



PAPERWEIGHT COLLECTORS ASSOCIATION

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Profile of a Sulphide Paperweight Collector

Hello! My name is James L. Page and I became a member of the Delaware Valley Paperweight Collectors Association last summer. Since it is unlikely we will ever meet face to face, perhaps you should know a little something about me. I live with my wife, Jane, in Cocoa, Florida, just outside the Kennedy Space Center where I worked for about 35 years as a Purchasing Manager for a NASA prime contractor before a disability forced me into retirement in January of 2000.

My career at the Kennedy Space Center began in 1965 just as the Gemini Program was ending and the Apollo Program was starting up. Two years before his tragic assassination on November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy set a goal for our nation of landing a manned space flight on the moon by the end of the decade. Unless you were directly involved in that long-range task, as I was, you cannot imagine the efforts of so many dedicated people working together to achieve that common goal. Although I played only a small part in that effort, I remain very proud of what NASA and all the prime contractors achieved with the successful Lunar Landing on June 20, 1969.

After the Apollo Program ended, we were even more challenged by the Shuttle Program, as we had to rededicate ourselves to somewhat lesser but still important space flight goals. My greatest thrill occurred in 1981 when my wife, who worked for a different contractor, and I were selected, independently, as Launch Honorees for

the first Shuttle mission, an honor afforded very few. As part of that award, we were honored at a reception attended by most of the Astronauts...John Young and Robert Crippen, the first Shuttle crew, were in isolation and some of the men were in training in Houston...and many NASA dignitaries. Later, we were allowed to watch the launch from a VIP site with an excellent view of the shuttle on its launch pad. There we were, rubbing elbows with numerous Congressmen and even a few movie stars! It is an event Jane and I will long remember.

Well, that's enough about me. The purpose of this writing is to tell how I became involved with sulphide paperweights. Sulphides, called "cameo incrustations" by Jokelson in his book on the subject, are defined in Hollister's *Encyclopedia* as: "Relief medallions made of china clay and supersilicate of potash for insertion in paperweights, scent bottles, decanters, knife rests, and a variety of glass objects. Any paperweight containing a sulphide." (Actually, that is an incomplete definition, as there is a whole category of sulphides which are not "medallions" but three dimensional representations of animals, human figures or inanimate objects, but Hollister's explanation will serve for my purposes.)



Pierre Laval

Anyway, I first started buying art glass paperweights in the early 1990's. These were purchased in local gift shops as modest stocking stuffer type presents for my wife and my friends.

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Little did I know back then that there was a whole other world of artistic treasures awaiting my appreciation. One day early in 1999, a co-worker brought me a cameo (another word meaning sulphide) paperweight from her mother's antique shop to see whether I had any interest in purchasing it. The piece was unlike any paperweight I had ever seen and it immediately piqued my interest, although the asking price, \$200, far exceeded any sum I had ever paid before. It was the Baccarat Pierre Laval Memorial sulphide weight, issued in 1967 with the cameo crafted by French sculptor Albert David. The name Pierre Laval on the Certificate of Authenticity accompanying the weight meant nothing to me so I looked him up. Laval lived 1883-1945 and was a French politician of the far right. . After the Russian Revolution in 1917, he became a Communist, but that youthful act did not prevent him from being elected Prime Minister in 1931-1932 and again in 1935-1936. As French Prime Minister, in 1931 he visited President Herbert Hoover with a proposal that the U.S. excuse or delay a \$257 million debt created during WWI. At the beginning of WWII, he joined Marshal Petain's Vichy government as Vice-Premier in June 1940, but was dismissed in December 1940 for actively proposing French cooperation with the German invaders. Laval was reinstated on Hitler's orders as head of the government and foreign minister in 1942 but had to flee the country when the Germans were forced to retreat from France by Allied advances after D-Day. When WWII ended he was detained in Spain and turned over to the Allies. Late in 1945 he was tried and convicted in the French courts as a Nazi collaborator and executed. Thus, as a convicted traitor, he became a most interesting historical figure but one almost never mentioned in the history books.

