

On The LIGHTER Side

March 15, 1985

Vol. II, No. 3

ETC., Etc., etc.

Even though this section has become one of my favorite ways of telling all of you what I have been doing, this month I will keep it short, as we have a lot of cover. One thing I will mention is that some of you newer members have asked for back copies. I have been trying to get all the back copies sent out, however, I feel I have missed one request (my first mistake this year!!). So if someone asked for back copies and haven't received them yet, please call it to my attention.

Following is a "Letter to the Editor" which I wanted to share with you. More later....

Judith

EDITOR, MA'M: The February issue story on Charles Vitek was very interesting and, probably important to lighter history buffs if we accept the story's claims for "firsts". At least one vital fact was not mentioned, however, nor was it specified in the story clipping that friend Jim Gartner sent to you.

Vitek undoubtedly used ferro cerium flint, an alloy of the rare earth element, cerium, mixed with iron filings. Natural flintstones, a composition including silica and incidental iron oxide, later flint and processed iron, still later flint and steel, have been used for hundreds of years to create fire. With imaginative people of many lands making these devices, many carried in kits, pouches and tinder-boxes, some might be classified as forms of pocket lighters.

In addition, because of the importance of fire in everyday life, many other chemical, mechanical and even electrical firemaking devices were developed long before 1908.

Also, George Selden patented his Erie lighter in 1865 and Elias

Koopman patented his Magic Pocket Lamp in 1889. I read several years ago that Selden and European counterparts, used Amorce-Thompson's Mixture as the sparking material. But Stefano Bisconcini in his great Lighters, Accendini said Mercury Fulminate was used to spark Selden/European lighters? The patent for Koopman's Pocket Lamp states Fulminate of Mercury bits were used to create sparks.

I have a "new," boxed BH Auto Igniter pocket lighter patented in 1907. It and the fairly common New Method pocket lighter operate on principles developed by Dobreiner in 1823--sponge platinum and alcohol/Columbian Spirits.

Conflict, conflict! A short "The story of the lighter" issued by Ronson Corp. Limited (England) stated "The first strike wand flint lighter was manufactured in the Treibacher Factory of Vienna." Bisconcini says Treibacher manufactured no lighters, only cerium flint, but sold others' lighters?

Agreed, Vitek's devices, if the story is true, launched the modern lighter with the ferro cerium flint as we know it today. Dr. Carl Auer von Welsbach patented ferro cerium in Vienna in 1903, recorded in 1904. He was associated with the Treibacher Co. I have an unsupported theory that Prof. Welsbach acclaimed as a genius, was not seeking a method of lighting cigars, pipes or then-new cigarettes. He is most famous for developing or improving to practicality the gas lamp mantle. Was he seeking a way to light street or ceiling-mounted gas lamps? Today, at Flea Markets, we can still find long "wands" - up to 40", perhaps, with a trigger device at the hand-held end which snaps a piece of ferro cerium flint at the other end. Lamplighters are known to have used his extension. Welsbach's flint, also known as Auermetal and Mishmetal, has been used in miner's lamps, welder's sparking guns and, probably, for many other applications.

Somewhere, I believe I read that Austrians Richard Kohn and ? Findsl developed the file-wheel in the first

(See LETTER on Page 2)

decade of the century?

All above, subject to corrections, additions, deletions and nit-picking.
Warren W. Gerber

IN THE SPOTLIGHT.....

OTLS CLUB RENEWS
COLLECTOR'S INTEREST

Newest OTLS Member, Department of Ohio, Donald R. Calkins of Westlake, a Cleveland suburb, now must balance a renewed interest in lighters with the responsibilities of a company vice president, night school studies leading to a Masters Degree in Business Administration at Cleveland State U., but most of all the interests he shares with his wife, Margie, and their son, Billy, 8, who has his own list of priorities.

Don became a collector about 10 years ago when he saw and bought an old tubular brass Bowers at the big Burton Flea Market. At the time, his wife was collecting sterling spoons, Victorian silver "and that sort of thing," but Don, just out of college, decided to go into the considerably less expensive hobby of collecting intriguing lighters.

When his parents, who are in the antiques and liquidating business, became aware of his hobby, they gave and continue to give a major boost to his collection. Don and Margie were visiting antique shops, mall shows and flea markets looking for furnishings for their home and, of course, they also came across relatively inexpensive lighters. In recent years, such travels became less frequent as other family responsibilities increased.

Earlier this year, when Don learned about OTLS and some of its' members, he re-checked his lighters (table and figural ones are shelved in and around his office at home; pocket types are mostly boxed) and his interest took a jump.

