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## STRETCH GLASS SOCIETY

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### *President's Message*

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Dear Members:

Our 1988 Convention is history, but for the few of us who were able to attend, it will be remembered as very successful.

Due to the considerable efforts of Joanne and Eldon Dolby, we had a number of guests (I believe 12) and added three of them to our membership. The Dolbys also brought 99% of their own Stretch Glass collection and set up several display tables, including an elegant one set for a luncheon. With the addition of glass brought by the other members, we had an impressive display.

After a delicious banquet dinner, Carl Fauster presented an interesting slide show on the history of Libbey Glass Company. I had expected to provide you with a synopsis of his talk but found that either my tape or the recorder had a malfunction and both Mr. Fauster's talk and the recording of the business meeting came out sounding like Minnie Mouse. Attempts to find some way to reduce the speed of the tape to make it understandable have been unsuccessful.

On Thursday we visited the Toledo Museum of Art where they have an exceptional display of antique glass with pieces ranging from several hundred years old to

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(President's Message continued - )

others of recent vintage. Of special interest was the display of Libbey cut glass, which had been the subject of our speaker the night before.

We will have to rely on my sketchy memory to relay the minutes of the business meeting. If anyone who attended finds an error in my reporting, please let me know.

Ralph Cooper and Wesley Bickster audited Treasurer's books; a formality which must be performed each year. Berry Wiggins and Martin Stozus accepted the duties of the Nominating Committee and presented the following slate of officers, which was approved by the attending membership:

President: Joanne Rodgers  
Vice President: Martin Stozus  
Secretary/Editor: Mary Louise Ryan  
Treasurer: John Miller

Board of Directors

Helen Cooper Alma Magenau Mary Henry Paul Miller

Dates for our next four Conventions were set:

1989: May 3 - 5 - Marietta, Ohio  
1990: May 2 - 4 - Indiana, Pennsylvania  
1991: May 1 - 3 - suggestions requested  
1992: April 29 - May 1 - suggestions requested

Our business meeting lasted a record 35 minutes and soon after members were on their way home or to other points. While some members had to leave Toledo, others of us returned to the Dolby's lovely home for a delicious lunch and the opportunity to see some of their extensive collections of a variety of glass.

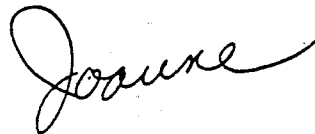
Following lunch, several of us visited the factory outlet store of Libbey Glass (and left a few dollars behind).

We missed a number of our regulars due to prior commitments and ill health. The schedule of dates listed previously should (we hope) solve the conflicting dates problem at least until 1992. As for the ill health problem, we hope that time, a good physician, and the Lord's help will solve that one.

In the meantime, let us know what is going on in your part of the United States.

Best wishes,

Sincerely,



The following pages are the remarks made by our guest, Russell Vogel song, at the Banquet Meeting of the Stretch Glass Society Convention at Kent, Ohio, in the Spring, 1987.

Mr. Vogel song's remarks were in the nature of an informal talk with our members, freely accepting questions during the time he spoke, while he related to us some of the causes and results of those causes that have bearing on the state of glass production in the United States today and some of what we might expect in the coming months and years for this industry which is of so much interest to all of us who are involved in the collecting of glass whether it be for profit or for the sheer joy of having the beautiful and rare pieces we are fortunate enough to have among our material possessions.

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Jabe Tarter introduced and welcomed Mr. and Mrs. Russell Vogel song to our members. They are the owners and operators of Summit Art Glass Company. They have been in the glass business for about fourteen years. Prior to the ownership of Summit Art Glass, the Vogel songs had glass pressed for them by Tommy Mosser and built up a good business marketing this glass. When Tommy Mosser decided to go into other fields the Vogel songs started their own factory. Jabe told us that he felt that this was a wonderful thing to do particularly since there are so few glass houses surviving in West Virginia that they can be counted on one hand and in Ohio there are even less than that. Jabe then presented Russ for his talk.

Russ began by telling us that it was a pleasure to be with us. He did not have a prepared speech or any particular thing to talk about but he wanted to tell us about the changing face of glass manufacturing in the United States today.