The Baccarat Laval sulphide was, understandably, a most unpopular weight in France. Whereas most Baccarat sulphides were issued as 400 overlays and 2000 regular weights, the Laval came out in 100 overlays and 160 memorial pieces. All this I learned much later but for now I was intrigued by how much history was contained in one glass paperweight, and, also, I admired the workmanship, the 18 facets, the detail in the cameo and the relative rarity of the weight. I asked the co-worker if I could keep the weight while I pondered the purchase. She

agreed, of course, as I was the office manager. I kept the weight for several months while trying to make up my mind whether I wanted to meet the asking price of \$200. After some length of time, the co-worker asked for the weight back because her mother was planning to hold an auction. I gave her \$100 to bid on my behalf and



was the high bidder. In just that accident of fate, I entered the world of sulphide paperweights and my wife received Pierre Laval as a more than usually expensive paperweight gift. I found out later that she would have preferred jewelry!

Herbert Hoover

At that point, I knew nothing about the existence of other sulphide paperweights and had absolutely no idea that this world would become a passion for me in the future. Nor had I heard the famous saying common among experienced paperweight collectors that **“Nobody collects sulphides!”**

Early in 2000 I retired due to a medical condition. In March of that year I bought a computer to pass the time and to communicate with friends. One day while surfing the Internet I discovered eBay and was pleasantly surprised to find many, many paperweights listed, more than I had ever imagined, and many of them my new found interest, sulphides. I knew nothing about the relative value of any of these paperweights on eBay and started to buy sulphides with aggressive bids, thinking that perhaps I would never get another chance to acquire a particular piece. I distinctly remember my first overlay sulphide on eBay and my determination to win at all cost. It was the Baccarat President Herbert Hoover blue overlay (cameo by Albert David, issued 1971, 400 overlays, 2500 regular)...and I did win! Not long after the bidding closed, I received a lengthy email message from one of the underbidders. He welcomed me to the eBay community of glass paperweight collectors, explained the various nuances and unwritten protocols about bidding and, noting my interest

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in sulphides, offered to provide information regarding the issue size and types of modern era Baccarat sulphide weights. This gentleman also explained “sniping” (bidding at the last second in order to register the winning bid in an on-line auction) in some detail and finally offered some advice I’ve never forgotten. He likened bidding on desirable sulphide paperweights to chasing after women and to waiting for a bus. If you miss any one of these three, he said, weight, woman or bus, there will be another along any minute.

This advice alone has saved me a great deal of money, and a good deal of aggravation, on many occasions. My mentor, for that is how I soon began to think of him, also suggested that I start by buying paperweight reference books so as to learn about the various types of weights, their history, their origins and their relative value. Since we first met on-line in May 2000, he has been very helpful, even instrumental, in my growing collection of mostly modern era sulphides. He has alerted me to bid on, and win, various publications in eBay auctions that



Saint Vincent

pertaine d specifically to my interest in these pieces. As a result of his help and my own persistence, at this time, I own about sixty overlay sulphide paperweights and another 160 or so regular edition sulphide weights, mainly from the factories of Baccarat, Saint Louis and Cristal



Abraham Lincoln

d’Albret. It is a rare event now to find a sulphide on eBay, or any other on-line auction site, I do not already own, so much so that I have begun research into antique sulphide weights, where competition is even more daunting, and the pricing even higher.

Antique, mostly French, sulphide paperweights are “another breed of cat” from modern era sulphides. We know from factory records and standard

publications how many of the latter were produced by the three main factories mentioned above. We do not have such records for sulphide weights made in France or America or England or Bohemia in the 19th century but they are comparatively rare. Maker (if it can be determined at all), size (magnum, large, medium, small), condition, and apparent rarity or commonality, then, determine the value of these antique sulphide pieces. Paul Jokelson’s 1968 *Sulphides: The Art of Cameo Incrustation* remains the major source of information on this collecting niche. Very recently I acquired my first

antique sulphide at a very good price because of an annealing crack, impossible to repair, but the weight still occupies a prominent place in my display cabinet because it reflects the workmanship of long ago. It is French, of course, possibly



Abraham Lincoln



Pope John XXIII

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PAPERWEIGHT COLLECTORS ASSOCIATION

REVIEW OF EVENTS

January 25, 2003

Fifty members and guests of the Delaware Valley Paperweight Collectors Association met for our Winter Meeting at 10 AM on Saturday, January 25, 2003 at Williamson Restaurant, Horsham, PA. This was our largest turnout ever for a Winter Meeting! While snacking on Danish, fruit, tea and coffee, attendees studied the many exhibits available: displays of For Sale weights by Guest Dealer William Pitt and Guest Speaker/Artist Bob Banford, books, weights and marbles brought by members for show, sale or ID, newsletters from other local paperweight collectors associations and brochures and antiques newsletters free for the taking.

