



Majolica Matters!

THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE MAJOLICA INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY
www.majolicasociety.com

December 2005

Meet our New President

By Carla Benhardt



LeRoy Davis and his wife Sally live in the charming little town of Tipp City, Ohio. They have been married 35 years and have two children, Kit and Celeste. They have been collecting Majolica together for the last eight years. Their interests are English pieces by Minton and Jones. But they also have some wonderful French pieces like their large Massier Rooster and large assortment of French Asparagus pieces.

Their collection of Majolica shows beautifully with their Victorian Era Copper collection. Just visit their home and learn all about the old copper including some very rare molds they have acquired. It's a most interesting tour.

Ask what their favorite piece of Majolica is and you will hear the "Copeland Sloth and Mischief", their George Jones Fox pieces, or the Minton "Lemon" teapot, creamer and sugar. It's just too hard to narrow it down to one.

LeRoy has served on the board as Vice President Annual Meeting Chairman three years prior to his new office of President.

Message from our MIS President

As the newly elected President of the society, I first want to thank the many individuals who have helped form our society into the dynamic organization which it is today. We have come a long way from our humble beginnings, and the future of the society promises to be exciting.

I am excited about the plans that are coming together for our next convention in Dallas. The venue of activities planned for Dallas promises to stimulate any majolica enthusiast. A MIS travel event is in the planning stages (possibly for fall 2006) which should interest many of you.more on that at a later date.

I am also excited as the society goes forward with the development of the Marilyn G. Karmason Majolica Archive Library. Deborah English is taking the leadership in developing an archival library devoted to the Art of Majolica. This should prove to be a great reference library for majolica enthusiasts as well as academic research. We have already received some generous financial and resource contributions from our members to "seed" this project. You will be hearing more about this as we go forward.

I am also excited to see new members join our society, and encourage both new and old members to become involved in some of the workings of our organization. We are all a "bunch of volunteers" and appreciate all inputs and efforts contributed by the membership.

Finally, I want to thank all the current officers and others that contribute their time and talents to see that the society functions and meets the needs of our members. You do so much to enhance the resources and functioning of the society in serving majolica enthusiasts around the world.

LeRoy Davis

SEE YOU IN DALLAS, May 2006!

The Bittersweet Moment **An October Auction**

By Deborah English

Michael Strawser held his semi-annual majolica auction in Hatfield Pa., on October the 28th and 29th. This auction was dedicated entirely to Marilyn Karmason's magnificent collection.



An auction is always filled with preparation



Nicolaus Boston educated bidders on assessment



Bird watchers Tom Gruber & Elaine Widmer



Linda Foley is having fun with pitchers

It was a "don't miss" event for many majolica enthusiasts. According to Michael, bidders attended in person from 26 states, as well as from England, France and Canada. Additionally, there were phone bidders and, for the first time, internet bidding was available through LiveAuctioneers.com and eBay Live Auctions. There were nearly 300 registered on-line bidders.

For those who were in the room, it was an exciting time. Never has there been such a display of important majolica. Marilyn's 669 piece collection ranged from the modest to the monumental, reflecting her many years studying the subject, and also reflecting the way she took each object on its own merits. The collection was mostly English, mostly Minton and George Jones. She also had a wealth of Griffin Smith and Hill. Filling out the rest were examples from all the major English companies and several French pieces.

What held the collection together was an enchantment with the figural flora and fauna that filled the tables. Camels and giraffes stood next to calla lilies and putti. Cows and berries, fish, monkeys and butterflies were all in attendance.

It seemed anything with birds on it would have been a favorite for Marilyn. Holdcroft and Minton Stork and Heron sets were both there. Birds appeared on garden seats and sardine boxes, on jardinières, game dishes, teapots and marmalade boxes. As for flora, she seemed to love that little white flower with the yellow center that appears on plates and strawberry sets. This is not to say that she excluded anything from her gaze, for the collection was deep enough to



accommodate everything. She also had a small but interesting group of modern majolica-related pieces.

The collection was especially strong in English teapots, Game Pie Dishes and most especially, Cheese Bells. The Minton Vulture Teapot was there. It was an extraordinary, perfect example, perfectly painted. The Minton Flat Iron Teapot was also there, along with many of the other major English teapots. Of particular note was the Turtle Teapot, originally thought to be Minton, but revealed that day to be the work of the Dunmore Pottery, a Scottish company. "Dunmore" is a new word for many of us, making this a very interesting discovery.