Russ said that a lot of people come to their factory and the first thing they ask Russ is "What glass factory did you work at?" His reply is that he never did work in a glass factory. He had been in the glass business about ten years when because of the changing situation in the industry they felt that if they did not become base manufacturers they wouldn't be in the business any longer. Since Russ had never worked in a glass factory he felt that the biggest asset he had to bring into the manufacturing business was his ability to market glass. He was a collector first and considered himself to be a lucky one and his wife was, too. Then they became what is called private mold people. This meant that they had the molds made for them and someone else made the glass. Now they are the manufacturers.

They started collecting glass in 1970. They got their appreciation for it and a knowledge about it from two men that they met one time when they decided to go to an antique show. They walked into the show and there was a great big booth and the man there was selling glass for a senior citizens organization. The people lived in some sort of a housing complex and this man was helping them out. They had never been to a glass show before and when they walked over to the booth, Jabe Tarter began telling them about glass.

Russ described Jabe as just bubbling over. He was so enthused that you could tell he loved it. Paul Miller came along and everyone was introduced. It was pleasing to Jabe and Paul to find these young people interested in glass. The Vogel songs were taken through the show and given an appreciation of just what the glass was that they were looking at. For the next few years every Monday night

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was spent with Jabe and Paul "going to college". If you have ever been to their house you know that it is a museum in itself and their appreciation continued and developed and grew to the point that they decided that they could not collect everything they liked or everything they saw. It was physically and financially impossible to do that.

Jabe encouraged them to select a field they were interested in. They did select Cambridge because Russ' grandparents had worked there and they had even inherited several pieces of Cambridge. They continued collecting, stressing the beauty of the pieces and the techniques of how they were made. Russ said that Jabe never once suggested that they ought to buy a \$70 bowl because in ten years it could be worth \$500. Value was more or less a side issue. Jabe just wanted them to appreciate what they were looking at.

So then within a few years they decided they wanted to get into different facets of the glass business. So they had a mold made and then another mold and another mold. One day Jabe commented that one of these days you will have your own glass factory. Russ replied that that surely was far fetched. How could they ever own a glass factory? They both worked continually to put money back into the business they had and eventually they became successful on a small scale in the type of business they had. Since the face of glass manufacturing changed in this country and they were in the situation they were in (having their glass made by someone else for them) they either had to "do their thing" or get out of the glass business.

With the decision made, they began by buying three acres of ground. Then they built a new building. They started searching for new equipment. They knew they didn't have enough of a mold inventory to do great things. They gambled. They did not believe that some of the big companies could make it and at that point they started buying more equipment. The first equipment was bought at Tiffin Glass Company. They began to put their factory together. Then as other factories did tumble, one by one, they were able to go in and buy molds very cheaply.

During their travels into these factories the Vogelongs found that usually the last man left at the factory was the best man, the one the company trusted and left there the longest time. Russ had questions to ask. "What put you out of business?" "How could you be in business so long and go under?" The answer was sometimes off the record and Russ could believe it or not. That was up to him. But he was assured it was true. At Tiffin he was told that management drained the company. Russ commented that everyone said it was imported glass that caused the trouble. It was agreed that this was a problem to some extent. For instance, at Tiffin goblets were put together in three pieces (bowl, stem and foot) and it eventually became cheaper for Tiffin to buy stemware from Ireland, bring it to Tiffin, cut it in the cutting shops and sell it. At the close of the Tiffin operation they had stemware that they were making there that would retail in the Fifth Avenue, New York showrooms for \$90 a stem and they were buying Irish crystal stems at \$5, bringing them here and cutting them and still they couldn't survive.

There were so many factors at that particular time. The natural gas prices went crazy because of the oil embargo. The seminars that all the glass manufacturers attended were sponsored by different natural gas companies. The natural gas people were telling these manufacturers that by 1986 gas would be about \$9 a thousand cubic feet. Well, they sort of panicked. Prices went way up and a lot of companies priced themselves right off the market. As it stands gas

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dropped down to about \$4.76 a thousand cubic feet. So in a sense the gas companies knocked the legs right out from under the glass companies. Gas is going to get cheaper because the number of users is diminishing.

Russ stated that there is what he considers a major glass company now - only one is left and that is Fenton. It is probably the most progressive glass company in this country because they are always out for the latest technology and gas saving devices that there are to keep their costs down. If you collect Fenton you know they don't make cheap glass.