At 11 AM, President Kruger called the meeting to order, introducing new members Andrew Scott (who has collected weights from Murano to Banford for years and was happy finally to meet others with similar interests), Xavier and Gail Simon, from McLean, VA (who collect murrini and marbles more than weights), David and Leslie Briening and Dennis Briening (both brothers being weight makers themselves) and Jim and Patricia Doherty, Moorestown, NJ (Jim became interested in old South Jersey glass because of a family doorstep that turned out to be a Millville umbrella weight). He also recognized those who had traveled a distance to attend, including "Iron Man" Charles Ugi from Hightstown, NJ. Rules for the Morning Program, "Your Favorite Patriotic Paperweight" Contest, were



Display of 35 "Your Favorite Patriotic Paperweight" Contest entries

explained, President Stan emphasizing that he wanted ALL pencils returned and NO hanging chads. Members voted for their favorite of the 35 weights set out in numbered squares on the display table and then visited the Guest Artist and Guest Dealer exhibits until noon. At that time, winners were announced: Bart and Sue Sutton won top place with a Degenhart sulphide depiction of Betsy Ross sewing the American flag, the Krugers won second and the Kornits won third place, all three receiving paperweight prizes.



Patricia and Jim Doherty, Boyd England

After the delicious lunch, at 1:15 PM, our President made these announcements: 1) William Manson has a Collectors Club that anyone can join; 2) A Caithness catalog is available and shows collector club information; 3) Copies of a list of Scottish weight makers are available to members; 4) Don Formigli authored the photo display of the Dale Chihuly exhibit at Grounds for Sculpture, Hamilton, NJ, on the far table; 5) Delaware Valley's 10th Anniversary Commemorative Weight sold in Selman's Fall 2002 Auction for \$1320; 6) Due to the recent cold weather, it has been suggested that our winter meeting in 2004 be held in Florida (!); 7) Our group's website is now showing up on Internet search engines; and 8) Since no local museum will cooperate, it is proposed that Delaware Valley PCA, for our 15th anniversary, present a large paperweight exhibit in conjunction with a major local antique show, possibly Atlantique City, manned by our members, to foster interest in paperweight collecting and possibly generate new members.

Regarding elections for President and Vice President, postponed from the Fall Meeting on October 26, 2002, Andy Dohan announced that the Search Committee had been unsuccessful in attracting nominees for these two positions. Since President Kruger had served the maximum of three consecutive terms, in order to avoid amending the group's By-Laws, Andy proposed that the post of President remain vacant for now and that Stan be elected Vice-President at this time. The Search Committee was hopeful that within the next year, a viable nominee for the office of president could be found. Andy suggested that President Kruger delegate more of his responsibilities so that the position would not appear so intimidating. A motion to elect Stan as

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THERESA GREENBLATT

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Vice President was made and carried unanimously, President (now Vice President/Acting President) Kruger abstaining! However, he will still be known as “President” in these minutes for the sake of brevity!

At 1:35 PM, nineteen Today’s Raffle Prizes were won by the lucky ticket holders. At 1:45 PM, Stan introduced renowned paperweight artist Bob Banford speaking on “Thirty Years of Making Paperweights”, both as a solo artist, the first to make compound weights, and with his father, Ray. In 2002, Bob was honored with a request to make an ornament for the White House Xmas tree. Since 1973, Bob said, he has gone from being the youngest weight maker to the second oldest in this area. As a high school graduation present, his father gave Bob his own torch. Before that Bob and Ray had been buying weights but after that Bob began making his own weights. When asked for a critique of Bob’s first weights, Francis Whittemore advised him to go into the antiques business! Over the past thirty years, Bob and Ray worked together, then Bob worked with his ex-wife Bobbie and with Pete Lewis but for the first time Bob is now working alone, one of the few lampworkers to do so.