Dunmore Pottery Teapot

As for the Cheese Bell group: There were no fewer than 24, capped by the famed Minton "Beehive Dome" example. The Minton "Thatched Hut Bee Hive" Cheese Bell was there too. Twice. In the large and the small sizes.



Minton Bee Hive cheese bell from the "Book"



A table of assorted cheese bells



Minton Wine Cistern



T.C. Brown Westhead & Moore Garden Seat

Of special interest to many people in the room were the Minton Wine Cistern with hunting imagery around the base, and the T.C. Brown Westhead & Moore Egyptian Girl Garden Seat. Both are rare.



Friends are the priority before the bidding starts

All 669 pieces sold. Michael Strawser says that buyers in the room accounted for 72% by lot and 87% by sales value. "Absentee bidders represented 8% of lots and 7% of volume. Internet bidders (won) 20% of lots for 6% of volume."

A cursory glance suggests that the Internet bidders competed for the “lower end” objects, which were sold Friday afternoon.

On Saturday, there was hefty competition for a number of pieces, most notably the Minton Wine Cistern and the Minton Beehive Cheese Dome.

The sense of “special moment” permeated the two days. The room was nearly filled to capacity. (Those of you who haven’t been to one of Michael’s auctions would be surprised at how big the space is.) There was lots of conversation, sometimes too much; occasionally it was distracting. The reason for it was real. There were lots of folks who hadn’t been seen around for a while. There was lots of “catching up” to do, along with the conversations about the majolica.

It was especially nice that Rita Smythe could join us from London. We were very pleased to see her.



Rita Smythe (right), of Britannia in London, made the long trip and enjoyed every minute.

Even people who didn’t feel that this was the right time to add to their collections came to see the pieces and to be part of the event. The MIS and Michael sponsored a reception Friday night, in hopes of meeting some new collectors who might like to join the Society. I think we got a new member or two, but we also got to spend some time with members whom we hadn’t met before.

And, of course we talked about Marilyn. I think we all wanted to be part of what she had put together. To have an object that was in the book, to have a piece we remembered her buying...some little key into the scholar and the lovely woman that she was. Seeing the collection all out at once was memorable, and thought provoking. When, at the convention, we happen to visit a collector’s home, we come away with a greater sense of who our host is. Being in

Hatfield that weekend, seeing those pieces all lined up, waiting for assignment to their new homes, we felt Marilyn in the room.



Nicolaus may have a Crab, but smiles prevail

The complete auction catalog is available at www.majolicaauctions.com. A list of prices realized will be available online, as well. If you prefer to have a copy of the Karmason Majolica Catalog, including prices realized, for your library, they can still be purchased for \$25.00. Majolica Auctions: 1-260-854-2859 • info@strawserauctions.com

Photos for this article were by Laurie Wirth-Melliand, Duane Matthes and Majolica Auctions

More information at:

www.maineantiquedigest.com/articles/jan06/majolica0106.htm

“Bidding” Farwell to a Mentor – An Icon in the World of Victorian Majolica

By Wanda Matthes

In October of 2004, Duane and I made our usual trip to Hatfield, Pa. to attend Majolica Auctions. As we were previewing for the Friday auction, in walked our dear Marilyn Karmason and her husband Norty Spritz. I was so delighted to see them since we knew that Marilyn had not been well recently. Marilyn was using a cane. We chatted about the fact that she would have her much needed hip surgery in November and continued to preview the auction items. In the past, we had made a habit of having dinner with Marilyn and Norty after the Friday night

auctions, since we always wanted to stay until the auction's bitter end. Many times we went to a favorite restaurant, the William Penn, located in a nearby town. We made plans to have dinner together later that evening but this time we would meet the other MIS members so that we could all dine together. On Saturday, during the auction, we again spent time together and at the end saw Marilyn and Norty "off". After the usual hugs, Marilyn and Norty headed back to NYC and we started our long drive back to Texas. That, sadly was the last time we saw our dear friend. We did speak briefly with her on New Years' Day 2005. At that time Norty explained to us how really ill Marilyn was.

