



Sept 15 2025 Vol. XLII, No. 5

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

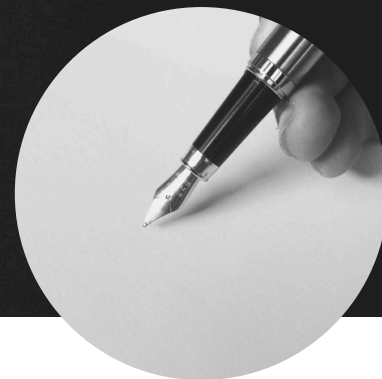


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FOUNDED IN 1984 - THE LONGEST RUNNING
LIGHTER COLLECTING COMMUNITY IN THE WORLD!



Editor's Notes



By Greg Ryman

I'm going to take it upon myself to personally apologize to all of you for the July newsletter and the flat stupid delay in getting it sent. It wasn't really what we should publish. I was upset about the lack of cigarette lighter collecting content and some you had voiced same to me. Taking a step back I've come to the conclusion that this was Judith's *swan song* as she edited all the photographs and by extension the entire newsletter.

I thought it extremely important that the first newsletter after Judith passed be on time. The board member tasked with preparing the September newsletter ghosted two other board members after 9 attempts at contact. So, I stepped in and this is what you get, albeit very late.

Publishing 6 newsletters each year is challenging as we get little support from the majority of you. OTLS remains the oldest cigarette lighter collecting club in the world and we all need to be *real* contributors. Ads, articles or pictures are continually needed. Doesn't take that long to submit to us, does it?

Big thanks to Ramzi Bader and John Engleman for stepping up at the last moment to help me with this newsletter.

Greg Ryman

WELCOME BACK

John Moore
Ron Skiba
Robert Wheeling

WELCOME NEW MEMBER

Laura Villegas

On the Cover

Regens salesman's sample case with various finish options Ca. 1940's

ON DISPLAY

By: Ramzi Bader



Evans Supreme, Banner and Petite ladies lighter counter display Ca. 1950's

Evans Petite ladies lighters counter display, 8 different finishes Ca. 1950's

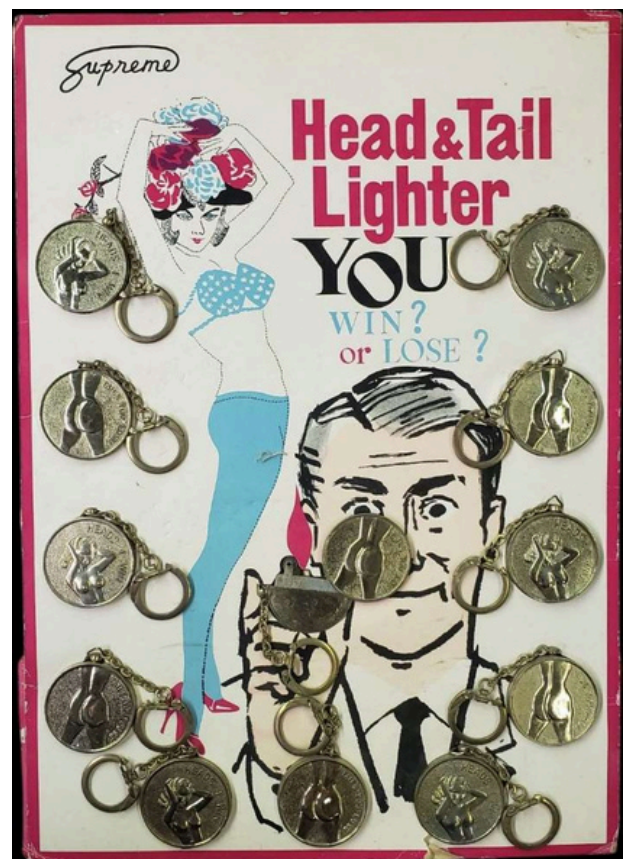


ON DISPLAY

By: Ramzi Bader



Realite counter display with 2 sizes of lighters and various plating and enamel finishes Ca. 1960's



Supreme counter display with sexy key chain lighters Ca. 1950's

ON DISPLAY

By: Ramzi Bader



Evans retail 6 pack combo lighter and cigarette case Ca. 1950's

Same box as above with lid open showing 6 individually boxed lighters



Made in Occupied Japan (MIOJ)



By: Greg Ryman

When I was editor, I tried over and over again to cajole two members who each claimed they were THE experts in MIOJ. I viewed portions of their respective collections and both had real “stuff,” and I’m still hesitant to declare a winner. Alas both have since dropped out of OTLS so that is that.

