



HOMEMADE WATCH PARTS CLEANER

By Henri Bonnet

One of the daunting tasks for the amateur watchmaker is to find an affordable watch parts cleaner. My research of the watch tool market revealed that virtually all watch part cleaners on the market are designed for frequent usage, mostly by professionals, and are priced accordingly. Antique machines to the extent that one can find them are often broken and need significant repairs before they could be put to use.

So, given the above situation, I decided that the best way for me to get a suitable machine is to build one myself. From the outset I decided to build it, mostly with components that I already had at home, and purchase the parts that I didn't have, locally. I had a fairly good idea in my head as to what such a machine should look like and made no drawings.

My first task was to find a suitable motor. Although I had several fractional horsepower motors at home, none of them were suitable. I decided that my best bet was to find a used sawing machine motor. Although I found those locally, they were part of old sawing machines which I didn't want, even though the cost was relatively low. I found a brand new motor and rheostat assembly, locally, and tried to adapt it for my purpose. It soon became clear that the motor did not have the ratio of RPM to torque that was required. Quick calculations revealed that I needed a 200 to 1 gear reducer. The nearest thing I could find was a 100 to 1 reducer and decided to use it with the addition of some pulleys of proper diameter to compensate for the difference.

I machined the pulleys out of aluminum stock and chose to use an O ring to transmit the power, instead of a belt. After some initial tests it became obvious that I could readily achieve the desired torque and speed range.

I was able to find a mesh parts holder basket on line but had to machine a twist-lock holder to connect to my speed reducer. One thing that surprised me was how difficult it was to find the appropriate jars to hold the cleaning solutions. Initially I tried to find square jars but could not get those of suitable sizes. Eventually I settled for round pickle jars to which I could add an insert to serve as a "turbulator".

I decided to build a twin column assembly to hold the basket and power source, simply because I already had the rods at home. I determined that the quickest way to build the

base was to use wood. I therefore "borrowed" my wife's cutting board to use as the base and bought a lazy Susan to serve as a rotating jar holder.

I used an inverted track light with a small halogen lamp as a dryer, which I purchased and installed on the rotating table.

To index the rotating table in its four fixed positions I used round head wood screws on the perimeter of the lazy susan acting against a wooden spring loaded lever. I installed all the components and made sure that the up and down positions were fixed with only one adjustable intermediate position selectable with a knob on each one of the columns.

I added a digital thermometer to the lamp dryer so that I could control the temperature, as well as a mechanical timer to stop the operation automatically after a preselected time. To control the speed range for the cleaning process, I used a 300 watt light dimmer switch and the motor rheostat to achieve the proper spin drying speed. After wiring everything I started testing the machine using water in place of cleaning solution. It all seemed to work properly.

The operation is as follows: Once the watch parts are in the basket I lower it into the cleaning solution in jar number one and allow it to bottom. I adjust the speed with the dimmer once and for all, as it will remain the same for all jars. I set the mechanical timer to five minutes and wait till the cleaning is done. I then elevate the basket to the three quarter position on the jar and hold it there with the two column knobs. Adjusting the rheostat to its maximum position, I spin dry the basket in the jar without contacting the cleaning solution. I then move the lazy susan to the next jar, which is the first rinsing operation, and repeat the process once more with jar number three. Next, I move the lazy Susan to the drying position and let the basket rotate slowly over the lamp dryer for a few minutes. I control the drying temperature by varying the height of the basket over the lamp and watching the digital thermometer. I estimate that the total cost of parts and hardware I had to buy to be about \$ 300.

It should be understood that my goal was to build a functional machine quickly, and my thoughts were directed to performance rather than cosmetics. I estimate that a similar machine could be build for around \$100 by eliminating some not strictly necessary components and using better purchasing sources. It is conceivable that chapter members who do not already have a machine may want to take the route I had taken. Good luck! ■



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*“A candle loses nothing
by lighting another candle”*

Erin Majors

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

By Mike Schmidt

The Ventura Chapter continues to grow its membership adding 3 new members in the month of June. This brings our total membership to 83. An interesting and enjoyable part of our Chapter is the number of spouses and other family members who have joined and attend our meetings. We have 16 family memberships.

The “CHRONO TIMES” is receiving rave reviews. All of the articles for the June issue were written by Chapter members. The Editor Ken McWilliams and all the readers thank the authors for submitting such nice articles. “Please keep them coming”.

