



Tri State Pipe & Tobacco Club Newsletter

March 2007

"An informal society of pipe smoking friends"

Little tube of mighty pow'r, Charmer of an idle hour, Object of my warm desire. ~Isaac Hawkins Browne, "A Pipe of Tobacco" 1973

First a note from the editor: Fellow club-members and pipe-smoking friends, with this issue of the club newsletter, the first thing you will notice is a new format. In a effort to produce more frequent newsletters, I have decided to drop the familiar "booklet" format in favor of this simpler, "letter" format which isn't as complicated to put together. The big advantage will be information packed letters getting to you more often. LH



Riegels September 11, 2006 Pipe Smoking Contest

A good time had by all

One event which most area pipesmokers greatly anticipate each year is the annual pipesmoking contest hosted by Dennis and Tony Hills at the Georgetown Square Riegels store each November here in Fort Wayne. The most recent contest was, as always, tremendous fun but also held some unexpected twists and turns.

As pipesters have come to expect, Michigan pipe artisan Lee Von Erck joined our humble gathering to share in the fun and to exhibit some of his latest eye-popping briar creations. So smitten was I with Lee's latest group of pipes that I grabbed two to set aside, and I believe Al Geyer did much the same. Others may have also purchased some of Lee's pipes, and I know for a fact that Stan Edwards landed a stunning sitter Lee had brought down expressly for him as Stan had picked it out from Lee's web page.

I always begin pipesmoking contests with a fair amount of trepidation, mainly because despite my immense enjoyment derived from smoking pipes I am prone to get busy talking or otherwise get distracted and too readily allow mine to go out. None of which distresses me too greatly, mind you, as part of the enjoyable ritual associated with pipesmoking, to me anyway, is tamping and relighting. People make these sorts of events, and I never let my admittedly remote chance at winning get in the way of talking with and enjoying the company of my fellow pipesmokers.

To my relief, TSPTC member Ben Fogt had the honor of being "first out." The ever affable Mr. Fogt took that distinction in stride, and seemed to enjoy the remainder of the contest just as much as if he had been in contention for the grand prize. By the way, Ben ended up with a booby prize, a Savinelli shape 316 smooth "burnout" which I promptly suggested he should glue to a plaque for display as if it were a largemouth bass or a headmount of a buck. Ben seemed to be seriously contemplating "mudding up" the affected interior area of his award, though, and last I saw at that gathering was consulting with Lee Von Erck as to how he might suggest he proceed.

Another but much more suprising "early out" was former multiple winner of the Riegels pipesmoking contest, Dale Hively. Dale has, if I recall correctly, won this event on seven previous occasions but for whatever reason did not approach his earlier times. An octogenarian, Dale is still the acknowledged "grandmaster" of area pipesmokers in terms of technique and will, I am certain, be right back in the thick of the contest next year.

Certainly Mr. Hively knows a thing or five about how to make a bowl of tobacco last without having to constantly relight, unlike yours truly. In addition to his seven contest titles at the Riegels event and many more "Top Three" finishes, his friend, Don Gardner, won this year's event and promptly credited Dale with giving him advice on the proper technique. Don's winning time was 66 minutes 50 seconds, and for having won this latest contest walked away with a brand new Von Erck pipe retailing for \$345! (Continued next page)

CLUB OFFICERS

President: Andy Spencer (260) 747-5726 agspencer@comcast.net
Vice President: Larry Hubartt (574) 566-2796 tsptc@tsptc.org
Treasurer: Dennis Nichols (260) 744-4797 dennis819@gmail.com
Secretary: Ray Franklin (260) 490-3195 rayjewels2803@msn.com

www.tsptc.org

(A Good Time Had by All, continued) Second place in the contest went to TSPTC's own, longtime (and senior) member John Laird. In what was, by pipesmoking terms, nearly a "photo finish" John tallied a time of 66 minutes 20 seconds, and won a brand new Savinelli pipe worth \$180.

This past November's third-place winner was Greg Grego, who posted a time of 57 minutes 45 seconds. For his troubles Greg walked away with a nifty Brebbia pipe which retailed for \$145. I must not have been the only one who admired the Brebbia Greg won, because John Laird eventually traded him the aforementioned Savinelli for the Brebbia. Both parties seemed happy with the exchange, which was consummated on a later date.