Duane and I were so privileged to become friends with Marilyn and Norty. We met Marilyn when we attended our first MIS convention in Valley Forge, Pa. I could hardly believe that we were getting to meet "The" Marilyn Karmason and "The" Joan Stake. They were both very friendly but Duane and I both stood in awe of them and kept to ourselves, choosing not to visit Majolica John's (John and Beckie Boraten) collection in Phoenixville or the antiquing trip the group took to Adamstown. Instead, we chose to explore Adamstown on our own. Now we know what a mistake that was. We missed an opportunity to see a great collection and John died before the opportunity came around again. We also missed getting to know other members who were on the trip. Thankfully, we gained some confidence and learned to get involved with other members.

My first real correspondence with Marilyn was to request membership brochures to distribute from my antiques business. I would write Marilyn a note and she would send out a "batch" of brochures by the US Mail which we laughingly referred to as "snail mail". Her instructions were always that I should initial each application. She was keeping track of who was recruiting new members to her beloved MIS! When Duane or I had a question about majolica, we, like collectors from across the world felt comfortable calling Marilyn on the phone. She was always willing to share her knowledge about that much loved ceramic, Victorian majolica.

When Duane and Cheryl Smith presented the MIS website the first time, Marilyn was so excited. It was like the birth of a long anticipated child. She immediately began to send eloquent emails on a near daily basis. We were so privileged to be able to communicate with her at will. Many nights around midnight, an email would arrive from Marilyn. She

became a constant source of learning for Duane and for me.

Several summers ago Duane and I planned a driving vacation to Maine and, of course, had discussed our future trip with Marilyn via email. Marilyn invited us to make time to come to Manhattan and would not take "No" for an answer. We said "Yes" and got to see not only her collection but Jerry and Aviva Leberfield's collection on the same weekend. What a weekend!



Marilyn's custom shelves she called "Majolica Pink"



The "Book" cover and some wonderful friends

Marilyn and I had discovered early in our relationship, our common love for asparagus. Whenever we dined together, Marilyn and I always got a side order of those scrumptious spears and shared them since neither Norty nor Duane felt the same way about asparagus. On that summer morning when we visited her and Norty at their majolica laden apartment, she made a late breakfast for us and, yes, included asparagus!

In October 2005, Duane and I returned to Hatfield for Majolica Auctions. Marilyn's death in April had saddened the entire community of friends, collectors and dealers of Victorian majolica. As word leaked out that Marilyn's collection would go to auction in October, many of us wondered silently. Should all of her wonderful pieces "go" in a single auction? Would the pieces reach their true worth if they all came to market at one time?

Our questions were all answered on October 28 & 29 in Hatfield, Pennsylvania. Collectors and friends from all over the globe gathered on Friday afternoon to preview one of the finest collections of Victorian majolica in the world, Marilyn's own collection. Spine tingling electricity filled the room. People had traveled across the country or halfway across the world in the hopes of purchasing pieces from the Grande Dame's collection. Marilyn's curiosity and joy of collecting was exhibited throughout the room. Her collection contained rare pieces which had not been to market in the US recently or maybe never before as well as a myriad of familiar American and Continental pieces.....She loved it all! Marilyn was truly an icon in the world of Victorian majolica. As collectors, we will forever feel her presence and will treasure the pieces which came from her beloved collection.

Confirmation! The passion for majolica is still alive and well!

Big "D" Hosts the 2006 Annual Convention at the historic Adolphus Hotel

By Gabrielle Ehrenthal

Come on down for a taste of Texas hospitality! Barbeque, Tex Mex and Majolica Fever will abound!

As you already know, the next convention will be held in the magnificent Adolphus Hotel in Dallas, Texas.

The Majolica International Society's 18th annual convention will be an unforgettable experience and since I know all of you are just as curious as I, about other people's homes and collections, we have arranged for a few extremely select homes for you all to visit.

Our gracious hosts and hostesses are all expecting us beginning Friday morning and all through Saturday

afternoon – **five unbelievable** homes all beautifully adorned with varied and exceptionally interesting collections. A true feast for the eyes and soul!



An amazing turtle at Sue John's home



Sue John's inviting garden

In addition, we will be visiting at least one antiques market, however if time permits, we may even do two of them. The Saturday evening cocktail reception and gala banquet with speaker returns to our convention program.