Congratulations go to Jim Chamberlain! Jim was recognized by the NAWCC at the National Convention in Chattanooga last month with a Silver Star Award. Jim was given this award for his many years of contribution in various leadership positions at the Chapter, Regional, and National levels. Look for an article in chapter 75’s newsletter, *The Regulator*, about Jim's service and contributions to NAWCC.

Our Chapter is providing another educational opportunity; a Field Suitcase Class FSW 101 “Introduction to Basic Time & Strike”. The date for this class is not yet firm, but possibly in September. Paul Skeels will be the Coordinator. If you are interested please contact Paul or any Board member.

The June lunch of pizza, salad and cheesecake with strawberries was well received, and not necessarily in that order. Lunch is optional for \$5, children free; basic entrance fee is \$3 and still includes coffee and dessert. We will vary the lunch and keep it interesting.

The July program will be the “History and Development of Watches”, and will be presented by Ferdinand Geitner

The Show and Tell for July, will be “Your last Purchase”.

See you all at the next meeting

Mike



Happy Birthday

Paul Barina, Jim Cash, David Dvorak

Mike Schmidt, Kathi Sheffrey,

Kim St. Dennis



Ventura Chapter 190 people

Each issue of our newsletter will feature members of our chapter with a short biography or some of their horological interests to help us get to know each other.

Sylvia and Chuck Griswold

By George Gaglini

Sylvia and Chuck Griswold, seen here as they attended the Chapter 190 June meeting. They met in New York while attending the New York World's Fair. Both worked in the air travel industry, he was a pilot and she was a flight attendant. Today, they are retired and living in Thousand Oaks, California.

During the Berlin crisis in the sixties, Chuck was a helicopter mechanic serving in the United States Army. His love of flight and aeronautics, which began when he was a teenager, propelled him from flying light aircraft to military helicopter mechanics to private industry command positions in global air travel as a 747 Captain for United Airlines.

Rather than calling for more power from the mighty engines of a Boeing "heavy" and searching for ever longer runways, Chuck, in his retirement, is on a quest for elusive wind and thermals in his sleek glider. And anyone expressing fascination with this transition might receive an invitation from Chuck to experience the miracles of flight in his glider over the California Mountains and deserts.

Sylvia is an ardent clock collector with wall, mantel and floor clocks gathered from all parts of the world. A visitor to the Griswold home will find an electric cat clock complete with shifting eyes and wagging tail sharing space with an extensive porcelain clock collection and several hand-made vintage clocks.

Sylvia's fascination with clocks attracted her to the new NAWCC Chapter 190. She is now a member and can be found helping at the member/visitor check-in table. Chuck builds clocks for the family and most recently finished a finely crafted walnut grandfather clock with a new Hermle triple chime movement.

We are proud to have the Griswolds as members of our rapidly growing Chapter. ■



Sylvia and Chuck checking out the Chrono Times

Some Ramblings from The Editor

by Ken McWilliams

Did you know that we have a working ATM at our Mart? I don't know of any other chapter that can say that. Now you have no excuses for not buying that watch or clock. We also have a video arcade for the kids, young or old.

Most of the photos in Chrono Times are taken by Bill Robinson. He does a such a great job so the next time you see him approaching you with his camera, give him a big smile.

Here are a few things to ponder.....

Why doesn't Tarzan have a beard?

If Barbie is so popular, why do we have to buy her friends?

What was the best thing before sliced bread?

What happens if you get scared half to death twice?

Why do psychics have to ask you for your name?

How much deeper would the ocean be without sponges?

And lastly, some truths. . . .

Inside every older person is a younger person wondering what the heck happened?

Everybody lies, but it doesn't matter since nobody listens anyway.

Seen it all, done it all. Can't remember most of it.

The shin bone is a device for finding furniture in the dark.

You can't have everything. Where would you put it?

Age and treachery will overcome youth and skill

Change is inevitable, except from vending machines.

I guess it's obvious to you by now that I had some empty space to fill, so to avoid being put through this again, send me a short article.

JUNE MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

By Robert Gary

Twenty-five members were in attendance for the program, “*American Wood-Works Clocks*”, presented by Bill Robinson, even though it was Father's Day! Chapter 190 now has 83 registered members, and we are continuing to grow.