Don classifies his as a "general" collection; he buys whatever interests him. When pressed to name his MOST WANTED, he lists "different" Ronson table lighters and all types of metal

table lighters. He seeks older models, perhaps a trait developed during earlier years when he helped out in his parents' antiquing efforts. This thought reminds him he'd like to find some more of the old electrical kind. He said he has no grouping of lighters for sale or trade at this time.

He counts as his most unusual what appears to be the French Crillion, the world's first mass produced butane lighter, while his favorite is Dunhill's 1960's Tinderbox replica. His newest goodie is a refillable butane with a digital watch mounted in it, a Christmas gift from his wife.

In his first years as a collector, Don tried to repair, clean and polish his lighters but, with work, school and family activities, mostly, he now just admires new acquisitions.

As another example of "a sign of the times," the Calkins have had a fairly elaborate security system installed in their home, Don says, more to protect the other antiques they cherish than the lighters.

Don also collects dairy company memorabilia and likes to play racquetball four or five times a week, in addition to supporting Billy's achievements as a swimming racer and family church activities. He is vice president at the Meyer Co., a small diversified company in Cleveland, which developed out of a large dairy operation into a company with a variety of manufacturing and retail operations. by warren gerber

EDITOR'S NOTE: KEN WAS UNABLE TO GET HIS ARTICLE ON PATENTS READY FOR THIS ISSUE. HOPEFULLY WE WILL HAVE IT FOR THE NEXT ISSUE. FOR THE COLLECTORS' CORNER THIS MONTH JOHN CUEVAS HAS SUBMITTED AN ARTICLE ON RONSON LIGHTERS.

NEW MEMBERS CAN ORDER BACK ISSUES OF NEWSLETTERS FOR SIXTY CENTS PER ISSUE. THIS PRICE INCLUDES POSTAGE.

For Sale or Trade

Want to sell entire collection. Make reasonable offer.

- 1 Ceramic table (small) lighter with "M" on bottom.
- 1 Braves Lighter (baseball).
- 1 Confederate lighter.
- 1 Ronson Pencil Lighter.
- 1 Ronson "gold color" lighter.
- 1 Butane Lighter (black) Polly-Gaz Steamer in case.
- 1 Evans lighter and case gold-black (1940's).
- 1 Japanese "fancy" lighter and case (black jeweled) (1940's).
- 1 large Japanese table lighter-ashtray set - brilliant green glass and metal (shine with silver polish).
- 1 Realite-pink with black poodle.
- 1 Supreme-odd case of Picture 19th Century - fabric (slides in).

Assorted lighters Zippo, Storm King, Vulcan, Prince Gardner. Some with advertising. Good condition. Caroly Page

ASR ASCOT dagger/letter opener gold colored with green plastic (pearlized looking) around handle. 9-1/2" long. \$15 or trade. Judith Sanders

(Kem Co.) Miniature (2" tall) bottle - no label left on it. \$3 - silver colored. Judith Sanders

For Sale or Trade

Have 3 lighters for sale:

- 1 Brass case
- 1 Adver - "A Light Reminder from Fred C. Dietrich Distrib of Fine Foods & Confections - Phone 2085 - 7203 Madison Ave. Hammond, Ind."
- 1 Adver - "I'm Happy I'm Protected - My Moose Dues are Paid for a Year."

\$10 for all. J. W. Kramer

Replica "cigarette" lighters. Refillable butane, flint. Available: Las Vegas (a local cigarette here), Marlboro, Kent, HB, 555, Players, Gitane and others. \$3 ea or \$25 dz. assorted. RK Enterprises, 953 E. Sahara Av. #E-15-A Box 257, Las Vegas, NV 89104. Check/M.O. or C.O.D. Please include \$2 for shipping (Non-Member)

Match-O-Matic, silver with brown grip. Actual size 5" high x 10" long, mounted on walnut base. Looks like James Bond type pistol. \$7 or trade. Judith Sanders



USE YOUR CLASSIFIED ADS!

Wanted to Buy or Trade

Ronson Pencil lighters. Andrew Morgan

Military - any type. Also looking for one from Viet Nam with map of V.N. on it. Robert Koznecki

Musical lighters. Warren Gerber

Scripto "Vu-Lighters, chrome top with clear plastic bottom. Inside clear bottom is usually fishing fly, small dice, Golfer, Bowler, etc. Send description w/prices. Nate Barragato

Pocket & table lighters w/names of Navy Ships on them. Jack Comins

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Printed Once A Month
For Lighter Collectors

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