Fourth place went to Vince Williamson, who won a \$125 Hardcastle pipe from jolly old England. The fifth-place winner was Carl Ritchhart, who walked away with a \$110 Savinelli.

TSPTC member Al Geyer came in sixth in this contest, and won an \$85 Old Boy pipelighter. Phillip Glaze finished seventh, and was awarded a \$50 Pipes & Tobacco package. TSPTC Treasurer Dennis Nichols won a nifty handmade tamper worth \$30 for an eighth-place finish, Joe Stolte came in ninth-place and received a \$25 Savinelli tamper, and both Steve Hutchinson and Tim Bigelow got \$20 tins of Reiner tobacco.

Also on display at the November contest were the remainder of the 2006 TSPTC club pipes made for our troupe by master pipemaker Lee Von Erck. A lovely and somewhat varied grouping of quarter-bent sandblasts, they went quickly and at a mere \$195 apiece represented a tremendous value. Certainly Lee's friendship with Riegels and Tri-State Pipe and Tobacco Club factored into the equation somewhat, but nevertheless Lee did a tremendous favor offering these pipes to our members at such low prices. They would have commanded a far higher tariff elsewhere. Everyone with whom I've spoken who acquired one of the 2006 Von Erck club pipes has raved about its smoking properties.

Finally, a well-deserved "thank you" once again go to Dennis Hills and his son Tony for hosting this event as a service to area pipesmokers and for having a neat and tasty array of yummys to provide solace for those of us with, uh, somewhat less than winning times. Kudos to all in attendance for competing and adding to the confraderie. AS

Pipe Smoking Memories

by Clubmember Ben Fogt

I started this hobby of pipe collecting very slowly back in 2002. I was displaced by divorce and losing my job in Columbus, Ohio at the time and couldn't always find a place to enjoy my collection. When things started settling back down I was too distracted from a hectic work week to dig back into my collection of moving boxes to get my pipes back out, so my humidor had to hold the treasures for a while. Well, moving up here and marrying my wife has afforded me some opportunity to get things out of storage and remember what it was like back then.



One of these memories involved learning how to smoke my 2002 J. M. Boswell Churchwarden freehand I bought in the spring that year. It cost me about \$85 and brought an infinite amount of stress reduction, which I still say might have saved me several years of good living. I smoked it pretty hot and it shows, but it's survived with me.

At some point in its travels the stem started to bend right. When you looked down the long stem you'd see the bowl angle to the right, away from center. It wasn't a real problem, but it was something I wanted to fix, someday. I had the opportunity to meet Lee von Erck, one of the favorite pipemakers of the TSPTC, at the Reigel's pipe smoking contest. I had brought along my Boswell Churchwarden and showed it to him. The stem has some twist detailing to it near the shank end so I asked him if he thought it would be wise to take it to Boswell's shop if I could get there. He thought it was worth a try. This began a quest.

I took the opportunity to ask Lee some other questions about pipemaking and about his class in Chicago before the pipe show there. I found Lee to be quite a character. He reminds me of a professor I had in college as a religion student. As most of the TSPTC members well know, Lee's pipes can be very fragile looking pieces of artwork. *(Continued page 3)*

(Pipe Smoking Memories, continued) While light and intricate, they are also very strong and well made and great smoking pipes. Now that I think of it, Lee's pipes are a lot like him. He's a tall guy but not heavy and he seems to be as playful in life as his pipes suggest. I'm still saving up for a twist from his hand.

Many of you probably remember from the TSPTC forums that in December, I received a gift from a friend in Toledo of three pipes that hadn't been smoked in over 25 years, a Ben Wade freehand, a Stanwell freehand and a Jobey tortoise. Although they hadn't been smoked much I still felt that they could use a good cleaning. In my conversation with Lee, he had mentioned Tim West both as a great pipe maker and a great resource for having pipes serviced. I found an excuse to pay a visit. So, finding an excuse to be back in my longtime residence of Columbus for business the week before Christmas, I made an appointment to drop off the pipes I'd acquired with Tim with a chance to possibly talk with him a bit.

