

# MUEHLBAUER: THE COLLECTION



## *A Trip Down Under*

You must know I love going 'Down Under' because in late November I made my way *from* the stormy coast of Oregon *to* Australia for my 5th (or was it 6th?) trip to that great country. Say "STR-EYE-L-yuh."

The 'stated reason' was to buy some outstanding pieces for my (now tiny) carnival glass collection from a world-class collection over there. But the real reason was that I just love the good-natured Aussies, their sense of humor, hospitality, and most especially, their love of life!



It was a very hurriedly put-together adventure prompted by a notice of the sale of approximately 150 pieces from the collection of some of my friends. Several (three?) years ago, when I visited and was so fortunate to have met many collectors that I had not previously met, and see their outstanding collections, I was awe-struck by the 'quality' of this particular collection.



When I use words like "quality," or "high color" with reference to carnival glass, I almost certainly am talking about the one thing that brings all of you to be reading this --- iridescence! There are/were few collections in Australia, or anywhere for that matter, that match the 'top-to-bottom' outstanding iridescence exhibited in this collection.

I made up a 'Christmas List' of 6 or 7 pieces when I visited before that I was particularly taken with. But alas, Santa's GPS navigation system must have gotten shorted out by our constant winter storms here on the Oregon coast, and so none of those 6 or 7 pieces made it down my chimney! When I saw 'the sale notice' in one of the newsletters, I wrote a letter inquiring if "**my**" pieces had made it to the for-sale list.

Let me digress a bit here. While these particular collectors have indeed made it to the *modern era* with respect to driving an automobile, having electricity and indoor plumbing, they are a bit old-fashioned in NOT having a computer or even a digital camera! So the ability to instantaneously communicate and share photos via email is something we could not do.

This, coupled with recent health problems that I and my lovely bride, Jan, have had, contributed to several of 'my pieces' being sold prior to the point at which I picked up my phone and tried to telephone these nice folks. That too turned into an adventure! By the time I figured out how to dial Australia with my cell phone (that to this very day totally confuses me!) starting with a "+" sign, then a "country code, then..... (i.e. + 61 8 1234 5678); well, more time had passed. When I finally heard something on the other end of my phone, it sounded like a cross between a male koala bear in heat and Marlene Dietrich! I mean low guttural sounds --- very sexy! My good friend was VERY sick! As noted, my original "Christmas List" had already been raided of a few pieces, but this nice lady and I still managed to hammer out a verbal agreement on several of 'my' remaining pieces.

And that's when the fun began! These folks had not previously sold many pieces of carnival glass, especially to 'overseas' buyers, so the prospect of currency exchanges, money transfers, double-box packing, insurance and shipping loomed as large obstacles. This is where my wonderful life-partner stepped in. Jan (who was my travel agent when I first met her --- and in the travel business for 25+ years) said, "Don't be discouraged. You know you want to go 'over' and pick up the glass and visit your friends again! Let's see what we can do." **Love her!**

Of course, *she was correct*. I really did want to make at least one more trip *Down Under* and because of the significance (spell that v-a-l-u-e!) of the glass in question, it made a lot of sense (kinda) for me to come over and personally inspect the glass before finalizing any kind of a deal. That way I could either pack and ship the glass myself, or hand-carry it back on the airplane with me.

Ahhh, see how easy it is for me to justify some crazy things when it comes to carnival glass! And I know that I am most-certainly the only CG collector in the whole wide world who does things like this. **Ha, ha, ha!**

Jan and I are great believers in Frequent Flier Mileage programs offered by some credit card companies. We have traveled to South Africa twice, to Australia multiple times and to carnival glass conventions (me!) and all over the U.S., all on Frequent Flier miles. The deal with FF programs is that there are very few seats on each flight that are available for FF passengers --- I don't know how many exactly, but I'd guess no more than 3 or 4 on an airplane that seats in excess of 400 total! So what do you do with that challenge? **Right!** You get your FF reservations faaaaaar in advance - like 8 months to a year if possible!

