

# On The LIGHTER Side

June 15, 1984

Newsletter No. 4

ETC., Etc., etc.

This month I will abstain from my usual "Etc." in order to print a "Letter to the Editor" which I have received.

More later....

*Judith*

Dear Judith:

Congratulations on your efforts in actually starting a lighter collectors club and getting the ON THE LIGHTER SIDE newsletter out. I've found it interesting and useful, especially in connection with the Zippo table lighter production dates.

While I salute your energy, I suspect that you'll need considerable input from the member-subscribers, or you'll need information from manufacturers (and there are so few lighter manufacturers now) or you'll have to repeat previously published material. You might delay an issue or skip one and soon...no publication.

Surely, each of us, as members, has one or a hundred stories or bits of lighter information to pass along to you. I'd like to know the status of Ronson Corp. lighters and general company operations and dates? Several collectors I've corresponded with over the years have been subjects of newspaper or magazine articles. Even if they aren't writers, they could copy and update the articles and send them along to you.

My collection has never been the subject of a feature article, so,

today, I drafted a story which you may wish to use in ON THE LIGHTER SIDE. I hope it will be of interest to other members, just as I would like to read stories on their start and major interests.

Come on, Fellow Members, if we want to have any kind of a lighter club publication, we're going to have to send some material to the editor. Wishing you every success.

Warren W. Gerber

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT....

Astonishment is the predictable reaction when visitors take a few steps into a modest apartment on the Lakewood-Cleveland, Ohio border and discover they are surrounded by lighters - more than 4,000 modern-day successors to the second tool in the civilization of mankind - the ability to make and use fire.

Thirty-four years ago, Warren Gerber was launched on this tremendously interesting odyssey when as a Salem (Ohio) News reporter-photographer, preparing for an Open House as they moved into a new plant, he set up an exhibit of a dozen mechanical steps to process a newsphoto into a zinc halftone and into the paper. The engraver had given him a "camera" lighter on a tripod which he placed at the end of the display to surprise and entertain school groups. Despite his detailed explanation of the photoengraving process, children and adults alike were more interested in the lighter.

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He brought a couple of other novelty lighters into the office; relatives gave him a couple more; a visit to New York City with its myriad of gift shops and Coney Island offering a variety of Made in Occupied Japan goodies and others for a few dollars, soon enable him to take a photo of his collection, some 25 intriguing little mechanisms in various shapes and colors made in America, Europe and Japan.

And, what do relatives and friends give a bachelor who had a direct line to cost plus 10 clothing? What does he look for on business and vacation trips after hotel bars lost their lure? Obviously, lighters is the most-preferred answer. As a bonus, travelers have the incentive to wander around new towns as they seek out gift shops and smoke shops in search of a souvenir or novel lighter. A few bucks represent an evenings activity and we feel better the next day.

Today, his apartment living room is dominated by nine, tiered, glass-door bookcases, 13 big, glass/lucite-covered frames, most mounted on 8 foot, spring-loaded poles and all with some "theme" or graphic design, plus 11 manufacturers' counter-top fixtures or especially fabricated containers. Filled with lighters, the shelves and theme frames resemble jigsaw puzzles whose pieces don't quite fit. And doesn't every serious collector sooner or later outgrow available display space, yet always find room for one more?

But, more important to Gerber than the gross number of lighters is the goal of displaying them attractively, either by classification, i.e. People, Modes of Transportation, Weapons and Knights, Animals-Birds-Fish, Sports and Recreation, Household Furnishings and Foods, Presidents, Tourism and Miscellaneous, as exhibited in the bookcases or in the 13 big frames of pocket-type souvenir and advertising lighters.

Fellow collectors will quickly see the possibilities under the titles: Map of North America, including all Canadian provinces, West Indies, Canal Zone; Map of Greater Cleveland; Zippo's Navy; Important Patents and lighters; "It All Started With Prometheus and the Wheel" (modes of transportation); A-B-C's; Four-panel frame containing All Armed Forces, Beverages, Sports-Recreation and Tobacco Companies; "Lighters for Matchless PEOPLE"; "New ZOO, Lighters Too" and "Every HOME Needs One." One Thunderbird design contains a wing of Zippo lighters, a wing of Ronson models and 16 case lighters. A second, eight-winged Thunderbird simply provides the design background for almost a hundred popular lighters. Three interlocked "Stickmen" are covered with some 80 foreign souvenir lighters and case lighters.