Bill and Jill Bauersfeld, Bob Banford, Kay Reid

Beginning with a picture of his long daily commute, 14 steps from his front door to his back door, Bob showed slides of his work, starting with the steps in making a piedouche weight.

Slides showed Bob’s work bench, the set up of a floral design, stacking the side rods for the stave basket of the piedouche, heating billets of glass in the kiln, placing a slug on the front of the rod, cleaning the hot glass, dropping the glass into the cup mold to pick up the side rods, attaching top and bottom rods for the basket and placing the completed pedestal in a 1000 degree kiln. The design is then picked up on a gather of glass using a vacuum pump to pull the glass down around the flower design, making for a more three-dimensional look, adding a colored layer to the bottom, softening the pedestal glass and attaching top and bottom together, switching the punty from top to bottom, finishing and annealing for thirty hours. Bob showed shelves of glass organized in bins in his studio and spoke of the difficulty in locating stable glass dealers for crystal and colored glass. He anneals his pieces for 30 hours, believing that you cannot bring the temperature down too slowly and the longer the better! He discussed breakage and success rates. He has studied breakage carefully and concluded that sometimes there is simply no explanation for why a piece breaks. Some break years after manufacture. He believes that even altitude may be a factor in breakage. Bob is no longer making piedouche weights, as his success rate was only 50% with that form. Fruit piedouche weights were successful only once in every three tries. The piece might

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be rejected for a small crack or a crooked basket. Now Bob's reject rate for normal shape paperweights is 10%, although snake and salamander pieces have the highest loss rate.

Of the compound weights he developed, Bob stated that the most popular was the bumblebee over a flower. Ed Poore is his usual cutter. Ray Banford is now 85 and makes about six designs or so per year; right now he is making glass faces and having fun with them. Ray made many rose weights over the years that included small gold bees, similar to those used by Charles Kazium, Jr. Bob also showed slides of Ray's iris weights and overlays. He and Bob were two of the few who made overlays by lampwork. They made red overlays until the glass manufacturer changed formulas without their knowledge and all ten they had made with the new red glass broke!

Bob's most popular design of all was the flower basket with gingham cut by Ed Poore. Some were overlays but most were clear. He ceased making baskets seven or eight years ago except for a fruit basket last year. He and Ray have made collaborative weights, too. Antique French weights were their inspiration for flower designs. Daffodils with upright trumpets and water lilies were made for a more three-dimensional effect. Bob has combined upright flowers and flat flowers in the same weight. He tries to add multicolor and varied techniques in each bouquet. He and his father decided on concave bases for their weights and have used several cutters, believing that cutting enhances the final product. Non-traditional shapes for Bob include his egg weights, jewelry pendants, tie tacks of roses and other flowers and flowers with rounded petals that have individually-pressed veins (called "loopy" flowers), each petal pressed three times. Bob also uses aventurine glass, which is gaining in popularity, in flowers and varies its gold color by applying translucent colored glass over the aventurine. He also makes petals with veins going in different directions. He noted that some green Zimmerman glass is no longer available because German safety standards were made more stringent, the green glass being considered harmful to the environment.

Bob makes 100 to 150 weights a year. He said it is hard to remember each individual weight although he easily recalls the designs that were most difficult to perfect. Red is the hardest color to work with, as it is difficult to show depth

with that color. He is now making apple designs with crimped green leaves. And he has made many snake weights that he said are either loved or hated with no middle ground. The latest snake weights include ladybugs or even ladybugs and spiders. Salamanders and lizards have stylized body patterns. Bob's new flower weights incorporate all his techniques, combined. He varies the centers of the flowers with different decorative canes. He noted that paperweights look different under different lights; quartz bulbs give the truest white light while fluorescent light is awful. After completing his slide talk, Bob answered questions about the coefficient



Gail Simon, Louanna Hammond, Clara Gardner

of expansion (COE). His glass has a COE of 108 but he also uses Kugler glass with a COE of 92. Bob is able to combine these successfully by careful annealing and because the German glass has a high lead content. Bob also mentioned that he is now using a new glass from New Zealand that is very consistent; he is using it a lot. Finally, Bob guarantees to replace any of his weights that break, no matter when that happens. This guarantee has resulted in his replacing two weights in 30 years! Loyal member Boyd England then passed around a picture of Bob naked, as a baby in his parents' arms!