Made in Occupied Japan (MIOJ) refers to those lighters made from September, 1945 to April, 1952 when the United States occupied Japan. When I view the two current wars in the middle east and Ukraine the devastation from these wars actually pales to the aftermath of WWII Japan. Thousands of bombs and two nuclear ones destroyed the industrial capability of Japan along with people and infrastructure and everything else.

The Japanese people were nothing but resilient and with our help returned to a world producer of first-class products.

MIOJ cigarette lighters are mainly known today for their novelty, while they did produce a few that were run-of-the mill looking Ronson look-a-like table lighters but to me, no other novelty lighter can hold a candle to MIOJ. The variety of MIOJ novelty is vast. Every time I think I’ve seen them all another pops up and blows me away.

While there are numerous manufactured cigarette lighters older than MIOJ and have stood the test of time do not discount MIOJ’s that are now some 73-80 years old and many are still functional and in great condition. Where Ronson produced elegance and while a multitude of their products could broadly be thought of as novelty, MIOJ lighters were more whimsical and more plentiful and way more diverse.

When I decided to do this article, I thought no big deal but then I started admiring my lowly collection and there is no way to showcase them all as this newsletter doesn’t have room.

There are baseballs, footballs, light houses, knights (of course), typewriters, radios, clocks, automobiles, bird cages, rockets, fans, pianos, sewing machines, lamps, guns, gas pumps, microphones, airplanes and the list goes on and on. My favorites remain those lighters where at first glance don’t look like lighters as the mechanisms are somewhat hidden. I’m pretty sure I’ve walked by 100’s if not more of the real novelty MIOJ’s by ignoring them thinking they were something else. I pay closer attention now.

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Made in Occupied Japan (MIOJ)



Continued from previous page

By: Greg Ryman

The pictures on the following pages are all MIOJ. These are, I think, some of the more hard-to-find lighters and if found, a premium is paid for acquisition.

If any of you have MIOJ's in your collections please do not hesitate to share with the rest of us as our newsletters continue to be in need of submissions.



Continued next page

Made in Occupied Japan (MIOJ)



By: Greg Ryman

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These 6 examples are a very small example of the variety of MIOJ's.

"SHOT and KILLED by a Ronson Lighter!"



Contributed by: Greg Ryman

In the November, 1956 issue of Confidential Magazine there was an article entitled, "SHOT and KILLED by a **Ronson Lighter!**"

Here with is article in its entirety.

"Two squad cars of police had raced into a Los Angles tenement district to break up a 'rumble' between rival gangs of young, tough hoodlums. Having averted the pitched battle, the cops lined the boys against a wall and made the usual frisk for 'zip guns,' switchblade knives and similar weapons.

One cop was automatically handing cigarettes and a lighter back to a tough he'd searched thoroughly when the policeman's hand stopped in mid-air. There was nothing wrong with the cigarettes. But the lighter hefted like it was full of lead, far too heavy for the job it had originally constructed to do. And a quick inspection there under the street lights brought confirmation of the cop's suspicions.

Once and inexpensive, stock model Ronson, it had been converted into a vest pocket pistol. And the grim truth is that more than a few slayings may eventually be linked to this miniature murder weapon.

For beyond turning up the fact of its existence, the investigation also revealed the exact blueprints for construction of tis innocent looking killer have been peddled all over the country---for a \$1.00--- each-by a New York firm operating from hole-in-the-wall offices not far from the heart of Times Square.

