member of the NAWCC and then a Charter Member of Chapter 190. Her life journey to that point was accentuated by a wide variety of interests and occupations, all driven by an interest and appreciation of the artistic and the technical.

A second generation Southern Californian, Jeanette resided in several communities in the Southern California area. She attended the University of California, Riverside majoring in Art History. Later, she moved to the State of Oregon and earned a Bachelors Degree in Mathematics at Western Oregon State University. She became a math teacher for various schools in the state of Oregon and later her interests lead her to the Oregon State University Library where she was a staff member for eight years.

At the urging of her parents, she left Oregon, returned to Southern California and attended West Coast University where she earned a Masters Degree in Computer Science (with a 4.0 grade point average). She became a computer programmer for the United States Navy at the Pacific Missile Test Center at Point Mugu where, for the past thirty years, she has produced analytic reports on a wide variety of military and aerospace projects and applications.

On the first day of the aforementioned clock course, Jeanette came dressed as a Renaissance musician. After class that day, she proceeded to the Ojai Renaissance Fair where, in costume, she played medieval and baroque music on a tape recorder. To the music composed between 1300 and 1800 she customarily adds, in her words, "a little Mozart."

For most of her life, Jeanette has enjoyed solving puzzles and the challenge of taking things apart and re-assembling them. She equates clock cleaning and repair with computer programming. She combines her love of art, music, and mathematics with the tasks of good clock making. She recently presented a program for Chapter 190 on the subject of design styles for clock cases titled "The Three R's: Art Nouveau, Art Deco, and Arts and Crafts." Jeanette lives in Camarillo, tending to her herb garden and occasionally refinishing a piece (or two) of fine furniture. ■

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

Now located at 1187 Coast Village road, unit 10a

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FOR SALE

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buy at the *September* Chapter 190 meeting.

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dave@daveswatchparts.com

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mahogany case. Gold-plated dial with hand painted
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Bob Reichel, welchdoc@yahoo.com **Ph: 1-206-364-7374**

I'm looking for a five inch piecrust bezel for an Ansonia clock.

Contact:

Tom McKnett

805-444-6383

- Chronometer -

Hamilton 21 Marine Chronometer in running condition, with
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.

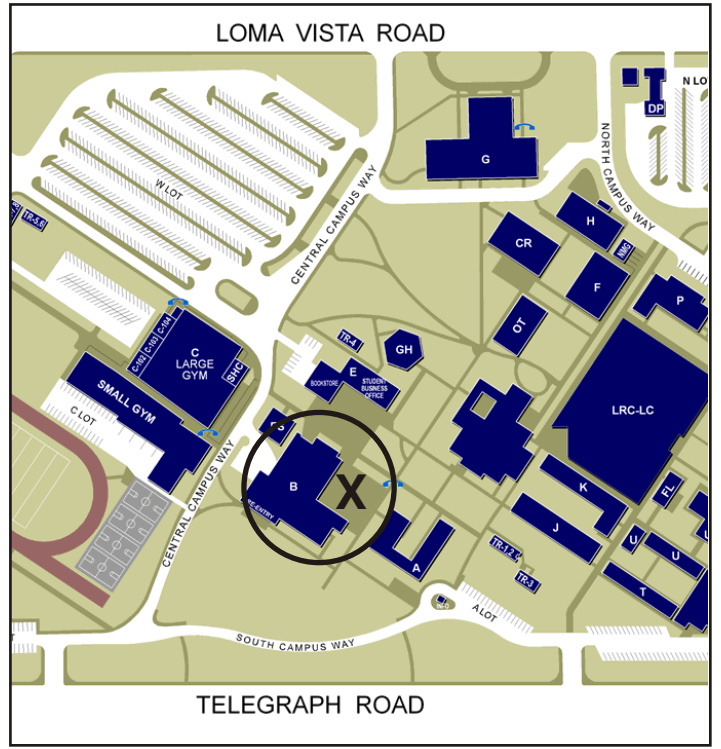
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The Chapter 190 meetings are held the third Sunday of each month. (No meeting in December)
 We will meet in the cafeteria on the Ventura College campus. The cafeteria is located in building "B", east of the gym and athletic field.



Hope to see you there!

September 2008 Issue

SEPT 21
NEXT MEETING

Chrono Times
 If Undeliverable return To:
 1738 Superior St. Unit 21
 Northridge, CA 91325