The next factory Russ went into was Westmoreland. They experienced a very different situation. It was a family owned business in the third generation. The third generation people died and the second generation had to maintain it.

Dave Grossman of St. Louis was the purchaser. He was famous for Rockwell figurines and that type of product. Dave bought the company for \$500,000 and in the next few years managed to lose a few million dollars. Russ was the "little guy starting out" and wanted to know everything he could from others in the business. Russ asked Dave what happened. Dave answered that there were several reasons. First, Dave was in St. Louis and Westmoreland was in Grapeville, Pennsylvania. Second, the glass industry was experiencing phenomenal growth in the early 1960's. They were making glass and everything they made they sold. In the late 1950's Heisey and Cambridge were bought by Imperial as you all know. Imperial could not make enough glass for the orders that they had.

In 1956 the owner of Westmoreland sent a letter to their salesman in May of that year that told them not to take any more orders for the rest of the year. The factory couldn't fill these orders and they were then running twelve shops. The other factories then thought there was a tremendous market out there and they rose up to meet the demand of the 60's and early 70's. Anything that was made could be sold. The companies did what is called in the business "fill the pipeline". Every gift shop was involved. Fenton advertising said that they were in every gift shop in the United States. That is great if the consumer is taking it off the market. But then for a lot of reasons, inflation and all kinds of economic woes, this country had a sudden change. Production ability far outweighed what people were buying. The factories hung in - the big ones where you saw 400, 500, 600 workers. You will not see it again, no matter which factory you go to.

The heyday of glass makers in this country as we know it, is over. This is not to depress you. It is just a fact. The market is not there. If this thing runs full circle as in most businesses there will be an increase and the factories that are left will rise up and meet the demand or more factories will come into being. One way or the other, when the demand is there someone is going to meet it. Some people may think that if all the glass factories are gone there will be no more glass. The glass will come from another direction. A few months ago Russ went to Findler, the factory that makes all the furnaces for the glass factories. He was surprised to see the parking lot full of cars, when Russ expected the factory to be dead. He questioned the owner, a personal friend, who said they were now working seven days a week! Russ asked who they were selling the furnaces to. The answer - South America, China, etc. Anchor Hocking is building a new factory overseas where everyone is going. Cheap labor, cheap everything.

Russ said he could survive the way he is doing business right now. He said

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L.E. Smith is lettering and may not be around much longer. As far as Fenton goes some people say maybe another three or four years. The downfall of most big companies is that when things slow down they can't cut back. They can't get small for some simple reasons. For instance, at Westmoreland the insurance for the building was \$57,000 a year. Viking Glass workers' compensation benefits paid to the state - \$53,000 a year, and that is just one thing. At Tiffin when they banked the furnaces for the last summer shut-down for four weeks the gas bill was \$50,000. You can't make it with those kinds of expenses when the heyday is gone in the glass factories. The factories were making all the money and the workers wanted what they had coming. This snowballed and got out of hand and the market disappeared.

How about Lenox? Lenox is divesting itself of a lot of different businesses they were in. This is one of the things these glass companies did in their heyday. They became diversified. Lenox bought a candle company. Lenox bought Imperial. In fact, Lenox had so much money that when they bought Imperial Glass they gave the shareholders two shares of Lenox for one share of Imperial. The trouble was that there wasn't anyone at Lenox smart enough to run Imperial. One of the Imperial men who had been in the business for years and years and was knowledgeable and knew what the market was, was put out to pasture. Lenox brought in a man who was a business major but he didn't know what was selling or where it was selling. Lenox did shore up the crystal business. If you wanted to buy Imperial Glass you had to buy a certain amount of Lenox Crystal and the dealers did not like that. It was the beginning of the downfall.

Russ also said the factories he went into looked the same as they had looked for 50, 60 or 70 years. They still had electric wires running down the walls with insulators. Absolutely no changes - a failure to change with the times. At Imperial every piece of equipment had gas burners - natural gas burners from the 50's. That is when gas was 52¢ a thousand feet. They couldn't get improvements in time. They then were deep in debt and could not downsize their operation to get out of trouble. You can't downsize a company of 500 employees and have one shop carry the overhead.