With the plans in hand, making a 'lighter gun' is entirely too simple for such artful minds as tye teen-age inventors of 'zip guns' and other homemade death-dealers. The major item is an ordinary 'push down' type of lighter, such as the Ronson and other similar makes.

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“SHOT and KILLED by a Ronson Lighter!”



Continued from previous page

Contributed by: Greg Ryman

The top assembly is removed and---in place of the wick holder---a tube of brass or hard steel is inserted, running from the bottom to the cap of the lighter, then then the cotton is removed from the fluid compartment, which is filled with molten lead and allowed to harden.

The 'trigger' on this pint-sized passport to eternity is a piece of spring steel, welded to the bottom on one end. At the other end of the steel piece is a firing pin made of a machine screw which has been filed to a sharp point.

With the top replaced, it looks like any other lighter at casual glance. Now, however, it is a murder weapon.

The brass or steel tube is a snug fit for a .22 short bullet---plenty good enough to kill. To use the 'gun', its operator flips the cap up just as you would if you were getting a light. With his thumb, he pulls back the spring steel 'trigger' and let's go.

What alarms police in Los Angeles, New York and other big cities is that the contraption is so new that officers in many other communities have never heard of it. They might easily search a shooting suspect, hand him back his cigarettes and 'lighter' and be unaware they were returning the very thing they were hunting for.

But a smart cop who's onto this new gimmick can spot one of the converted lighters easily by the fact that it is suspiciously heavy---due to the lead in it---and by the firing mechanism, which protrudes slightly beyond the bottom.

Beware Your Next Light

How many blueprints of this cigarette 'lighter gun' have been distributed is anyone's guess, but they undoubtedly number in the thousands."

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“SHOT and KILLED by a Ronson Lighter!”



Continued from previous page

Contributed by: Greg Ryman

The threat of this ingenious murder weapon is becoming so great, the Los Angeles police have issued a confidential departmental bulletin, warning all officers of its existence.

Copy approaching and searching hoodlums will do well to bear one thing in mind.

Make sure your next light isn't your last."

Excerpts from Los Angeles Daily Police Bulletin

...This department publishes the following information regarding a deadly weapon, now in circulation in this country, made out of a push-down cigarette lighter...

It is the desire of this Department to familiarize all officers and local departments with the basic operating procedure of this weapon as well as its distinguishing features... The lighter used must be of the push-down type such as a Ronson or similar make, in average condition...

Anyone found in possession of this weapon is in violation of Section 12025 Penal Code, or Sections 5821, 5841, and 5851, Internal Revenue Code.

All law enforcement agencies are requested to notify this Department, attention Murphy and Creasy, Robbery division, or the Alcohol Tax Unit, Federal Building, Los Angeles, if information is available regarding the manufacture, sale or possession of these weapons.

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"SHOT and KILLED by a Ronson Lighter!"

Articles

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Contributed by: Greg Ryman

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RONSON LIGHTER (Continued)



