

Majolica Matters!

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Summer 1999

"ENTHUSIASM UNMATCHED" - THE ELEVENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION REPORT

by Marcia Singman

"I own the FLY, and now I own the Bunny, Honey!" exclaimed C.D. Gann (pictured with wife Cay), one of many unique personalities at the 1999 Nashville Majolica International Convention. Robert Goldberg, our guest speaker on "Appraisals," thoroughly enjoyed the convention saying that we all had "enthusiasm unmatched" and that the vibrant



majolica enthusiasts ever.

My "prom date" Chana Johnson and I had a terrific time from the moment we stepped off Southwest Airlines (with our tummies full of peanuts), to the shuttle ride back to the airport with Cay Gann and C.D., who stated in his southern drawl, "We're headin' back to the barn." As soon as we arrived at the Marriott, we dropped our bags in the room and rushed to the Executive Board meeting. I dragged Chana's new svelte figure kicking and screaming, "I want to eat first!" The meetings were long, but informative and helpful. After a Friday morning meeting, Cheryl Smith and her mom Helene chauffeured us over a stream to Belle Meade Mansion



and to several antiques shops along Highway 100. We had fun chatting and laughing all the way. The evening's delight was MajoliCake and Coffee with Dr. Howard Silby (pictured above). During his slide show, Howard managed to convince us that his albino cat's eyes dilate and that Albino ware is beautiful. His sense of humor set the tone for the entire convention.

"Barter 'n' Buy" on Saturday morning was a big hit thanks to Marilyn Price and Phyllis Ann Hays (pictured top right). I bought a rustic bread platter and sold a set of salt 'n' peppershakers. Bargain items purchased and

sold, we then learned about appraising our treasures from Dr. Robert Goldberg. "An appraiser usually starts out knowing one



thing well and, with me, it was silver. Now, however, I'm more interested in ceramics." To become an appraiser requires both technical competence and "connoisseurship," (looking at two things and knowing the difference between them). The two kinds of appraisals are for estate or gift purposes and for donations. The appraisal has to be defensible by the appraiser since it is highly scrutinized by the IRS, who agrees with only 46% of estate/gift appraisals but 80% of donation appraisals.

Dr. Goldberg's advice is to get references when choosing an appraiser since we need to have trust and confidence in that person. The fee was based on a percentage, but now the fee is based on an hourly or fixed rate. Fees vary from \$75 to \$350 an hour depending on the appraiser's region, competency, and the value of the object. "An appraiser is a researcher. He has a task and completes it." Dr. Goldberg suggests we document our items with photos and videotape. Have you documented your collection? Now's the time!

On Saturday afternoon, MIS members boarded buses to the crafts fair and the antique shows. We got a bit of exercise and saw many



items, but purchases were few. Perhaps we were waiting to go to "Heaven." The evening bus ride through the lovely green hills of Tennessee delivered us to the historic Westin Hermitage Hotel (pictured above). We enjoyed cocktails and a wonderful dinner,

of grilled pork chops topped with black-eyed peas and salsa, greens, cheesy-grits and crème brulee to die for! I tried to act civilized sitting next to the very dignified...and quite handsome (I am allowed to say this as an older married woman) Mr. Nicholas Dawes. I relaxed when dealer John Weld informed us that Nick Dawes was wearing mismatched shoes! After dinner, singing waiter Gregory Washington entertained us while Gerry Leberfeld and Chana Johnson boogalooed behind him. At this point, we decided that Gerry would become the "entertainment chair" for next year's convention.

Some of us thought that Gladys Knight and the Pips might be a hard act to follow. However, Dr. Robert Cluett's (pictured right, with his wife Thelma) historical research and slides on the life of George Jones was informative and eye opening. His excitement for anything by George Jones began with a dish of 'Abbey' patterned ware he saw when visiting the 93-year-old American born widow of George Jones' grandson in Darien, Connecticut. An 1841 census, shown on a slide, revealed that George Jones was a "commercial traveler," a potter's apprentice. His first year's salary was seventy pounds. He received eighty the second year and one hundred the third. For his travelling expenses, he was allotted a guinea a day on the road, and sixteen shillings a day when staying in London. The beginning of his pottery manufacturing business dates from 1862. The business was named George Jones and Sons in 1873 with the crescent trademark added in 1878. His salary at this time was 150 pounds a month, while the average worker earned one pound per week. George Jones had a stroke and died at age seventy in 1893. Dr. and Mrs. Cluett cleaned his gravesite and stated to us: "If you visit his grave, I'm sure he'll be very pleased to see you!" Dr. Cluett revealed that Jones' artistic talent came from Jones' wife's side of the family and that George Jones, though an apprentice to Minton, did not work for Minton. George Jones was an entrepreneur who enjoyed painting country landscapes and won prizes for his greenhouse plants. Dr. Cluett showed us one particular slide of a jug (pictured on page 106, figure 230, in his book George Jones Ceramics) and said: "This is very attractive, but I say this because I own it!" In another slide of a beautiful compote featuring a fox and a duck, he quipped: "I bet the fox gave that duck a bit of a fright!" He also described yet another game dish as one which had a "dead something-or-other" on top. After fielding several thoughtful questions, Dr. Cluett ended his informative and engaging speech.