A Zippo rotating World-Globe, a Ronson "ferris-wheel type" Varaflame countertop case, plus Scripto, Bowers, Park-Sherman, other Zippo and Ronson merchandise displays, a five-sided lucite, hand-made cover for chess set lighters and all 12 Zodiac lighters are among other fixtures there.

For the first 20 years, mostly, Gerber sought novelty table lighters, as well as souvenir and advertising pocket lighters. As it became more and more difficult to find different lighters, for about 5 years, he acquired novelty knickknacks and routed oblong or round holes into the new conversation piece and inserted a lighter mechanism that need a good home. But that could go on forever and, thus, no challenge. In recent years, with the aid of a very talented ad agency art director friend, Fran Lengel, he has assembled these Theme-graphic design frames. He also is constantly searching for the development history of fire-making devices and lighters and finds some sources are graciously cooperative, while most have more important things to do, like meeting the payroll. Although Gerber's goal is to write a comprehensive book on the history of lighter development and manufacturers, he believes there are too many gaps and unconfirmed data to allow him to assemble the information.

He has visited a dozen other collectors over the years and has corresponded with, perhaps, a dozen others and has come to the conclusion that each of us has a pretty high idea of the value of our own goodies. He is somewhat uncomfortable with hard-nosed trading, especially via mail, but has had several experiences where he and a fellow collector have met face-to-face and more or less "given" each other wanted lighters which is sure to even things out in

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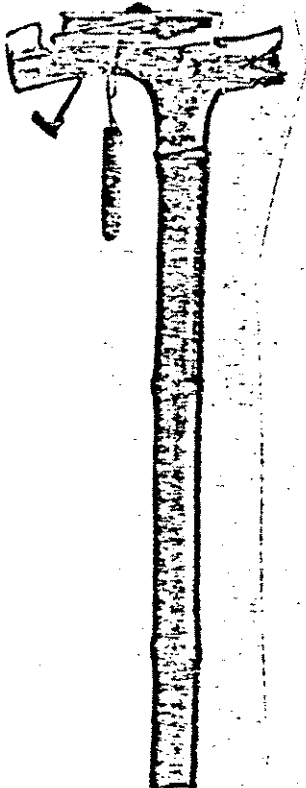
the long run because beauty is not only in the eye of the beholder but so is an old lighter of minimal interest to one collector and "most wanted" by another.

Gerber's Most Wanted include authentic antique flintlock tinderlighters, musical lighters, pocket-watch-like brass/copper 1910-30's European lighters and a role of Amorce-Thompson's Mixture caps for an 1865-78 George Selden's Erie and discs of 24 fulminate of mercury bits for an 1889 Elias Koopman Pocket Lamp.

This collector loves to have visitors and jokes that he locks the door when they enter and refuses to open it for at least an hour or until they're properly impressed and have listened to at least a dozen stories about "when I got this one...this one works when you..." (w.w.g.)

### COLLECTORS CORNER

In digging around for information on unusual lighters, I have found a set of books called THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF COLLECTIBLES, which was published by Time Life Books, Inc., which I believe came out in 1978. Following are some pictures and descriptions of a few of the lighters shown in this series of books:



(left hand picture)