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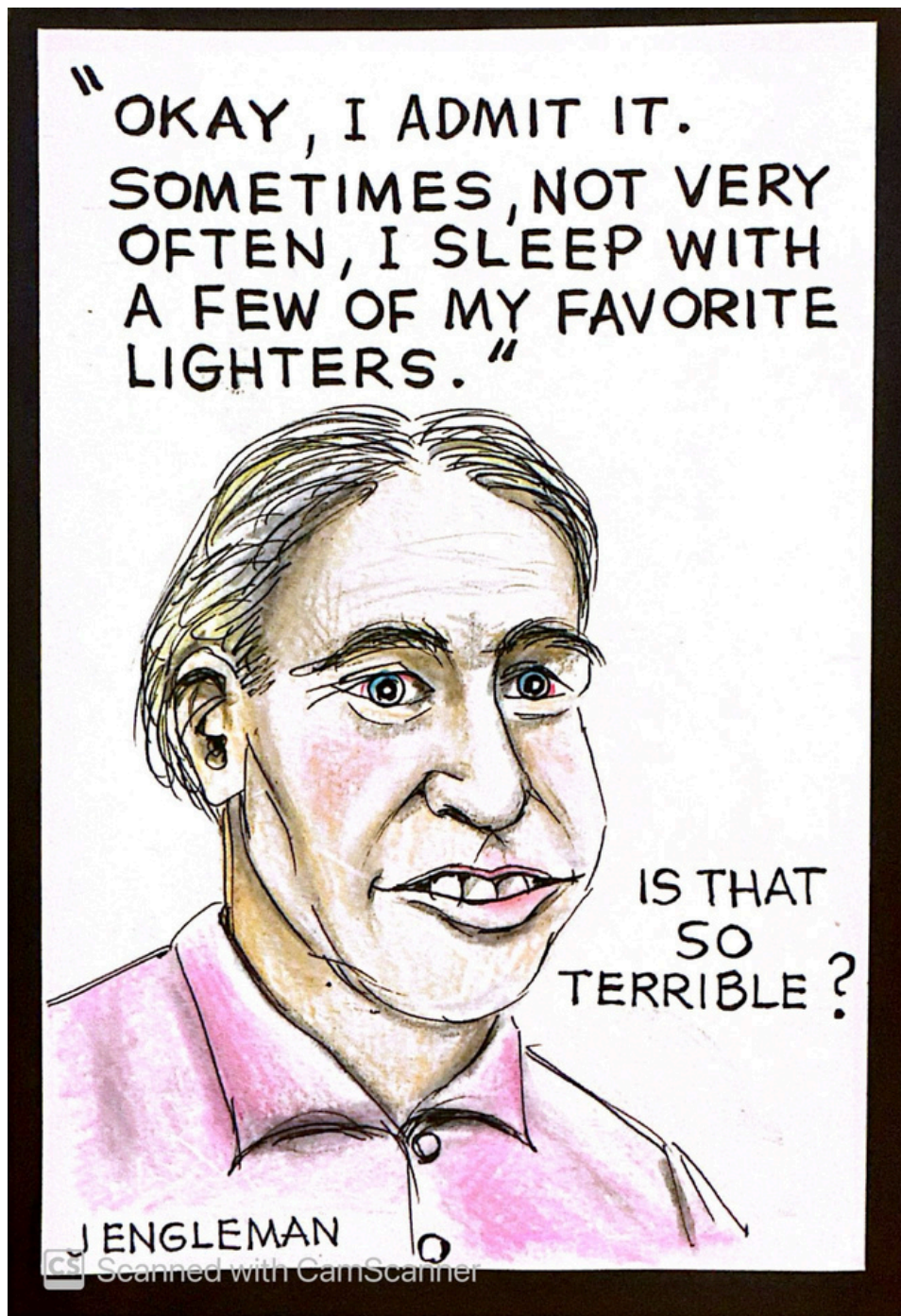
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**Loaded and ready to fire! Ron-
son lighter, transformed into
a vicious, vest-pocket pistol.**

never heard of it. They might easily
search a shooting suspect, hand him
back his cigarettes and "lighter" and be
unaware they were returning the very
thing they were hunting for.

Caricature

Contributed by John Engleman



JUDITH SANDERS



The recent loss of our primary founder is a blow to OTLS. When she met the late John Cuevas they immediately bonded over collecting cigarette lighters. In the early eighties finding someone sharing our collecting passion was purely by luck. John noticed that she was beyond passionate and suggested to her that she should start a cigarette lighter collecting club. She took his suggestion and formed On the Lighter Side with three founding members. John, Judith and one other collector, a woman. Judith was humble and always wanted John to share as co-founder even though his suggestion was his main contribution to what followed. But that was Judith.



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JUDITH SANDERS



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For the first 20 years of OTLS it was a one woman show. Judith was a real multi-tasker as she was the editor, mailer, printer, record keeper, secretary, treasurer, et al. And she did this while being employed and raising a son as a single, divorced mother. Few could do what she did 40 years ago, man or woman. Almost single handedly she was able to grow the club from the original 3 to 997 paid members. Then came eBay and membership evaporated by the hundreds. Not to be deterred but realizing our collecting community was changing rapidly she asked for volunteer members to serve as board members to take pressure off her.