In 1980 Tiffin stopped production and they started bringing in blanks from Ireland. They cut this glass until 1983. They were bringing truckloads of glass into Tiffin. They were pushing twelve million dollars a year out of the Tiffin factories and they couldn't make it on twelve million. At the time they were bringing truckloads of imported lead crystal from New York. In a factory they had women re-boxing it, into Tiffin boxes, putting it back on the truck and it left the factory the same day. This eventually caught up with them. In reply to a question Russ said that it was junk - crazy stuff, candleholders. It was not fine glassware. Russ also said that there is a lot of Duncan now being sold that is actually Tiffin - but that is another story.

Now the question is where is the industry going from here? Russ didn't think anyone has the answer for the simple reason that as the companies are being liquidated the molds are going in all different directions. A lot of Imperial molds went to Summit Art Glass (Russ' company), to Germany and a lot of them are now collecting dust over in Indiana because they were bought for Fostoria. Lancaster Colony owns Fostoria. They own Tiara. They own Indiana. It is a big conglomerate. They bought every mold that was left at Imperial for \$10 each. Russ was able to get some of the dip molds he wanted when he was there. The Heisey Williamsburg molds were there. There was some effort to get some of the molds to keep them off the market and on the shelf. The Heisey Collectors bought all the Heisey molds except the Williamsburg line. Those went to Fostoria and Fenton. From Fenton they

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went to Lancaster Colony in Columbus into a huge warehouse and they moved from there to Indiana. Just to show you how things go this was my conversation with the vice president of marketing for Lancaster Colony. He was asked if they decided to sell any of the molds yet. The reply was that they were still cataloguing them. Russ told him that he had read that they were no longer making hand pressed glassware. Russ was told that this was true. Russ then asked who was making the Tiara home party glass for them. The reply was that Fenton was making it for them and also that Fenton was making the Princess House Glass (another party plan line). Princess House is a \$165 million company owned by Colgate Palmolive. They are closing the Louis Glass Company down. They had purchased it a few years before and had 24 shops working at one time. Now there is a complete brand new factory in Massachusetts. It runs at capacity and they are still getting someone else to make glass. Russ declared that the home party plan is dead. No matter what glass company starts it up, it is dead.

So where do we go from here? Russ didn't know. Russ knows where he is going. He has a one shop factory. He has seven employees. He has 650 molds. He will never have to buy another mold in his lifetime or his boy's lifetime if he chooses to stay in the business. That will be his choice. He is going to continue to make glass and is making it out of old molds. Some people are upset about that and Russ understands. "But they should have gotten upset when the factories sold the molds because when the Vogelongs bought these molds the factories didn't care. You buy the mold and it is yours. You do with it what you want. You can walk into my factory at any time, 8 to 4, Monday to Friday. We prefer to have someone bring you up front (to the glass making area) but if you can't find anyone you can walk right up front and see what we are making at any time. We don't have anything behind locked gates. We aren't hiding anything. We sell to everyone. The market is not really to the collector. We sell to the Ma and Pa gift shops, flea markets.."

Then the members raised the question about marks on the glass. Russ said that everyone isn't interested in the marks. Even though the Tiara party plan business is gone we must remember that the year before Princess House did \$165 million and there were years that they did \$240 million. Somebody bought all that "stuff" and not a piece of it was marked. There's a lot more glass sold in this country that is unmarked than marked. So the market is there. Russ' sales are to the public and the question of having a mark or not as yet isn't important.

Again a member wanted to express the importance of the mark for others. The glass can be authenticated. Sometimes it establishes who and when it was made. This is important to the collector. It was agreed that we could have a long discussion about the presence or absence of the mark and not settle it. Russ was then asked if it wouldn't just be a help for people to be able to distinguish the old from the newly made glass. At least if the glass were being marked you could then be sure that it was indeed new glass. Russ agreed that was correct. But Russ also said that Fenton cannot sell nearly the amount of opalescent plum now that it is marked as they did before without the mark. The company cannot stay alive on collectors. There is no company that Russ knows of that had unmarked glass that suddenly became viable because it then marked the glass. Another member stated that the mark problem is going to be around for a long time and if you are a true collector you will have to learn without depending on a mark how to select what is good and special.

Russ agreed with this. He has been on both sides of the fence on this issue. He was and still is a collector. When they started collecting Imperial had made a lot of glass out of Cambridge molds and he was willing to defy us to tell the difference about Caprice Blue and whether or not it was made at Cambridge! Or was it made at Imperial?