We all headed for the buses back to the hotel. Unfortunately, I boarded the wrong bus, the infamous bus #2, which had some rowdy off key individuals in the back. For some, it was mildly refreshing; for others, it was Headache #391. The rowdiest was my roommate who had gotten her mo-jo started as a back up singer to Gregory. The freshest talent on the block was 15 year old Tipp City, OH star Celeste Davis, who knew all the words from the 60's and 70's songs of the hippie-dippie generation. Dealer Linda Ketterling from Toledo, Ohio, Wanda Matthes from Plano, Texas, and Teri Stone from Tulsa, Oklahoma chimed in until Bob Price of Belding, MI asked "Were those the brakes or was that you singing?" At the hotel, everything did come to a screeching halt when Celeste, Chana and Gerry tried to crash a wedding celebration but were bounced. Returning to our rooms, I caught a glimpse of the lovely and demure Aviva Leberfeld quietly dancing the "pony" and the "mashed potatoes" down the hall, signifying the end of a delightful evening...our "majolica prom."

The business meeting Sunday morning, before we were all to die and go to "Majolica Heaven," began with announcements from our faithful leader Joan Stacke and the ever-energetic Polly Wilbert keeping us on track. The charming Marilyn Karmason took notes as our competent events' host Phil English and computer whiz treasurer Cheryl Smith made their reports. Chana and I were honored to sit next to such prestigious people. After a plea for pictures and stories for the newsletter, Chana Johnson voiced the new message of the society: "Let's be inclusive of all the many people who love majolica. After all, one person's butter pat is another person's Prometheus vase." It was exactly 10:30 a.m. when we entered Heaven's Gate. We were bowled over by Pam Ferrazzutti's large scale French majolica and greeted by Robert Ruggles', (The Gilded Age Antiques), handsome breakfront full of English majolica. Michael Strawser welcomed us at the door with a gorgeous display for the October auction. All the dealers, well organized by Randi Schwartz, had so much to offer each of us. Majolica Heaven was such a "feast for the eyes" that the Southwest Airlines peanuts were filling enough on the trip home to California. See "y'all" in Wilmington, Delaware, same time next year!



The Silbys - pleased they bought so much, so long ago!



Is that Michael Corleon or Michael Strawser with Robert Goldberg discussing The Family, of Majolica that is!



You both are so dang cute, but we don't know your names! Let us know!



"If I wasn't here, I don't know where I'd be!", touts birthday boy Dr. Moe Wizenberg, right, with Jim Trout of Olathe, KS



The "Woman in Black" Randi Schwartz, left, with Mary Rossi of NYC



The Darling Dearings of Atlanta!



The New Entertainment Chair, Gerry Leberfeld with the lovely Aviva Leberfeld



...and a tribute to Nashville's most famous pair, Dolly!



Martine and Nick Boston of London with Baby Boston on the way!

ELEVENTH ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

by Polly Wilbert

Before the fun begins at Majolica Heaven each year, the last event of our weekend is the Society's Sunday morning business meeting. To encourage attendance, President Joan Stacke warned that only those who were present at the meeting would be admitted to Majolica Heaven. Needless to say, that clever incentive resulted in a full complement of members to discuss our fairly brief agenda.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer/Data Base Manager Cheryl Smith (Scituate, Massachusetts) gave the treasurer's report, which is published for your information in this issue (Statement of Revenue and Expenses).



