

MUEHLBAUER: THE COLLECTION

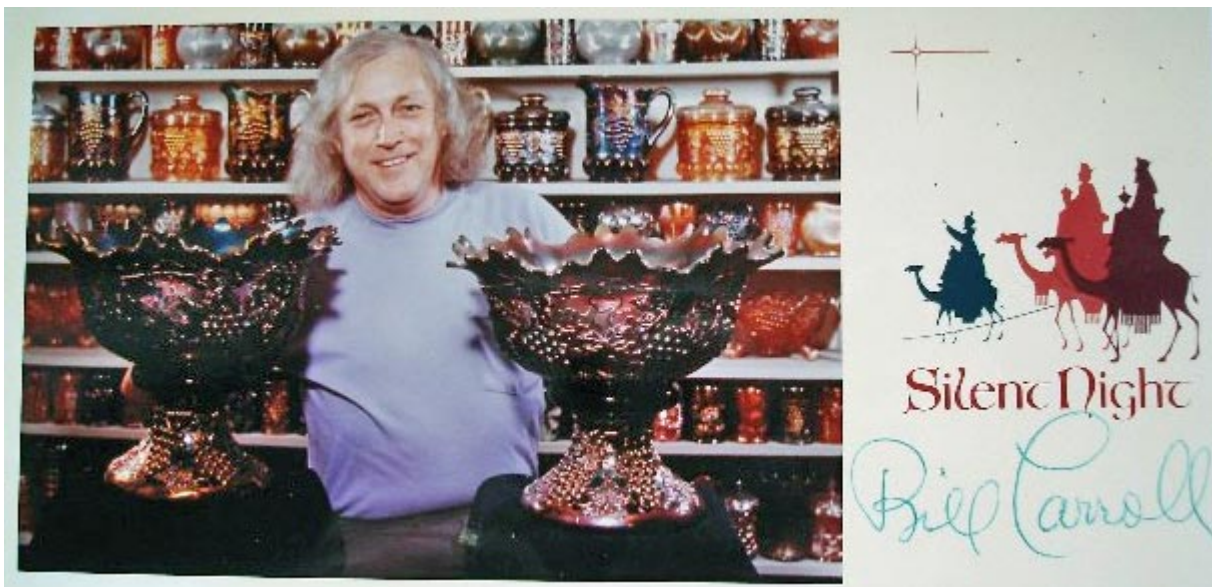


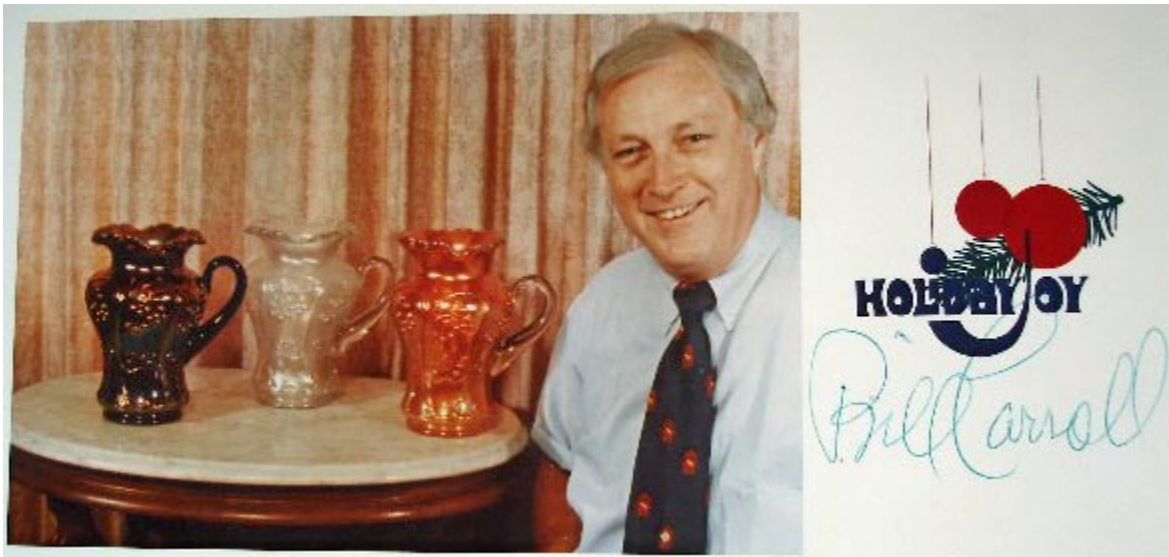
Emerald Green Imperial Grape Water Carafe by John Muehlbauer

Shortly after our auction at the 2007 HOACGA convention, Fred Stone, who had purchased the emerald green Imperial Grape water carafe, came up to me and asked about the provenance of the carafe. I told him it was a fun story and I didn't want to rush the telling of it, promising to write him as soon as I could about it. Jan and I were headed for Hawai'i the following week for 20 days or so, but unfortunately had to cut the trip short. So here we are on the Pacific Ocean again, but now it has a decidedly colder temperature.

