

## MUEHLBAUER: THE COLLECTION



### *Father Gabriel's Fabulous Collection* by John Muehlbauer

The fabulous collection of Father Gabriel "Burney" Talley, that I was most fortunate to have been allowed to purchase in 2001, provided my personal collection with many beautiful pieces of carnival glass. Many of these will be shared with you carnival glass collectors during this year's HOACGA auction. I thought it might be fun to chronicle the process that led to my obtaining this outstanding collection.

First of all, let me give credit where credit is due. Burney's collection at the time, was significantly enhanced by the sharing of the passion of the hobby, as well as great pieces of carnival glass, by Burney's sister, Norene, also of New Mexico. Many of us had known Norene for at least as many, if not more, years than Burney himself. Norene was known in some circles as "Mrs. Imperial," because of her love for, and her fabulous collection of, Imperial carnival glass. How many of you have owned two emerald green Four Seventy Four punch sets at the same time? (Tom, you don't count!) I mean, come on!

I have known these CG collecting siblings for many years. When I first started collecting in the 70's, I both bought from, and sold to, these two pioneers of the hobby before I even knew they were related! So when I was able to buy Burney's glass in 2001, it was like I was buying a collection and a half; the half coming from Norene.

Norene is gone now, bless her soul, but I was most fortunate to have visited her and her husband's fantastic ranch high up in the New Mexican De Cristo Range. It is beautiful country, teeming with pronghorn antelope and elk. Over the years, Norene and I traded some glass back and forth. One piece that I coveted more than any other was her out-of-this-world emerald green Imperial Grape water pitcher. Whenever I would genuflect in front of this phenomenal piece and beg Norene to sell it to me, her response was always the same, "I promised Burney first choice on that." I had two thoughts; 1) maybe Burney will just stop collecting before she decides to part with the pitcher, and 2) darn Burney! Here is a picture of the gentle man, Father Gabriel Talley himself, holding 'my' pitcher:



Because Burney has a collection of 'adopted' neighborhood cats, he covered the front of his main display area with sheets of 1/4" clear plastic. That kept the cats from playing amongst the brilliant 'colored trees.' But it also kept collecting friends like me from being able to fondle many pieces that I would have liked to. When we got to the point of deciding if we would be able to 'do a deal,' I had to make up a list of specific pieces from photographs, my memory (Ha!), and multiple phone calls to Burney. However, in the end, it worked out nicely as there was very little 'damage' in Burney's collection, and what there was, Burney's incredible memory allowed him to just tell me when it came to individual pieces. Here's the 'cat-proof' display after it had been de-clawed:



In the same room, I'll call it the "display room," Burney had one wall almost covered with red pieces of carnival glass. I think there was a total of 29 red pieces in the collection.



While I had to sell off many of these, I managed to retain the fabulous red Chrysanthemum (and Windmills) ruffled bowl, an equally great ruffled Coin Dot bowl, the Chesterfield lemonade water pitcher and tumblers, a couple of Vintage bowls and two "best I've seen" Waterlily and Panther footed saucers. These pieces have already been profiled in the article I wrote and that Brian and I shared with you as a Christmas present in December.

Burney's "parlor" contained many of the 'super-stars' of his collection and the auction. There was a section of a wall where Rose and Poppy Show bowls hung.



On another wall, Burney had hung his chop plates, including the three Chrysanthemum choppers featured in the auction, and some other out-of-this-world treasures.



To be technically accurate here, the Chrysanthemum chop plates were not a part of the 'collection transaction.' Burney had allowed me to buy them, and 'my' emerald green Imperial Grape water pitcher, before we agreed on the sale of the entire collection, not that it makes any difference. You'll get a chance to own all of them. As I told you, 'my' emerald green pitcher came to Burney via Norene, and recent discussions with Burney indicate the Chrysanthemums might have as well.