Bill presented an excellent program on American clocks with wood works. He explained that brass was virtually unattainable in the United States until about 1845 to 1850. Prior to this time, clock makers used the only materials available to them, wood. Since wood does not have the strength of brass, the stress on the wheels by the heavy weights required to power the clock for 8 days would be too much, so the vast majority of wood works clocks had 30 hour movements.



An interesting feature of these clocks is that many of these weight-driven clocks had dials with faux winding arbor holes painted on the dials. The earliest versions of these clocks had no cases. The movement and dial assembly was simply hung on the wall. If the owner so desired, he would commission a local cabinet maker to construct a case to compliment the movement.



Mike Schmidt with one of his “wood works” clocks



Two of Bill Robinson's clocks with the movements removed



George and Donna Gaglini with Chuck Griswold.

Beware The Frankenwatch

By Dave Coatsworth

Having just let my guard down and bought a very unique example of a 'Frankenwatch', I thought I would talk about what to look out for when buying an antique American pocket watch, especially when buying online.

Unfortunately, today we are seeing many antique pocket watches showing up in online auctions that are a compilation of parts from several watches (thus the title, 'Frankenwatch'). The following are a few things to look for and keep in mind before bidding on a watch.

Matching serial numbers - All plates and bridges (and sometimes other parts) of an American pocket watch will be stamped with at least the last several digits of the serial number. (See photo below.) If you are buying the watch from someone who only sells watches and does not have the skills to repair them,



it is not reasonable to expect them to partially disassemble the watch to check that the serial numbers match. However, if the seller claims that the watch was just serviced, it is reasonable to ask if the serial numbers

match, as the watch should have been completely disassembled during servicing. (Of course, nothing prevents the seller from lying about this, but at least you have documented the situation should you later find out that there is a mismatch.) Furthermore, if the damaskeening seems to differ on one of the bridges or if the degree of polish differs on one of the bridges, it is reasonable to ask the seller to remove that bridge to check the serial number (and to send you a photo of the serial number). If the seller says that they are unable to do this, then walk away and continue looking for another example that does not raise your suspicions.

The 'rare prototype' watch with no serial number. (And, its cousin the 'factory error' with 2 serial numbers.) Some watch companies produced a particular model for many years. During this time, they sometimes moved the visible serial number around, usually from the top plate to the barrel bridge or vice versa. The Waltham 1857 model is an example of this.

Take a look at the photo of the top plate and barrel bridge below it. Both are from a Waltham 1857 model and they fit together perfectly. However, notice that both parts have a different serial number. They are from different



watches produced about 6 years apart. If I took the opposite top plate and barrel bridge and put them together, I would have a watch with no visible serial number. You sometimes see these explained as a 'rare' factory mistake (in the case of 2 mismatched serial numbers) or a 'prototype that escaped the factory without getting a serial number' (in the case of no visible serial number). While this is certainly possible, it is extremely rare. It is much more likely that someone has put parts from two different watches together.

Mismatched damaskeening If the watch has nickel plates, check to make sure the damaskeening pattern matches, or at least appears to be consistent, across all visible plates and bridges. An obvious mismatch is cause to question the seller.

Differing degrees of polish on the plates and bridges If the watch has gilt plates, be on the lookout for one plate or bridge that looks significantly brighter or duller than the others. While this may happen naturally due to a difference in the manufacturing process, it could also indicate mismatched parts.

Mismatched hands and screws - While this is easy to correct if you have access to a good parts supply, it is a red flag. Mismatched hands or screws tells me that someone with low workmanship standards has worked on this watch at one time. If they didn't care about matching these highly visible parts, what does that say for the internal parts that are not visible?

Old watch with new dial - This one is sometimes difficult to detect unless you are really familiar with the model of watch you are buying. To take one extreme example, Waltham produced the 18-size 1883 model for about 40 years. During that time, dial styles changed significantly and the company's name changed from 'American Waltham Watch Company' to 'Waltham Watch Company'. However, the dial feet locations on the 1883 model never changed. Thus, it is possible to take a late model dial that is simply marked 'WALTHAM' and put it on an early model 1883 watch (which should have a dial marked 'American Waltham Watch Co.'). Also watch out for reproduction dials. There are modern enamel dials being produced in China that look very good, but they tend to look Too good and this should be your clue that they are. There are also painted replacement dials produced in Switzerland. It is often difficult to tell that these are not enamel dials in a photograph.

(Continued on next page)

Welcome New Member

John Peha



Junk is something you've kept for years and throw away three weeks before you need it.