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The only reason that there is a record of what was made at Imperial was a box of file cards recording everything made in the Cambridge molds. If that box had gone into the trash, it would have been anyone's guess what was made there. Again Russ said that a lot of molds went to Germany and a lot went to Lancaster Colony. Then Russ added that a lot of them may never get used. Who will buy them? Russ said he has lots of money invested in the glass he collects and the best way to protect it is to get around and see what people are doing.

People making glass can't make money by keeping what they make a secret. If Russ takes a mold off the shelf and makes six pieces and gets \$300 it won't keep him alive (in business). He must take that mold off the shelf and make a 1000 (pieces) and sell them for \$4. He cannot take a mold off the shelf and use it once or twice in his market. He would never survive even as small as his business is. Russ was then asked if he was now making glass with the Cambridge or Heisey trade marks on them. His reply was that he has only one mold that has the Cambridge trade mark and he had not used it yet. Russ does not have any Heisey molds.

Russ explained the story of the Heisey molds which were in the possession of Imperial Glass at the time Imperial was liquidated. He began by saying that at the time of the liquidation money was no object for the Heisey people - the Heisey people referred to the Heisey Collectors. Russ was correct about that. \*I do belong to a Heisey Glass Club here in Washington and I was astonished at the ease - a least comparative ease with which the Heisey Collectors pledged money and gave generous amounts to the Board of Directors to facilitate the purchase of the available molds to be held by the Heisey Collectors to keep the molds together and prevent their being used to make reproductions in the marked molds of glass of an inferior quality and to safeguard the authenticity of the existing Heisey glass. For many this was a business investment because many of the collectors and members of my group are dealers. However, the enthusiasm was just as great among those members who are just collectors. More than \$225,000 was given or pledged immediately to secure those Heisey molds. Indeed, after the purchase arrangements were made to move the Heisey molds back to Newark into a warehouse there to be cleaned, stored and catalogued by these devoted Heisey collectors. Among these molds were some that are for glass of which there are, as yet, no known examples. A real labor of love among the Heisey folk. There was a great celebration in Newark, Ohio on the day that the Heisey molds "came home". \*

(\*\*Editor's note between \*)

Back to Russ' story of the liquidation at Imperial. The group that handled the process were from Columbus and they are the same people who liquidated the DeLorean plants. They took on the Imperial plant because it was a sure thing. They purchased the place for \$660,000. Heisey Collectors put over \$200,000 into the molds right away and the land was sold for \$70,000. Lancaster Colony paid \$120,000 for the collectors crystal line. L. E. Smith spent \$20,000. Russ spent approximately \$78,000 for some Westmoreland and Imperial molds, a few Tiffin molds and a lot of Cambridge molds. But - at today's market prices the molds are worth about 2.4 million dollars. That's where the heart of the glass business is - it's the molds. You have to have them. You can make 123 different colors. Collectors appreciate odd colors. The every-day man doesn't care about all this. You can show him slugs or rubina (three colors) and he doesn't care. It doesn't affect him at all. He likes cobalt. 99% of what Russ made in two years is ~~cobalt~~ blue. Russ will make it for 50 years if that is what it takes to survive. It is a tricky business to be in and the name of the game is survival. We are going to do what it takes to survive.

One of our members had a question about colors over a twenty year period-



do colors come and go? For example what about L.E. Smith's avacado? It has apparently been given up. Russ replied that they gave it up because it is a dead horse. The big problem for the factories was if they went to a gift show and they heard that so and so glass company was selling lots of pink they all went home and made pink glass. It was like Fenton's going into the import business. A month later L.E. Smith had every kind of import in their showroom just like Fenton and when you diversify you weaken yourself. If you are a glass manufacturer you better be making glass, especially in hard times. Now, when times are good and anything you buy will sell then you can diversify. Lenox was in everything. They bought Mexican pottery. They would go down there and buy it for a dollar and sell it for \$50. Russ knows a man who ran a division at Lenox and knows this to be so. Lenox is divesting itself of this because it is all dead. The American public got smart.

"Well, that about raps up what I had to say."

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Paul Miller then asked if we could have a question and answer session, even though Russ had welcomed the questions during his talk. Russ agreed and the members were delighted. We will try to summarize the questions and answers for the next Newsletter. Russ had so much interesting information for us that I know we could have continued for hours. Perhaps we can do it again sometime. Needless to say Russ received a great round of applause and had an extremely satisfied audience. Hopefully our members will remember all the other questions they thought of the next days and weeks and jotted them down to ask Russ at another time.