You keen-eyed collectors surely noticed the marigold, candy-ribbon edged Goddess of Harvest bowl. Herein lies a sad tale. This picture was taken a year or two before I bought Burney's collection. Late one evening I received a call from Burney to the effect that this treasure was missing. It was the single piece missing, as far as Burney could tell. Obviously, the thief was a knowledgeable carnival glass person. The police were notified. After a week or so, it came to light that Burney's long-time house cleaner had let a collector in who said he would wait for Burney to come home from work. After a period of time, this person told the house-cleaner, who had left him alone whilst cleaning in other rooms, that he had changed his mind and decided not to wait. Burney couldn't be sure exactly when the bowl went missing, but was sure it had been only on the order of a few days or a week. The 'person of interest' was the only knowledgeable CG person in the house during that period of time. Bottom line -- the bowl is still missing and no arrests have been made to date. Keep an eye out for it. To my knowledge, it's the only marigold CRE Goddess of Harvest known.

Forgive the photos, if you will. They were all taken with my old Sony Mavica camera from the digital camera Bronze Age. My son nicknamed the camera my "boat-anchor camera" because of it's large size and heavy weight.

Also in the "parlor" were two china cabinets. Unfortunately, I don't have a photo that shows the larger of the two cabinets in total. But I do have a picture of some of the 'superstars' that cabinet contained. Again, I wish I would have had the resources to allow me to keep all of these treasures.



To use some more modern slang, "Heavy stuff, Dude."

As you can see, guarding 'my' emerald green Imperial Grape water pitcher in this "treasure-house" china cabinet, were two blue tankards that clearly got my heat a'beating -- a Strawberry Scroll and a Lily of the Valley -- two of the rarest and most desirable water pitchers in all of carnivaldom! As previously noted, because I have yet to win the lottery, I was forced to part with many pieces that I dearly would have liked to have been able to keep in order to fulfill my obligation to Burney. Unfortunately, these two spectacular pitchers were among those that had to go.

Hiding away behind the Strawberry Scroll, was an AO, or nowadays "lime green opal" Rose Show plate. Why, oh why did I let the plate return to it's previous owner in Freeport, Illinois?

And what more can I say about the sapphire Oriental Poppy tankard? It's been featured in previous articles and pardon me if I borrow a bit of 'proper' British vernacular, it is quite simply "over the top." Neatly sneaking a peek out from behind super-star "Mr. Sapphire," is another diva, the marigold-on-custard Rose Show plate! I had previously owned one of these and so I was bound and determined NOT to let my pauper status convince me to sell this one 'before it's time.' And that time is now!

By now, have you gotten the impression that this collection was an absolute power house? Looking back on these pictures, some or 5 or 6 years later, I realized I should have contacted Wells Fargo for a home-owner's loan in order to have kept many more of these virtually priceless gems. But then, I was SO young five years ago!

The smaller case in the parlor contained another collection of beautiful glass all by itself. On the top shelf were Corn vases and Daisy & Drape vases.



I let the AO D&D go home with my best buddy from Wales and the killer green Corn Vase up to Washington state, but I kept the purple Corn Vase. It's got to be the best there is.



The smaller cabinet also contained some most unusual and rare glass. Among the pieces that we did not include in the transaction were an amethyst Dozen Roses bowl and a couple Rose Pinwheel bowls. Quite frankly I didn't know how to include a fair-market valuation in my price offer to Burney. You can see these pieces on the middle shelves.





Also in this case, was a killer red, and a more-than-killer, purple large Imperial, or Lustre Rose footed bowl. You can see these on the bottom shelf. I sold the red bowl a few years back, but kept the electric blue, "Tiffany colored", large purple bowl. I forgot to ask Burney, but I suspect this bowl also came through Norene's hands. It's definitely a WOW piece of Imperial.



The size of the collection, my Honda Civic coupe, and my checkbook, were such that it took two separate trips to get from New Mexico to Cameron Park, California with the glass. Talk about driving within the speed limit! With the second 'load' I timed my pick-up such that I could attend the SoCal convention on my way home. I must confess that I stayed overnight prior to the convention with Ed and Judy Maxwell. By the time I got to the convention hotel, my Honda was a bit lighter. By the time I left the convention early Sunday morning, it was lighter still!

I could go on and on about different pieces in the collection, but you have already seen quite a few of them in previous articles. You will see the ones that I haven't had space here to profile, at the HOACGA convention. I'm SO hoping that the great man himself may attend, but at this point it's doubtful. If he does, you will have a chance to talk with one of the true pioneers of our hobby.

Thank you so much Burney.