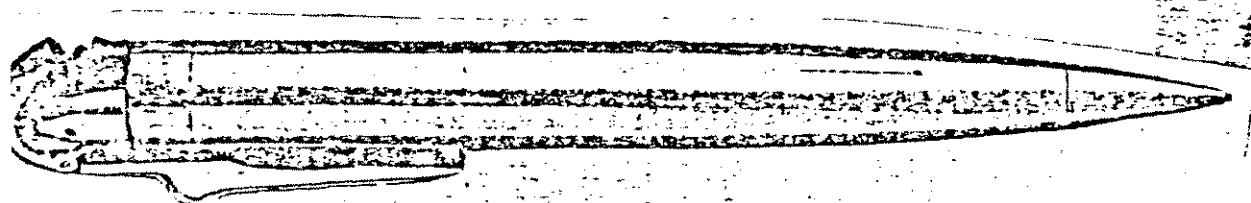
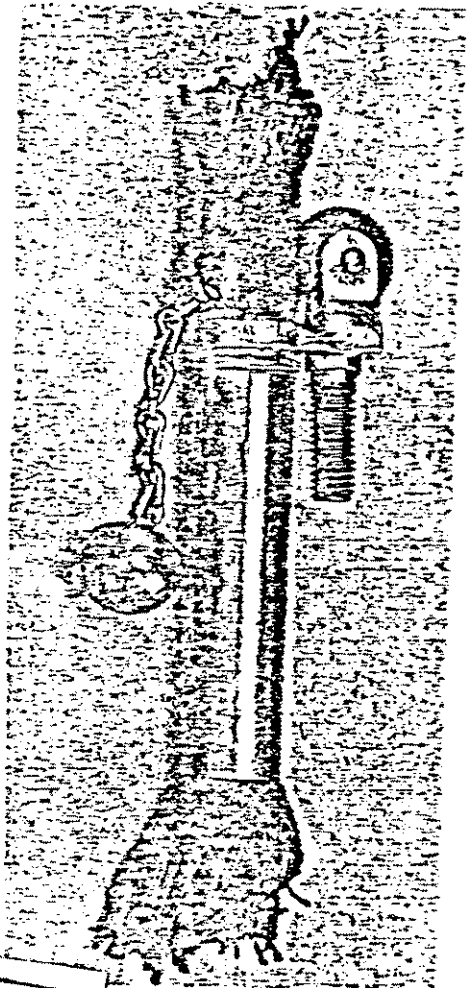
A smoker's cane from the turn of the century illustrates the ingenuity of cane makers. On this cane, the handle houses a cigar clipper at the left end, a cab whistle at the right and a flint light -plus-pillbox in the middle.

(right hand picture)

A simple rope lighter for troupes in WWII was lit with flint and steel. It smoldered rather than flamed, thus showing no lighter when used in a trench at the front.

(picture below)

The Ronson Penciliter of the 1940s is desirable because of its dual purpose. The lighter is activated by the clip.



CLASSIFIED ADS

For Sale or Trade

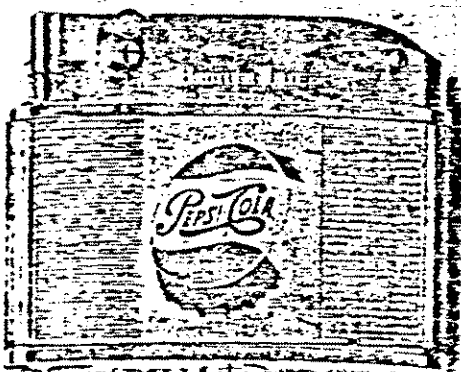
Aurora "45" pistol, 4" long, also flashlight. \$3 or trade. Judith Sanders (Member)

Luden's Cough Drops/5th Ave. Candy Ads - Scripto Vu-lighters. \$5 or trade. Judith Sanders (Member)

(Japan) Old flintlock pistol (replica), silver & black w/wood stand. \$20 or trade. Judith Sanders (Member)

Continental (old shape) with Lucky Strike ad. \$3 or trade. Judith Sanders (Member)

Pepsi-Cola. \$10 or trade. Judith Sanders (Member)



Storm King with Dallas Cowboy Super Bowl VI World Champions. \$7 or trade. Judith Sanders (Member)

"Penguin" (old shape) Winston ad in original box. \$3 or trade. Judith Sanders (Member)

Wanted to Buy or Trade

Dunhill lighters. John Cuevas. (Member)

Lighters with following State names or emblems: Ala., Ct., Del., Ga., Ida., Mass., Ky., Wyo., Va., R.I. Judith Sanders (Member)

Authentic flint & steel flintlock tinderboxes & other pre-lighter fire-making devices. Warren Gerber (Member)

Occupied Japan lighters. Judith Sanders (Member)

Musical lighters. Warren Gerber (Member)

Novelty type lighters. Judith Sanders (Member)

1910-1930's round, brass/copper, similar in size/shape to man's hunter case pocket watch, French, German, English, flint post pulls out, hole/fitting for wick, WWI scenes or leaders or coins NOT Japanese-made "Belgium or French" coins, Warren Gerber (Member)

Wanted to Buy or Trade

Will pay \$25 and up for "Ceramic Occupied Japan" cigarette lighters. Send complete description. Bob Gee (Member)

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

Printed Once a Month  
for Collectors

Judith Sanders  
Editor

All ads appearing in this section need to be received in this office by the 10th of the month in which you want the ad to appear. If you wish an ad for more than 1 month, please specify. Ads are free for members. There will be a \$1.00 charge for ads placed by non-members. Please send ads in type-written form. For information, write or call:

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