A taste of the Brian Loncar's collection



Lois Miller's gorgeous dining room



One of Lois Miller's many collector cabinets

Please start making your plans and reservations you will be thrilled with the program we have all strived to arrange for you Dallas awaits us with open arms and true Southern Hospitality!

If you need more encouragement, or help with your reservations or arrangements, all you have to do is call me at 516-729-5894.

Happy New Year!
Gabrielle

October's Successful "Meet and Greet"

The Majolica International Society's hospitality room at the Best Western in Kulpville, Pa. after the Friday October 28th session of Majolica Auctions provided and opportunity for members and prospective members to socialize in a very informal setting. Membership chair, Karen Coscia, along with Maryanne Leckie hosted this very successful event.



"Meet and Greet" following the Friday night auction



"Meet and Greet" allowed for intimate conversation and relaxation before the auction's "Second Act" on Saturday morning.

The Swallow and the Dragonfly

By Wanda Matthes



Once upon a time, in the area of Staffordshire England, commonly known as Stoke on Trent, the pottery of George Jones produced a splendid jardinière. The artist for this splendid jardinière chose cobalt blue for the

background, which displays a scene of a swallow and dragonfly amongst lilies and cattails.

The year was 1873. Shortly, this wonderful piece was purchased by a young couple and placed in their home in London, where they raised their family.



A glance at London's Peckham St in 1895

There it proudly stood for many years, sometimes empty and sometimes filled with various forms of flora. As years passed, the owners of this magnificent piece became old and frail. At this point, it was time for the jardinière to live with one of the owners' children, who was now and adult with a family of their own..... They, in turn, placed it in a prominent place, where it proudly stood, sometimes empty and sometimes filled with various kinds of flora.

When this family became old and frail, the swallow and dragonfly jardinière moved again. This time, it

moved to live with a daughter and her family. Now the jardinière's family was very large, with many cousins all over England. As time passed, it was once again time for the jardinière to have a new home within its extended family. Two generations later, it was a gift from this daughter, to a young adult cousin and, his new bride, Gloria.

Again, the jardinière was a focal point in its home, holding plants to brighten the dreariest London day. The year was 1945. Gloria and her husband were guardians of this wonderful pot for sixty years. Gloria says that "It survived wartime London bombings, several house removals plus the attention of my children and grandchildren."

Now as to how the piece came to "live" at our home in Texas....

On our web site, www.emajolica.com we ask site visitors to send us an email for information. Here is the message which I received from Gloria on September 26, 2005.

I have a large Jardinière - Cobalt blue - turquoise interior - decorated outside with water lilies, kingfishers - dragon fly - etc. Which I would like to sell. How do I do this?

So far I have no idea of value.

Can you help?

After identifying the piece for her and many emails with photos and conditions descriptions, Gloria and I agreed on a price. Then came the complications which arise from not knowing each other, being thousands of miles away from each other, living in different countries and, the matter of paying in a different currency. And then came the project of shipping.

Gloria wanted someone to come to her home and pack the piece, so I explored many different options, all of which were shockingly expensive. Finally, I contacted Nicolas Boston, who was kind enough to supply me with a shipper's name. They not only were the most economical of the list of shippers I explored but the most professional I have ever used. Thanks Nick!

Again, more emails between Gloria and me. Meanwhile, Duane and I went away on a ten day trip. We advised Gloria and the shipper of the information and arranged to have the piece arrive at

our home after our return. As soon as we returned, I rushed to the computer to find Gloria's latest email:

Wanda,
The shippers arrived on Wednesday morning (London time) not Tuesday as originally promised. The jardinière exited swathed in layers of blankets. I enclosed a paperback book of photos of the district where I live - but pictured many years ago - about the same date as the 'pot'
I hope it is of some interest to you.
Regards Gloria ---

As promised, shortly after Duane and I arrived home from our trip, the jardinière arrived. It was boxed in wood and strapped in metal. This is one time I had to be patient and wait for Duane to come home and let the pot out of its box! What a thrill! Duane was about the cart all the packing away when I asked about the under plate. Thank goodness the under plate did not get cast aside. I don't know about you, but I personally have never seen the under plate before. Granted, it is in need of restoration, but what a treat to find such a great piece with the under plate. The accompanying paperback book Gloria included contained wonderful pictures of Victorian England from the area where the pot had "lived" for some one hundred thirty years.