Obviously, that option was not available to me. I had to leave "next week!" Well, because I had been a very, very good boy this past year, Santa consented to give me my Christmas present a bit early in the way of round-trip tickets from LAX to SYD to MEL, all on Frequent Flier miles! Alas, there were some minor inconveniences - like having to limit the trip duration to just a bit longer than a week (couldn't find a 'FF-seat' for the return flight); having to purchase (with *real money*) return tickets PDX (Portland) to LAX, and MEL to ADL, etc. But as I said, having an ex-travel agent wife made these inconveniences easy to overcome (*all for the sake of a few pieces of colored glass!*)

So just about 10 days after I spoke to that sexy young (80+ years young) thing by phone, I was heading to the Portland airport. To be honest, I was mentally holding my breath until the massive Boeing 747 lifted off the tarmac from LAX for the *cruel* 14 hour 20 minute, non-stop flight to SYD. I note this as a form of an apology to those in Oz who 2 days later picked up their jangling phones only to hear, "Hi. This is john muehlbauer. Can I stop by tonight and take you out to dinner?"

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I'm going to cheat a bit here. I'm going to share some thoughts, illustrated by pictures I took on previous trips to Australia.

Prior to the trip used as a basis for this article, Jan and I traveled to Sydney with friends to run the Sydney Marathon. After the marathon we all traveled north to the *Australia Zoo* near Brisbane.



Those TV devotees may have heard of the *Australia Zoo* because of it's late, great founder, Steve Irwin, AKA *The Crocodile Hunter*. I was a big fan of Steve, not because of his 'over the top' portrayal of what some of us think as a typical Australian, but because of his obvious zest and love of life. But I digress.



As luck would have it, the Sunday that we visited the *Australia Zoo* Steve and his wife, Terri, (from Eugene, Oregon --- **Go Ducks!**) were there and 'did' the show themselves. They were there because the day had been proclaimed a holiday to honor Australian firefighters. Anyway, here's some pics of Steve 'doing his thing' with some of his namesakes. The "Big Fella crocodile" is named "Agra" and is meaner than a snake on a hot tin roof!



Jan and I also like birds. We are not hardened "birders" per se, but if you have any interest in birds whatsoever, the birds in Australia are a definite treat. Unfortunately, they are also very shy so I have to cheat and show you pictures taken of birds and animals that were in a Wildlife Park north of Victor Harbor as well as the *Australia Zoo*. I'll start with my favorite Australian picture *of all time* of three baby Kookaburras:





Did you spy the "Joey" in mom's pouch in the center photo? Victor Harbor is south of Adelaide about 70 Ks and is the home of two of my very best Australian collector friends, Anne and Allan Blanchard:



I'm sure some of you know the Blanchards from their trips here to the US for various CG conventions. Delightful people who have opened their hearts and their home to me twice now. I have known the Blanchards for quite a few years. I met them when they lived in Perth, Western Australia. Allan was a member of the Australian Parliament and represented Western Australia. At one point he was what is the equivalent of our *Speaker of the House*. Anne is a retired college professor. As I said, they are sincerely nice people! Oh, yes --- they have a magnificent collection and probably more water sets that any other collection in Australia:





Back to 'real time!' As it seems happens almost every time I go to the Land of Oz, I managed to see some rare and unusual glass, this time at a non-collector's home. I'd guess you could call this person a "picker." The two pieces were the 2nd known green Horse Medallion rose bowl. Like the 1st one, which I was lucky enough to have brought back from New Zealand, this one was equally unattractive. It was totally silvery on the outside and totally uniridized inside! Unlike the first one, which had been etched with something about the World's Fair some eighty years ago in Christchurch, NZ, this one had no such etching. However, the current owner said this one had also come from NZ. I tried to get him to price it, but got the, "I don't know what it's worth" response (standard for people who have no intention of selling then and there.)



I got the same answer when inquiring about a rather ordinary looking Wishbone bowl. I'd say the iridescence was a "4" at best. But what made this bowl a possible winner on the resale market was that it was on sapphire base glass! Kinda fun to 'find' these kinds of pieces even if you can't manage to get them bought.

In summary, I came home with 5 nice pieces; 4 for my 'new collection' (now up to an astounding 33 pieces!) and one for resale. Because of the rushed nature of the trip, I wasn't able to visit as many of my friends over there that I had hoped. Some were sick, some just had other things going on.





But that's just the start of a self-justification for **another trip**, isn't it?!?!

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