So, the first part of my day ended well on time and I made the trip to Worthington to his house. Tim was remodeling the house so I wasn't invited in, but was quickly asked to return in an hour or so. That gave me time to get rid of some books and make it back. When I made it back through all of the traffic, Tim had finished up. He invited me to see his workshop and we talked about pipe making, since I'm very interested in giving it a shot soon. He showed me his augers for drilling out bowls. Some of them were so worn down from sharpening that many said that they were the same size, although they ranged widely. I also got to see Tim's current pipe inventory, a rare sight, to be sure. We talked also about the Columbus show and the effect of the Ohio Smoking ban as well as my next trip, J. M. Boswell's shop. Tim used to buy his briar from J. M.

I found Tim to be a very nice fellow. It's pretty obvious when you meet him that this is his hobby and he finds it quite fortunate that so many people appreciate his hobby enough so that he can make a living at it. I can understand that attitude entirely myself. But I had more business to do, so I had to leave.

The following Saturday led me to Chambersburg, PA and the middle of the town. We'd stopped for gas after not being able to find the store on the GPS. We'd given up and gotten some sandwiches as we got back on US 30 heading to Gettysburg and our final destination, Glen Rock, PA. Well, what to our wandering eyes should appear? Boswell's Pipe Shop, the sign said. Right on our way out of town. I swung the car hard into the small parking lot and gobbled down a much needed dinner. I picked up my pipes and headed into the store, while Deborah spent more time eating. I don't understand why she wasn't as excited as I was. I had just a couple weeks prior received a Twisted Freehand that J. M. had made in November and I was excited to get the pipe I've reserved at that time, a smallish Bridge Churchwarden.

Now to enter the Boswell shop is to go back in time. A longish narrow-ish storefront opens up to a sitting area on the left filled with sofas and men you'd expect to still be there come morning. On the right, a counter with twenty or more tobacco blends and many more on the wall behind. Just beyond this, a walk-in humidior and the shorter displays of pipes in glass cases. The left wall is lined with cabinet after cabinet of hand crafted pipes. About the time, the drool began forming, a woman asked if she could help me. I told her I'd bought the twisted freehand and was there to pick up a churchwarden. At that point she knew my name. It felt like home. Between talking with her, she is J. M.'s wife Gail, J. M. running around the store with cookies, and all the people just spending time in the store, it instantly became a new destination on my map.

Deborah came in and Gail made sure she felt at home. She brought out rolling carts with the latest pipes from the workshop, gave us a tour of the mega huge Grizzly pipes. Some of these have mouthpieces as large as 1.5". The mouthpiece is carved of solid acrylic instead of being formed from the normal materials over heat. Deb was impressed enough to actually say that she'd enjoy going back some day. I left just with what I'd intended, except for an additional Churchwarden bag, but that hardly counts.

What to say about J. M.? We didn't get to talk, really. He was busy entertaining, which certainly says a lot. His shop was like a party and the customers more an extended family than visitors. I felt like the pipes lining the walls were like photos of distant relatives or family reunions, but ones to come. It was very nostalgic, to be sure. The number of pipe *(continued page 4)*

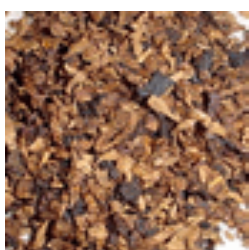
(Pipe Smoking Memories, continued) is astounding, especially when you see how quickly they disappear from inventory. Gail said that one time some Tinder Box managers made a special visit to see him work. He carved 3 pipes in less than an hour with only fitting the mouthpieces and applying the finishes to go. It's no wonder I spent less money every pipe I own that he made than I can find from most other high quality pipe makers.

What shows in his work isn't mass production, but experience. Boswell's pipes don't seem quickly made. It seems that from him, a pipe is the result of an organic process that ends as it should in whatever shape and size results. Sort of like family, don't you think?

So we left there with no light to burn. I thought back over the few weeks of my journey to see where pipes might come from. It was quite an experience and I hope to do more. I certainly recommend visiting your pipe maker's shop as much as I recommend seeing where your beef grows and your eggs come from. It just seems to make things that much more real. BF

Louisiana Virginia Blend

A review by Club President, Andy Spencer



Maybe I've become so set in my ways, so comfortable with a few favorite blends, that newer and sometimes better blends have escaped my attention. So it seems to be with a Red Virginia-based blend from PipesandCigars.com's American Heritage series. The blend of which I speak was "discovered" by yours truly during a lunch in January when longtime TSPTC members Sherman Carver and Al Geyer joined me at Azar's Big Boy in the Waynedale area.