By the time the sale and delivery of the swallow and the dragonfly jardinière took place, Gloria and I felt like friends. I asked her if she would be willing to supply me with a photo and some additional information about how she acquired the pot. Below is the photo of Gloria and her youngest granddaughter, Lydia.



And the swallow and the dragonfly came to live with a new family in Texas....and lived happily ever after!



The Swallow & the Dragonfly at home in Texas

Wedgwood Fly at Auction

A match box with lid modeled as a fly had an estimated price of £150-200 at the Key auctioneers at their March 15-16, 2005 Norfolk, England sale.

Biding was strong and the final hammer price was £ 4,000 plus a 10% buyer's premium. Obviously at least two bidders thought better of the 5" (12cm) long box. Absentee and phone bidders could



not out bid those in the room even though the fly had some minor damage to the inside rim

Please send your comments and material for the newsletter to:

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MajolicaMAIL Communications

By Duane Matthes

We sent a "MajolicaMAIL" eMail out on **Dec 29th** to all members that have eMail addresses. If you didn't get that email, then MIS doesn't have your email address recorded correctly or the mail got trapped in your SPAM filter. The message enters your mail process with the name of **Duane@majolicasociety.com** so please open that email address in your SPAM filter.

Please eMail **Duane@eMajolica.com** with issues or your corrected email so we can correct our records and communicate with you. Thanks for your help!

Visit **www.majolicasociety.com/majolicamail.htm** to catch up on past majolica mails.

MIS Membership Directory

Each year-end, for member benefit, we publish and distribute an alphabetic membership directory with a regional index. The first thing you need to do is check your own information in the alphabetic directory and make sure we have your address and contact information correct. If we don't, then correct the information using the 2006 Dues Notice we included with this issue of Majolica Matters. A new field we've added to the directory is Mobile Phone. Members were sending them in - - so we made room in the data base to keep them.

Next you need to look at the regional index that is in zip code sequence. It allows you to locate other members in your region. New members are constantly joining the society and you'll be able to locate those that are in your local region.

Remember if you loose or misplace your directory you can always find one to reference or down load from the Member Area of the society web site where it is updated quarterly.

This, along with volumes of other useful information is stored at the MIS web site. To access the Member Area, you will need to email us at: **Duane@eMajolica.com** for your user name and password. Then, never worry again about not having the most current address, phone number or email for another MIS member.

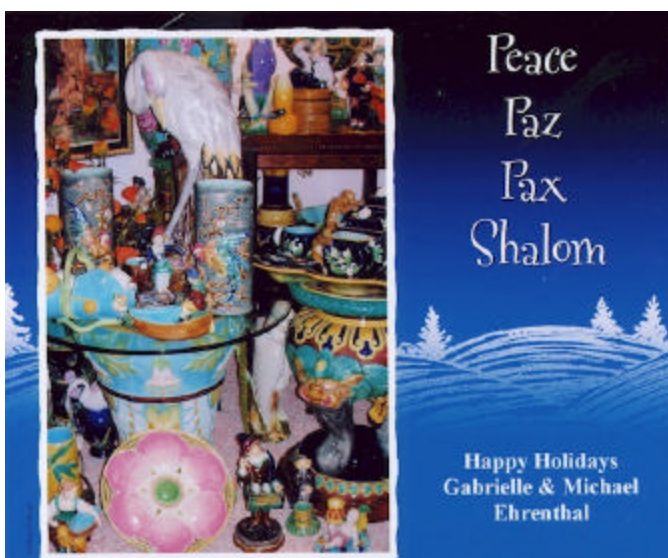
2006 Society Dues Process

Please check your address label on our mailing envelope. The red date such as "2005-Apr" indicates when you owed 2005 annual dues. Some members have paid ahead and won't receive any 2006 dues notice. Please use the enclosed 2006 Dues Notice to send in your 2006 dues.

As the old year ends and 2006 begins, I look forward to receiving your articles, photos and ideas which will bring value as well as entertainment to our members.

Curl up with pen and pad and write about majolica and your passion for this wonderful Victorian ceramic.

**Have a Happy and Prosperous 2006!
Wanda Matthes**



We wanted to share with you this wonderful Holiday card we received from Gabrielle & Michael Ehrental. They chose to send their wishes with a peek into their wonderful majolica collection.

**Happy
New Year
to All**