

MUEHLBAUER: THE COLLECTION



Fabulous Florida

For years I've wanted to attend the Florida Sunshine State's club convention. It just hasn't worked out for me, until this year. If I wouldn't have had such a wonderful time I might have considered the club's name as a bit of false advertising. It was cloudy and windy the entire time I was in Florida. I had brought my swimsuit, but brrrr, no way did I venture into the Atlantic, which was right at the Holiday Inn - Cocoa Beach. However the warm and friendly atmosphere of the club members more than made up for any temperature issues. And besides, it still was a lot better than the weather that most of the rest of the country was having!

Kennedy Space Center

The SSCGA treated all pre-registered folks who cared to go, to free entrance to the KSC Visitor Center on Thursday. Nice present! Regular adult admission was \$38.

It was fabulous! I must confess I'm not much of a museum-goer, except for art museums, but I and everyone I talked to, thoroughly enjoyed the experience. We car-pooled over and most spent the day there.



In my previous life as a rocket guy, I had been to the facility before, when we called it *Cape Canaveral* or simply "*The Cape*." I was last there for a Gemini launch, so you know how long ago that was! The present version of the Visitor's Center didn't even exist.

There's tons of things to see and do there and it's easily a two-day experience to take it all in. I went to both IMAX theater presentations. The first one was on the Space Lab, narrated by Tom Cruise and was a highlight for me. It was in 3D and with super surround-sound it was a moving experience. I also joined other convention attendees in a sort of a virtual shuttle launch 'ride' where you sit in a seat in what appears to be an orbiter payload bay and go through the launch sequence --- "*main-engine start, solid booster ignition, lift-off, roll, MECO, BECO, SRB jettison.....*" etc. The seats tilted and the sound and vibration was intense. A great experience.

Here's a few snaps of the Kennedy Space Center (KSC) Visitor Center with interested convention goers. I especially like the one with Mission Specialist Tom Mordini ready to suit up for lift off.



Thank you so much Dee and other SSCGA members for this special treat!

General Comments

Room sales seemed to go well. I spoke with several dealers and collectors who had brought glass for sale and all of them told me they had sold moderate amounts of their wares. One collector had *The High-Priced Spread*; individual pieces priced between \$21,000 and \$75,000! Wow! Not sure which, if any, pieces sold.

We were treated to a pair of seminars on Friday, one by Joan Doty (Right! --- on "Vahses") and one by Greg Warhol candleholders. Both brought wonderful glass to illustrate their points.

The Kid's Auction

Then it was time for the "Kid's Auction" --- a SSCGA specialty. This great program works like a 'real auction' in that the kids (up to 16 years old) get a bid number, \$575 of Monopoly money and have at it. Each kid is assigned a "mentor" to help them through the process. There is a preview, the auction ('called' by Jim Wroda), showing your bid number, payment and checkout. Each child is supposed to buy only up to their \$575 limit, but I suspect some may have gone over their limit. (How real is that?)

All the glass is donated and the 'mix' seemed to be equal parts of contemporary and 'old' carnival. It was great fun, both for the kids and for us voyeurs. There were 9 bid numbers this year, up from 2 last year. The future of the hobby?

Here's the Kids enjoying the Kid's Auctions, bidding (with help from their mentors,) checking out and proudly displaying their new purchases. What fun!



I must say a few words of praise here for the Hospitality Room, ably manned (or womanned) by Jackie Poucher and daughter Mary Lou. There was always hot coffee and juice and enough snacks to take the edge off our hunger pangs. Great job ladies!



The Big Auction

The *Big Auction* preview was held Friday night. As usual, the set-up by the Wroda auction team was outstanding. There were lots of circled numbers in my brochure, as I'm sure there were in everyone's.

The glass was from the giant collection of long-time collectors John & Jeanette Rogers of North Carolina. This is the second sale of Rogers' glass in recent history and a third auction is scheduled for HOACGA for 2009. See why I used the adjective "giant" when describing their collection?

The 'headliner' of the auction was the massive and massively beautiful, 'master' Grape & cable punch set in ice blue. It was and is, beautiful. Kinda the pinnacle of collecting carnival glass in some minds! Since most of reading this know, I won't keep the rest of you waiting. It sold for \$62,000 and is headed to Tennessee. Jim Wroda announced, "I have an opening bid of \$50,000.....who'll give me \$52,000....." and was into his chant.

I watched one prominent bidder who I knew was interested in the set, but never saw him bid. Later I was told the \$50k opener (wow!) was this man's bid. I did not see the other bidders, but picked up the TN gentleman's bid at \$58k. Like I said, it closed out at \$62,000.



The very next piece was one of the reasons I went to Florida. It was a gorgeous and super rare, powder-blue opal Peacocks ruffled bowl. It was advertised as having a "3" heat check " and that was the reason I thought I might have a chance to bring this beauty back to Duckland. Wasn't meant to be. It stayed right there in Florida for \$4,000. I chased it to \$2,000 --- not even close!

I did manage to snag two of my other three 'targets' --- an ice green Rose Show plate with yellow iridescence (what else?) and an aqua opal stippled G&C PCE bowl. The later was intended to be an upgrade

for the one I own, but it was quite different when I put it side-by-side later at home. So I decided to keep them both!

Number 175 was another 'target' of mine after seeing it in the preview. By today's standards, nothing too exciting --- a marigold Daisy & Drape vase. But *OH MY* the color! It was dark, dark marigold top-to-bottom and had the most gorgeous pink overlay ever. I swore (to myself) that it was going to Oregon with me. As most of you know, this is a \$175 - \$300 vase nowadays. I thought to myself, "I'll just blow all these guys away and take that baby home, *even* if it takes \$450 - \$500 to do it." HA! The bidding went up so fast that I can't remember if I got my card up at all! Hammered down at \$800. But you should have seen it! I heard it went to Canada.