Sherman generously offered a bag of tobacco for me to try. I was pleased to note that it was a ribbon cut blend appearing to be, and certainly smelling like, any really good Red Virginia leaf ought to be. As I rolled it through my fingers, I was even happier to detect a lack of the sickly sweet cloying quality peculiar to some Virginias. The ribbons were not at all dry, but neither were they overly wet either, and passed across my fingers without adhering to them.

Still not knowing much about the blend other than what the label revealed, which was that Louisiana Virginia is a Hearth & Home blend- I was to later find out that it was from PipesandCigars.com, and even later discovered that "Hearth & Home" is their label whereas "American Heritage" is a specific range of blends within their Hearth & Home tobaccos- I gently filled my 2006 TSPTC / Von Erck club pipe and put it to match.

Wow! To say that my first, second, and even third impression was favorable is a gross understatement! This blend is almost dizzying in its variety of flavors, a veritable merry go-round of lemons and peppers and Red Virginia and Perique, dancing back and forth across the palate. The Perique is particularly interesting in that it is very mild, barely detectable save for the hint of peppery quality to the flavor.

As I continued to savor the Louisiana Virginia sample, it began to exhibit real depth and a tasty but not overwhelming sweetness characteristic, to my mind at least, to the very best Virginias like McClelland's 5100 and that same blender's 2006 Christmas Cheer. Not all who have sampled Louisiana Virginia agree with me on every point here, though, as a quick check of Tobacco Reviews online revealed that some bemoaned what they saw as its blandness. If not having my tongue burned as has, sadly, happened with too many Virginias is "bland" then I'll happily continue to smoke Louisiana Virginia, although I would describe that aspect of its properties more as "creamy" than "bland." Seemed to me that there was flavor aplenty in this blend.

If Sherman had not disclosed to me that Louisiana Virginia contained some Perique it might have taken me awhile to attribute its lemony, peppery traits and occasional hint of a plum-like flavor as being brought forth from some St. James Parish Perique from deep down in Louisiana. Certainly the flavor(s) belied any description of "blandness" from other reviewers, in my humble opinion. Any dissenting views were clearly borne of having had one's tongue turned to cinder by the nuclear fires of some Virginia blends or perhaps having had one's tastebuds bludgeoned into insensibility by hammer-and-anvil-like Latakia-based smokes like Pirate Kake and Old Ironsides. *(Continued page 5)*

(Louisiana Virginia blend, continued) This blend is exceptionally cool-burning all the way through, and left only a fine, fluffy gray-to-charcoal-colored ash in the bottom of my bowl. At least one other review I found online expressed the opinion that the sweetness of the Virginia component of this blend perhaps could have been greater and that it tended to subside partway down the bowl. I did not find it overly sweet, although certainly some Virginia addicts might wish for the almost sickly sweet properties of many Virginia-based blends. This quality, which I find distressing in most blends, was actually a large part of what attracted me to Louisiana Virginia due to its relative absence.

Yet another complaint levied by one online reviewers was that it might have been a tad punchier in terms of nicotine content, although the reviewer revealed himself by adding that he was a former Marlboro smoker. Having been made positively sick to my stomach a year or two back when trying a sample of Dunhill Three-Year Matured Virginia that had been stored for years in bulk, I was delighted to find that the nicotine content seemed somewhat on the low side for a Virginia although Louisiana Virginia was not altogether devoid of nicotine "tang." Again, just right in terms of balance and qualities as I rolled the smoke around in my mouth as one might do with a quality wine.