Here's the (illustrated) story.

When I first saw the carafe it belonged to one of the all-time great pioneers of our hobby, Bill Carroll. Here's a couple pictures of Christmas cards that Bill sent out each year, one I suspect, while the musical "Hair" was in full swing.





Bill lived not too far from Griffith Park in the L.A. area, where they are currently having major fire problems. He lived in a tiny wooden framed house that was a veritable carnival glass museum. I'm not too sure of the timing here, but I suspect my first visit to Bill's house was in the mid to late 70s.

What a shock it was to walk into Bill's tiny abode. The front door entered directly into his front room which appeared to be wallpapered with carnival glass! Bill had shelving that went from the floor up to the ceiling loaded with CG on all four walls! It was amazing! The shelving was varied in height so that different shaped pieces occupied their own entire shelf. Here's a picture of one wall of that amazing living room. *(click picture for larger version in new window)*

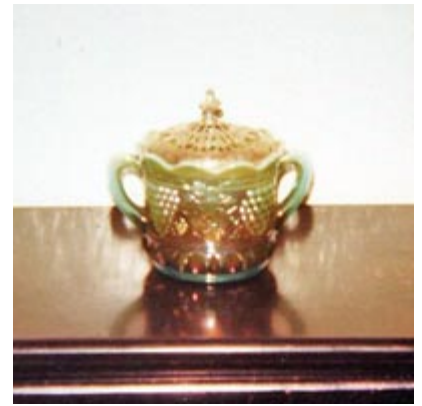


As you can see, water pitchers, G&C open compotes, banana boats etc., all had their own shelves. On each side of his fireplace were more water sets and funeral vases.



(click pictures for larger version in new window)

Bill obviously loved the glass. He owned many rarities. In the 70s, we really weren't so sure how many of this 'n thats were truly rare, but some were obvious. Here's a picture of an aqua opal cookie jar! *(click picture for larger version in new window)* The base was badly cracked (or broken and reglued) and the top was made of some sort of a silver metal, but it was what it was. Wow!



His home had two small bedrooms. Again, floor to ceiling shelving with row upon row of same-shape pieces. In this picture of his spare bedroom you can see some of the water carafes. *(click picture for larger version in new window)*

There was another bookcase, or shelving section to the right of this one, and that's where the emerald green carafe was. The first time I was at Bill's I tried to buy it. Bill readily sold glass from his home/collection. In this instance however, he declined, saying something like, "No, I'd better not. I've never seen one with that kind of color and I don't know if I'll be able to replace it." Ha, I doubt that he would have been able to replace it as well, but if anyone could, it would have been Bill!

Every time I visited Bill in later years, I'd inquire about that carafe and always the response was the same. Bill passed away sometime in the mid to late 80s, I believe. John Woody sold his glass in a two-day auction in St. Louis. What a landmark auction that was! I remember going head-to-head with Don Moore for Bill's ice green Tree Trunk funeral vase. I was obviously in over my head and dropped out in the \$1200 - \$1300 range. I had to be satisfied with Bill's white one. The ice green one is still in the fabulous vase collection of Don & Connie's great friends George Thomas and Dale Matheny.

When the water carafes came up at the auction, John sold them "choice" for the first three or four passes. I was the big winner on the very first go-around, for something under \$200, if I remember correctly. Obviously, I chose "Emmie." The final pass I recall sold for \$45, "X-times the money. Take 'em all." The dealer who bought the last large grouping had half of them resold before the auction was over!

And so ends the saga of the emerald green water carafe. When I sold my collection in 1992, I just couldn't part with it, nor a banged up and epoxied AO Dandelion mug that Bill let me have. The carafe now resides in a good home in Wichita. The epoxied Dandelion is sitting 15' away from me on my shelf, my tribute to a great friend and an amazing carnival glass character, Bill Carroll.