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The great lesson to be learned from this wonderful talk by Russell Vogel song is that we better become more serious about our own talents for identification. We must read, and indeed study, the characteristics of glass - the size, the color, the shape (the silhouette) and the design itself which may be a clue to a certain period, rather than become too dependent on a trademark or a signature on a piece of glass. At the last big glass show there was a piece signed in script "Steuben Frederick Carder" - it appeared to be like Mr. Carder's signature but no one who saw the glass believed it to be Steuben. Indeed, most said absolutely not Steuben. We have a piece of almost identical glass (shape slightly different) and it has never been suspected to be anything other than possibly unmarked Loetz. It has all those characteristics but no signature or mark of any kind. The price on the piece in question was \$425.00. It was my curiosity about the cost that made me pick it up to see the price since my own piece was acquired at little cost. What a shock! Russ' tales of the rambling molds should be taken very seriously!

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We have a serious request to make of our members. It would be beneficial for everyone if we could establish some ongoing communication among our members. As I read through the past issues of the Newsletter I realized what a gold mine they really are for our collectors. The generosity of those among us who have spent years collecting glass and becoming well informed in the process is certainly matched by the curiosity and interest of the collectors of less experience. Our Newsletter must take the place of the local glass club meeting and lectures for many of us who are not conveniently located to benefit from that kind of great association. We want your questions. We will try to find the answers. We are able to have consultation with the Stretch Glass experts! Berry Wiggins has often suggested that we should try research at the Library of Congress. That's a priority! Please, let's hear from you - letter, phone call or even a tape. Soon. And often.

A bit more about the coming Convention in May 1989 in Marietta, Ohio-

Joanne Rodgers, President of the Stretch Glass Society, invited David E. Richardson, publisher of the Glass Collector's Digest, to speak to us at the banquet next Spring in Marietta. Mr. Richardson has confirmed that he will indeed be our guest and speak to us then. We will have the opportunity to learn about the business of getting information together and circulated to glass collectors. The Glass Collectors Digest has become very popular among the members of the many glass collectors groups here in the Washington, D.C. area. Since the magazine features articles and pictures about all kinds of glass, new and old, rare pieces and the more easily available ones, and in every price range, there really is something to interest everyone. It is a good addition to our continuing education program as glass collectors.

Berry Wiggins has made arrangements for our accommodations in Marietta. We will bring you more definite information in the next Newsletter. Meanwhile, be sure to mark your calendar - May 3 to 5 in Marietta, Ohio. Don't forget!

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William Heacock  
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We were all saddened to receive the news of Bill Heacock's death in August. We will surely miss Bill's enthusiasm for glass collecting. His determination to know more about each piece of glass has resulted in all the wonderful things he shared with us through letters, phone calls, articles, books and just conversations when he was wherever we happened to be. Bill left us all quite a legacy!

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About the coming "Iridescent Glass" book- Some weeks ago I had a phone conversation with Berry Wiggins. At the time Berry had hoped that the book might be available for the next Stretch Glass Convention. The latest information is that the publication may be delayed beyond that time. We are all very much interested in another book because there is little information today about Stretch Glass. We certainly rely on Berry's earlier book and the book by Kitty and Russell Umbraco, and aren't we fortunate to have these authors within our group and so very willing to share their information and their enthusiasm!

Berry had suggested that we print again some information about the chemistry of the glass colors. So far I have not found it in any of the Newsletters in my possession. However, there sure is lots of invaluable information in these early Newsletters. The question and answer columns that are in many of the Newsletters are fascinating to me. No other Stretch Glass collectors live near me and I am not able to have much knowledgeable conversation about the glass in an ongoing basis. During 1978-79 there was a "contest" to name the patterns. We will see if we can put this story together for you again (especially for newer members) and update the material after consultation with some of our "in house" experts.

The Newsletters describe lots of pieces that are never seen for sale here. There does still seem to be a fair amount of Stretch turning up at Carnival glass affairs in the Washington area and also at the depression glass shows since it was made in depression glass time. We do have a good bit of what appears to me to be new and imported from Europe.



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or send it to you to share with them.