Unlike today, members actually stepped up and we've had a series of board members, chairman's and presidents. Humble Judith was satisfied with being club secretary and taking a back seat and eventually holding no position. The club, while noticeably reduced remains the longest cigarette lighter collecting club in the world. All due to Judith and her passion. Her self-proclaimed title as the "Lighter Queen," was well deserved.

From the beginning to the end, she was all about our members and treated all of us as extended family. She was deeply affected by any members passing or change of status. A very rare attribute.

Annual conventions/shows remained a highlight of her life. She loved seeing old and new members. She was in her element being among fellow cigarette lighter collectors. While our conventions/shows are noticeably smaller she was still over-the-top excited to attend. Until recently she was the convention chair and as such did all of the extensive work necessary as our conventions/shows just don't materialize without lots of time and effort. Members viewing the last Newsletter can easily see Judith's footprints as it was all about the attendees. Her people.

Not surprisingly Judith loved figural lighters and any lighter that showcased people. She never confined herself to one area and collected a variety of lighters. There is NO collector as well known world-wide as Judith Sanders. She cannot be replaced in the cigarette lighter collecting world. Vast numbers of collectors have amassed far greater collections but no one can surpass her stature.

Knowing Judith, she would not want our club to fold after her passing. There are enough of us that see value in what she started and want to continue OTLS.Honor HER!

Submitted by: Greg Ryman

Classified Ads

FREE

Wanted: Unfired 1988 OtLS Convention Lighter. Please contact Glenn @ glenngrush@aol.com

Remember there are still a few of the 2024 Convention Lighters for sale! Please order from Rob Giarretta. Rob523@aol.com

OTLS Convention Lighters for sale. Lot of 40 lighters, 1st thru 36th conventions, plus 2 non-convention years, a second finish from 1998 convention and an OTLS Original 1932 Replica Zippo. Selling as one lot. Contact Kenneth Burk at klburk@att.net

Interested in buying Mint in the Box Flat Advertising Lighters (that I do not currently have). Please send photos and prices to John Elster at Jresce@aol.com

Need Zippo lighter Boxes. Boxes made before 1986. Not plastic, only the paper or cardboard boxes. Call me at 609-805-8386 or email/text at smstolar3@gmail.com

Zippo insert repairs, cams and cam springs, flint tube replacement, and flint wheel replacement. Each repair replacement is \$ 5.00 per item. Return postage also required. Tom Prylinski 2123 e. 42nd. St. Erie, PA 16510. Email Pyrotjp@twc.com.

WANTED: Nudie lighters/naughty lighters, adult lighters, joke lighters, the naughtier the better! Contact Bill at (323) 829-9191.

700 Zippo Lighter collection for sale. Years range from late 1950's to 2000's. Some sets included. I am not interested in cherry picking but very interested in someone buying them in bulk for re sale and they'll be priced accordingly. Contact Kenneth Burk at klburk@att.net.

The Thorens Lighter Book is Here

This book is a Hard Cover, full size Coffee Table book with over 200 high gloss color pages containing over 400 pictures and illustrations, weighing a hefty 3.8lb . This is a must have for all lighter collectors, Art Deco lovers and all those who appreciate history.

Priced at \$175 per copy plus \$15 s/h in the USA.S/H costs to other countries will be quoted upon request. To order your copy please email ramzi@etp-inc.com or call/text (909)407-0248

NEXT ISSUE: Nov 15, 2025
SEND ADS BY: Oct 20, 2025
OTLSNEWS101@GMAIL.COM



On The LIGHTER Side
International Lighter Collectors
Founders: John Cuevas
Judith Sanders

| | |
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| Karen Politi | Social Secretary |
| Rob Giarretta | Treasurer |
| Tina Pinedo | Digital Coordinator |

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Rob Giarretta, Tina Pinedo, Bill Calkins, Greg Ryman

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