Don Formigli, Bob Banford

President Kruger congratulated Bob on his informative presentation and urged members to view again Bob's paperweight display as well as the display by Guest Dealer William Pitt. He reminded attendees of the Spring Meeting on April 12, 2003, when John Hawley would speak on "The European Influence on Boston and Sandwich and New England Glass Company Paperweights", including American copies of French weights. Also speaking at the Spring

Meeting... Jim Lefever, on Millville inkwells and whimsies. The meeting was adjourned at about 3 PM but members lingered long after, the room finally clearing around 4 PM, with only Bill Pitt left still packing while Williamson staff were setting up the next function.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Sutton, Secretary

dates to the classic era of 1845-1860 and is of Saint Vincent.

Of all 220 plus weights in my collection, my favorite is the Baccarat Rose Overlay Abraham Lincoln, issued in 1954 with the cameo by French Mint sculptor Gilbert Poillerat. Honest Abe appears in 1291 regular pieces,



Pope John XXIII

in three flash color grounds, clear fan and clear diamond cut bases, but there are only 197 overlays, almost evenly divided between blue, rose and amethyst. Only 63 Rose Overlay Lincolns were made by Baccarat and I have two of them, with slightly different cutting, so that each, perhaps, is unique in that respect. In a December 1977 pamphlet entitled A History of Baccarat Modern Paperweights Baccarat explains this, stating: "The cutting of these sulphide paperweights done entirely by hand is of course never identical. Some of the regular or overlay weights have a star cut on the base, or intermediary facets, or additional cuts here and there, either to suit the fancy of the particular artisan who is doing the cutting or to erase a flaw, thus making most of them actual one-of-a-kind samples". I also own two Baccarat Pope John XXIII Overlay White Opaline Flash on Yellow Back weights (153 in this color combination, issued 1966, cameo by Albert David) with differences similar to those of the Rose Lincolns. I have never seen these differences spelled out in an auction description and always thought doing so would enhance the bidding level. Maybe I should keep that thought to myself!

The gentleman I've been referring to as my mentor wishes to remain anonymous, fearful, no doubt, of a deluge of requests for assistance and support by novice paperweight collectors. Recently, he has very kindly suggested that I now know a great deal more about sulphide weights

than he does, and I am willing to accept the compliment with all modesty! Seriously, though, I have found most paperweight collectors, all across the economic spectrum, to be warm and friendly people eager to share their knowledge and experiences. They are, without question, the nicest and most dependable group of individuals I have ever had the pleasure of dealing with on a day-to-day basis. I've completed over 300 transactions on eBay...my Feedback rating currently is 277...and have never had the slightest hint of a problem. To the contrary, these vendors have gone out of their way to be helpful and for this I am very grateful.

Finally, with my Kennedy Space Center work experience as background, I have even found a connection between modern sulphide paperweights and my career at NASA. Issued, I believe, in 1973 in an edition of 225 overlays and 1000 regular pieces by Cristalleries d'Albret, France, one of my favorite sulphides is that of the Moon Astronauts, Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins, who flew the first moon landing mission, Apollo 11, July 16-24, 1969, and Alan Shepard, who flew the Apollo 14 moon landing mission, January 31-February 9, 1971. I knew these men and now I have them

forever encased in a glass paperweight, never to be forgotten heroes of our time.



Moon Astronauts

So...despite the famous saying, some of us **do** collect sulphides, and delightedly so!

P.S. I also own a few non-sulphide glass paperweights but please don't tell anyone. I would hate to ruin my reputation!

Author: James L. Page
Photography by Barbara Green



PAPERWEIGHT COLLECTORS ASSOCIATION

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DUES FOR 2003 ARE PAST DUE!
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