(Frankenwatch continued)

Multiple case screw marks - Among Frankenwatch infractions, this one is more of a misdemeanor than a felony, but it is common and does affect value and, therefore, one should watch out for it. Collectors will pay a premium for a completely original watch in it's original case. Certainly a jeweler could have replaced a worn out case with a used, but much less worn, case to save some money for a customer many years ago. However, it is much more likely that someone has recently put together a movement and case. (Just look at the number of separate movements and cases that are listed on eBay every day!) While there is nothing really wrong with buying a re-cased watch, you should adjust the price you are willing to pay so that it is closer to the individual values of the movement and the case.



The bottom line is... Look for inconsistencies! If something doesn't look right, question the seller before placing your bid. If the seller can not substantiate the consistency of the watch, walk away.

Now, about that Frankenwatch that I just bought... The auction was for an Aurora keywind movement. The listing contained two photos, one of the movement and one of the dial, but the dial was not on the movement. I should have asked either 1), for a photo of the pillar plate side of the movement as long as the dial was not attached or 2), why the dial was not attached to the movement. When I received the movement I was amused to find that the pillar plate was from an Illinois watch! Early Illinois and Aurora 18-size watches did have the same pillar plate locations, so it was possible to put them together. They did not have the same dial foot locations, however, which explains why the dial was not attached. As you can see in the photo below, there is glue residue on the pillar plate where someone had obviously cut the dial feet off of a dial (probably a good Aurora dial) and glued it to the movement at one time. The seller was not a watch dealer, so this was probably not an intentional case of deception. He quickly agreed to an adjusted price based on my estimate of the value of the parts, which brings me to my last piece of advice. Don't hesitate to say something if the watch you receive is not what it was represented to be. ■



Several members have expressed an interest in purchasing Tran Duy Ly's clock books. I will have a price list of all of his books and about forty other horology books at the July meeting.

I will be taking orders for these at a substantial discount to members. I only do this once or twice a year so if there are some that you want, now is the time.

See me at the meeting for details. Ken McWilliams

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Presented by Ferdinand Geitner

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CLASSIFIED PAGE

This page is dedicated to advertising for Chapter 190 members. It is, of course, free to members.

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Dave Coatsworth

Tel. 805-650-8800

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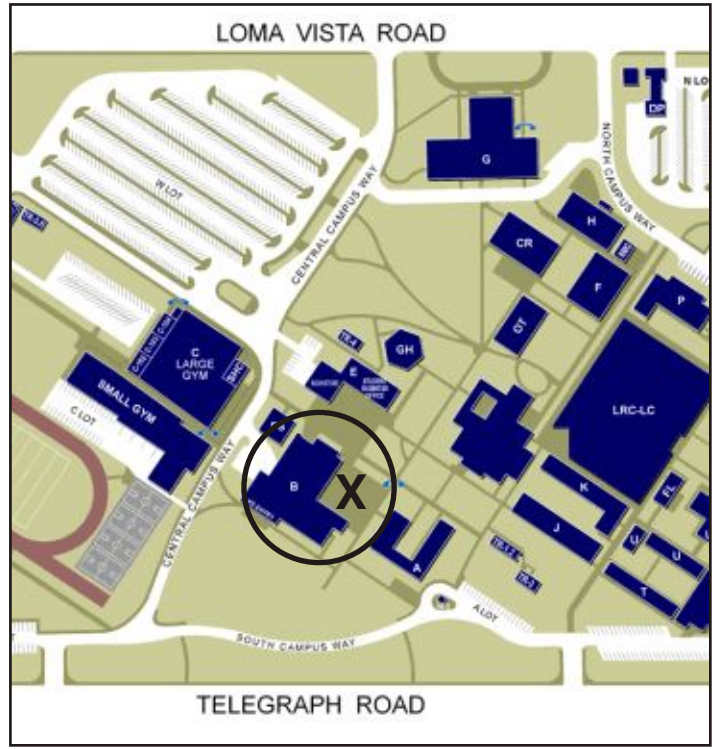
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The Chapter 190 meetings are held the third Sunday of each month. (No meeting in December)
 We will meet in the cafeteria on the Ventura College campus. The cafeteria is located in building "B", east of the gym and athletic field.



Hope to see you there!

July 2007 Issue

JULY 15
NEXT MEETING

Chrono Times
 If Undeliverable return To:
 17738 Superior St. Unit 21
 Northridge, CA 91325