In my opinion, there were lots of bargains in the auction, but afterwards John and Jeanette confided that they were pleased with the \$300k bottom-line gross. Lots of money, isn't it?

Here's some random snaps:



Dee & Paul Bekemeier

I caravanned back to the Bekemeier's lovely home Sunday morning. We swapped cars and headed off to the Nielsen's for their Open House that afternoon. More on that later.

The "Bees" had been known to me as advanced collectors for many years. I first became familiar with them while they were buying a lot of Grape & Cable from Charlotte and Gordon Williams of California. That was probably in the 80s. I knew that they had sold off large amounts of G&C in previous auctions as well as some red pieces from their reported large collection of that rare color.



I didn't know quite what to expect when I first walked into their home. Let me tell you folks, they still have loads of red left! As well as some unusual Orange Tree pieces, as well as some beautiful aqua opal, as well as some great antique furniture, as well as You get the picture.



Paul and Dee were terrific hosts and I thoroughly enjoyed my overnight stay and 'talking carnival' with them late into the night.

Nielsen's Open House

Gracious Loretta and John Nielsen hosted a fun open house Sunday for all the convention goers. Loretta had laid out a spread that was large enough for even me to get my fill. Yum!



They have a beautiful contemporary home which features a large full-size swimming pool "under screen." It's kind of like a screened indoor patio that melds into the rest of the house. Gorgeous.

Of course, they had cabinet after cabinet filled with gorgeous carnival glass. The Nielsen's love all carnival glass; 'old,' contemporary, Australian and European. There was something for everybody.



Another rarity in the Nielsen's collection is the only-know sapphire toilet set. Fabulous!



As I mentioned before, they are quite involved in the SSCGA's Kid's Program and put in countless hours in an effort to develop new CG lovers. I applaud their efforts.

Thanks John and Loretta for everything that you do for our hobby.

The Poucher Collection

Armed with maps, hand-drawn maps, loads of written instructions, and still more maps, I headed off east towards the Tampa Bay area. My goal was the Poucher's residence and the legendary collection housed there.

Paul Bekemeier had touted a "cross-town expressway" shortcut. *You got it!* "Shortcuts" usually are for people who traveled the area for years, or are very lucky. I was *neither*, and ended up smack dab in the middle of downtown Tampa! I called Jackie to help me find her place. She did.



About 45 minutes later I pulled up in front of Jackie's and 'the girls' place. 'The girls' are 3 rescued greyhounds, "Tinkerbelle," a tiny lady dog that seems to hold her own amongst her siblings, and "Tom" the cat, the only male resident. I'm not sure of Tom's name, but *Tom* will do.

I was prepared for a great collection, but not as prepared as I should have been! Folks, it's out of this world! Simply stated it is one of the top 3 collections that I've ever been lucky enough to behold. And in almost 40 years of collecting I've made it my goal to see as many collections *around the world* as I can.



It may be the best collection ever. That's really an impossible title because each collection has a 'tone.' Some specialize in rarities, some in iridescence, some in patterns, some in shapes, some in specific base-glass colors, and so on. There really is no way to distill all these variables to quantitatively say "Collection 'X' is the best." So let me say that the Pouchers have amassed one of the 3 (or so) best CG collections I've seen in this country, the UK or Australia. It truly is something to behold.

Jackie and her late husband, Randy, collected anything that was 'good.' They have loads of water sets, punch sets, vases, red and AO pieces, outstanding rarities/whimsies and even *my personal favorite* Millersburg. It's like the Louvre (I'm told) whereby it would take at least 3 days to absorb it all. I'll let my pictures do the 'talking', although I must apologize for the quality of them. Since my last stroke, I have a hard time holding anything steady with my left hand (and my right ain't much better!)

Here's a pretty good picture of a one-ova-kind --- a green, 3n1 edged Farmyard. What makes *this* bowl so special (in addition to the base-glass color) is that the straw, sticks and rocks pattern goes all the way around the background and is not just isolated to beneath the fowl-feet. To my knowledge the only example of this pattern variation yet discovered. Check it out!



Another super rarity, also probably one-of-a-kind, is this fantastic amethyst Diamond & Rib 'jardiniere whimsy.' I'm especially interested in this as several years ago I was in the right place at the right time and was able to purchase a green jardiniere from Randy at one of the HOACGAs. It sold at our 2007 HOACGA convention auction. Neat piece!



Being an aqua opal lover, naturally I was 'taken' by Jackie's "AO China Cabinet."



What's not to like about a Peacock at the Fountain punch set (6 cups)?, but one of the pieces that really knocked me out was Jackie's AO Holly bowl. I was aware of two AO Holly plates, because I have seen them at a Northern California club meeting many years ago. Not exactly 'old hat,' but the 6-ruffled bowl *really* caught my eye. I think part of the attraction was that the 'aqua opal' coloration looked very much like it was done at the Northwood factory. That's NOT the case with most Fenton AO, as most of you know. Killer piece!



I could go on and on, but a person really has to see this collection. If you ever get the chance.....

A beautiful and gracious lady, Jackie and I talked for hours and hours. Can't wait for the next time I'm able to continue the conversation and hopefully, some day view her great collection again.

Summary

As I said, I wanted to 'do' the SSCGA convention for years now, and this year I fulfilled my wishes. It's a *must* for all of you reading this, as are seeing the collections of the Bekemeiers, the Nielsens and Jackie Poucher. Make time!