Board Members, left to right: Marcia Singman, Marilyn Karmason, Joan Stacke, Phil English, Cheryl Smith, and Moe Wizenberg

Museum Exhibit: Joan Stacke (New York City) reported on the Society's museum exhibit project. Joan and Phil English (Baltimore, Maryland) have arranged a meeting in New York with a curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art to discuss the exhibit. To date, the Dallas Museum of Art and the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore have expressed interest. The Philbrook Museum in Tulsa will also be approached about their possible participation. Joan, Phil, and Gerry Leberfeld (New York City) will continue to work on this project and will keep us updated on its progress.

Technology: Cheryl Smith noted that a central phone number is being established with recorded information and that the Society now has an e-mail address: majsoc@erols.com. She also reported that a Society Web site is being developed. A URL address is being obtained and several members have volunteered to work on the structure of the site. A show of hands was evidence that almost everyone at the meeting uses e-mail. This was a dramatic increase over only a few users "on-line" two years ago.

Future Meeting Sites: Annual Meeting Chair Phil English led a discussion about sites for our annual meetings in 2000 and 2001 which ranged with enthusiasm for cities such as Dallas, New Orleans, and Charleston. It was agreed that having a meeting in the East every other year has value in keeping the meeting accessible to the greatest numbers of members and minimizing wear and tear on the meeting's organizers. Concern about keeping costs affordable -- especially the hotel rate -- was also expressed. There is strong support for holding the meeting in Atlanta. (In fact, some would actually prefer if our meetings were held in Atlanta every year because of the abundance of antique shops.) We will continue to schedule our meeting in the same spring timeframe each year, on either the last weekend in April or the first weekend in May, depending upon when facilities are available and working around religious and secular holidays. For 2000, it was agreed that Phil would look at facilities in Wilmington, Delaware. Wilmington has many things going for it. It is 15 minutes from the Philadelphia airport, a major airline hub. Winterthur, Longwood Gardens, and Chadds Ford are all nearby. If the meeting can be arranged for the weekend of April 29th and 30th, Renninger's Extravaganza in Adamstown, Pennsylvania -- a large country antique show about an hour's drive away -- will also be an option for attendees. Roberta Musser (Wilmington, Delaware) and Bill and Linda LaPointe (Malvern, Pennsylvania) agreed to serve as local co-hosts for the 2000 meeting. Building on the fun and enthusiasm that were evident in Nashville should make next year's meeting a "must" for everyone. We'll announce the details for 2000 as soon as they're available.

Entertainment Committee: One of the surprise highlights of the weekend was an unscheduled hip musical offering with choreography at our Saturday dinner (...you had to be there), Past President Gerry Leberfeld (New York City) will be chairing the entertainment plans for 2000. "Fly Guy" C. D. Gann (Atlanta, Georgia) and Chana Johnson (San Leandro, California) are joining Gerry as back up. Watch out boys and girls, heaven only knows what this trio will be up to for next year!

Regional Meetings: For a number of years, we've been talking about holding regional meetings. This year we're going to make it happen! Volunteers to host a local meeting on Sunday, October 17th, were identified and meetings will be held in: New York City (Thea and Richard Benenson); Baltimore (Howard and Barbara Silby); Boston (Polly Wilbert and Cheryl Smith); Tipp City, Ohio (Sally and Leroy Davis); Shawnee Mission, Kansas (Jim Trout and Moe Wizenberg); London, England (Martine and Nicolaus Boston); San Francisco (Chana Johnson and Marcia Singman); Atlanta, Georgia (the Ganns and Dearings); and Michigan (Bob and Marilyn Price). (Hey, Texas, anyone willing to be our hosts in Dallas?) These initial gatherings will feature a simple format with a brunch/lunch/or tea in a home or meeting room or restaurant and each members bringing a favorite piece of majolica for show and tell. Seed money for the regional meetings will be provided by the Society. Please note, you can attend any of the regional meetings not just the one in your local area. So, if you're going to be in London, go to that one! More information will be forthcoming as the details of each meeting are set.

Majolica Matters: Editorial Board members Chana Johnson (San Leandro, California) and Marcia Singman (Oakland, California) spoke about the need for input for Majolica Matters. Helen Cunningham (Nashville, Tennessee) will serve as Features Editor. Chana emphasized how important it is for all of the Society's members to share photographs of and information about their collections through MM and to contribute articles for it.