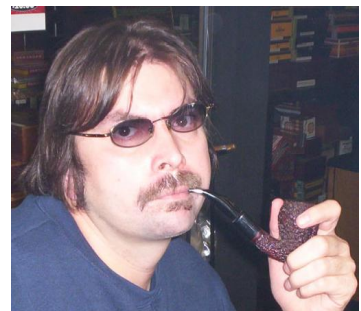
PipesandCigars.com's Hearth & Home American Heritage Series has a couple of other Virginias I intend to try (LJ Heart Virginia and Old Red) as soon as I have secured a goodly amount of Louisiana Virginia to last. Master blender Russ Oullette, who created Louisiana Virginia, brings all 25+ years of his pipe tobacco blending experience to play here and it really shows in my opinion. Although I am not certain, it seems likely that he also blends the rest of their tobaccos as well including their much-ballyhooed "Butternut Burley" blend so much in vogue on the pages of ASP (alt.smokers.pipes' site on the internet). It too is on my "hit list" of blends to try, but before sampling it or any other blends on PipesandCigars.com's site I would urge you to give Louisiana Virginia a try. It will take more bowlfuls to ascertain for sure, but at this point I like it at least as well as any other of the best-quality Virginias I've tried and perhaps better than any and all which have come before. As I'm smoking a bowlful of 5100 in my favorite Crosby briar, that's truly saying something. AS



Cloud 9

Pipe Blend Reviews,
by Sherman Carver

Esoterica Tobacciana's
"Margate"



Here's a classic English mixture, a deliciously dark latakia blend, that burns slowly and provides an exceedingly smooth and dry smoke. It falls into that category of mixtures that tends toward a slight sweetness, probably some Virginia tobacco. Its rich, bite-free, nutty latakia flavour has a chocolate-like character that is an outstanding complement to a cup of fragrant black coffee. Its aroma is much like its flavour—heavy, rich, smoky—and I wish it would linger longer. Dark-brown to blackish medium-cut tobacco with medium-reddish-brown flecks. It's a ribbon cut tobacco so you don't have to worry about rubbing it out like a flake tobacco.

I smoke this blend in any size pipe because it smoke very cool in any the size pipe. It comes in 2 ounce tin or 8 ounce foil pouch.

(Esoterica Tobacciana pipe tobaccos are a creation of J.F. Germain & Son, one of the few companies that still process their tobacco in the old traditional, labor intensive ways. No artificial flavorings or preservatives are used in their blends, only premium quality leaf. The various types of tobacco are blended in small batches by hand, then aged together in tins to mellow and develop a uniform flavor and distinctive character.)

Checkout our club bulletin board: Be sure to log in to our club bulletin board at <http://www.tsptc.org/phpBB/> to keep in touch with your fellow club-members.

Tri State Pipe & Tobacco Club recommends:



<http://www.riegelpipeandtobaccos.com>

Pipes & Tobaccos

3 Fort Wayne Locations

Downtown: 624 S Calhoun (260) 424-1429
6410 W Jefferson Blvd (260) 432-0002
George Square (260) 493-2806

Fresh Handmade Cigars
Custom Blend Tobaccos
Maps-Magazines

About Tri State Pipe & Tobacco Club

The Tri State Pipe & Tobacco Club was founded in 1999 by three friends (Larry Rathburn, Andy Spencer, and Dan Hudson) as a way for pipesmokers and enthusiasts to get together on a regular basis and share their fondness of pipes and tobacco.

Most of our members are from the greater Fort Wayne, Indiana area. Our informal meetings take place about 5:30 pm around the middle of each month in an area restaurant--one that is pipesmoker friendly of course.

Among our members are pipemakers, shop owners, estate pipe dealers, serious collectors and pipe smokers. Meeting nights are social events with pipes sold, bought, traded and more importantly smoked. Many tobaccos can be sampled and purchased. The informal discussions include pipemaking methods & materials, tobacco blends, pipemakers, new acquisitions and more. Members show their newly acquired pipes and the old favorites, including some one of kind pipes.

Our membership is somewhere around 35. Anywhere from 8-15 attend on meeting nights. Our meetings are open to anyone who is interested and newcomers are always made to feel welcome. So if you are interested in stopping by, check our website or call one of our club leaders listed on the front of this newsletter for meeting information.



7th Annual 2007 Tri State Pipe and Tobacco Club Pipe and Cigar Show



Saturday, April 21st, 2007 10AM - 4PM

QUALITY HOTEL BALLROOM, 3330 W Coleseum Blvd, Fort Wayne IN

Thousands of pipes and tobacciana. Buy-Swap-Sell-New-Used-Collectibles-etc! Pipe smokers, collectors, dealers, pipe-makers...anyone interested in any aspect of the gentle art of pipe smoking--don't miss this show! Browsing encouraged! Bargains galore! Visit www.tspt.org or email

agspencer@comcast.net for more details