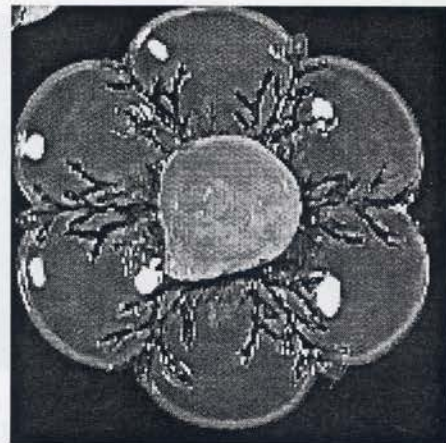
The Nashville meeting was absolutely our best ever in terms of enthusiasm and volunteerism. We welcomed a large number of first timers into the fold and renewed friendships from years past. As Phil English has so aptly said, "Education stimulates the mind and friendship renews the spirit." On to Wilmington in 2000 ...

NO TIME FOR THINKIN'

*Another Majolica Adventure
by Judy Taback*

On one of our frequent visits to Los Angeles, my husband and I visited a favorite dealer who specializes in European antiques. Always inquisitive, and facing a veritable mountain of recent acquisitions at the entry, I asked if he had any majolica, in particular, Minton or George Jones. The response was that there was really nothing there. He had been "cleaned out" by a dealer who was looking for George Jones pieces, but that I was welcome to look at the "leftovers" in an armoire at the rear of the store.

We made our way to the rear - not an easy task as there was SO much stuff that had not been put away as yet. We found the armoire, opened it up and peered at the eight or so pieces on display. *And there it was* - the pink George Jones figural shell oyster plate with the raised shell in the middle and in mint condition (pictured at right). My heart raced, but there was no price on the plate.



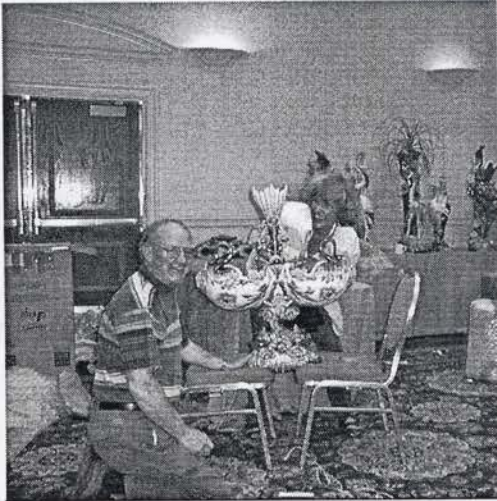
Once I regained composure, I took the plate, as well as two other pieces, to the front of the store and asked the prices. I hardly heard what he said about the other two pieces but I did hear \$140 for the oyster plate. Guess what? *There Was No Time For Thinkin'* about it. I could barely write the check; we made some small talk and headed out the door. Unfortunately, or fortunately, depending how you look at it, that's not the end of the story. Six months later, in need of money, I contacted a dealer friend and sold the plate. That dealer sold the plate at Majolica Heaven to another dealer who sold it to a long time client for \$1,000.

I encourage everyone to check out every nook and cranny when you are shopping for majolica. Keep reading your books to learn who made what and *NEVER* accept the word of anyone, not even an antiques dealer. A Minton fountain may be lurking around the corner, so always check it out for yourself. You never know when that elusive treasure is going to be found.

LIFE OF THE ITINERANT TRADER

The Dealer Setup

When we walk into Majolica Heaven, we marvel at all which lies before us. What is it like before the lure takes hold? Here are scenes of what some of our dealers go through several times a year. As Connie Aranosian of Cara Antiques says, "Marcia, it's the life of the itinerant trader."



*Lorne and Pam Ferrazzutti of Toronto,
Canada*



Jerry Hayes of Oklahoma City



*Linda Ketterling of Toledo, OH with
rock 'n' roller Celeste Davis*



Robert Ruggles of Boone, NC



Wilma Murray of Philadelphia, PA



Connie Aranosian of Langhorne, PA



*Charlie Washburne of Chappaqua, NY with
Chana Johnson*



"Mama, please can I have this giraffe?" pleads Celeste Davis



Linda and Bill LaPointe of Malvern, PA, our Y2K convention hosts



Photographer M. Singman says, "Look up and smile!" Walt Richey of Amery, WI replies, "He's [dealer Jerry Hayes] the one who's smilin'!", as Walt writes the BIG check



The Goldbergs, of New Orleans, LA, feeling at home "appraising" the situation



"Three's Company" – but what pleasant company: left to right, Joan Stacke, Chana Johnson and Phil English



"Fly" Boys Gerry Leberfeld and C.D. Gann



Helen Cunningham, center, with Brenda and Donald Wilson of Manton, MI