

THE TORCH

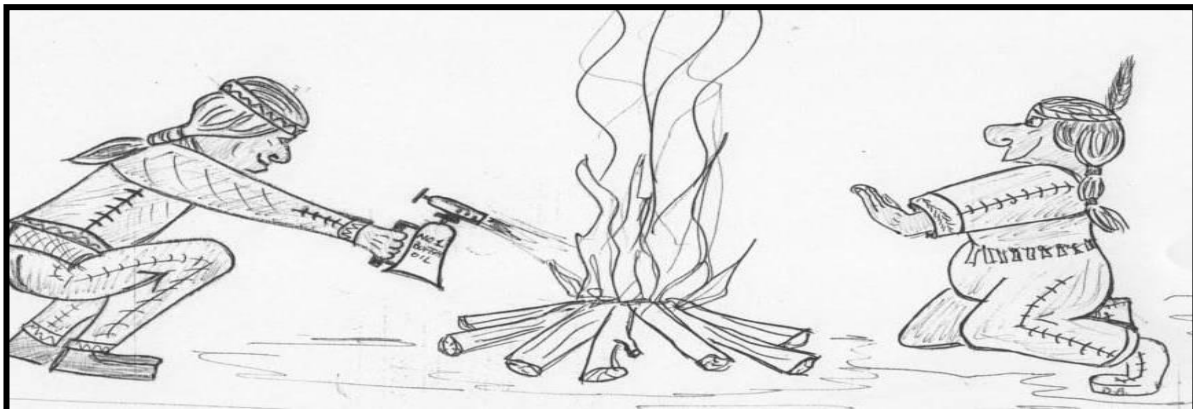
NEWSLETTER OF THE BLOW TORCH COLLECTORS ASSOCIATION

Issue #53

June 2012



An Otto Bernz No. 6 Auto Blow Torch.
From the collection of **Ted Maire**. See page 2.



Even the American Indians used blow torches!
A sketch from the desk of **Dick Bernard**

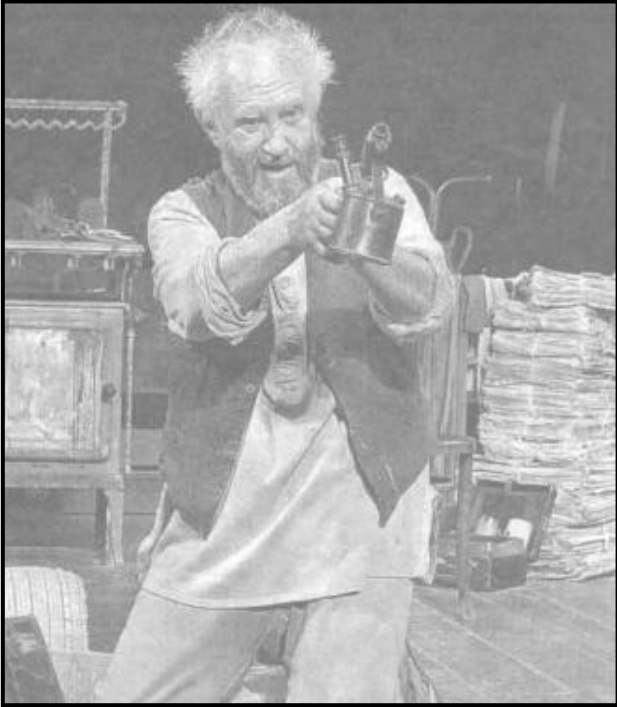
NEW MEMBERS

Ole Falk Madsen of Slagelse, Denmark has been a torch collector since 1993 and has amassed over seven hundred fifty pieces, of which six hundred have been restored. Due to the size and uniqueness of his collection, his local newspaper wrote an article about him and his torches. Ole is no stranger to blow torches since he used them extensively as a young painter years ago.

WELCOME ABOARD!



NOTES FROM ALL OVER



Gary Fye sent in this newspaper clipping, shown at the left, from the June 1, 2012 New York Times showing an actor wielding a European blow lamp on stage. The actor, Jonathan Pryce, portrays Davies in “The Caretaker”, a 1960 Pinter classic about the interface between a tramp and two odd brothers. It is difficult to determine the model; however, can anyone identify the blow lamp?

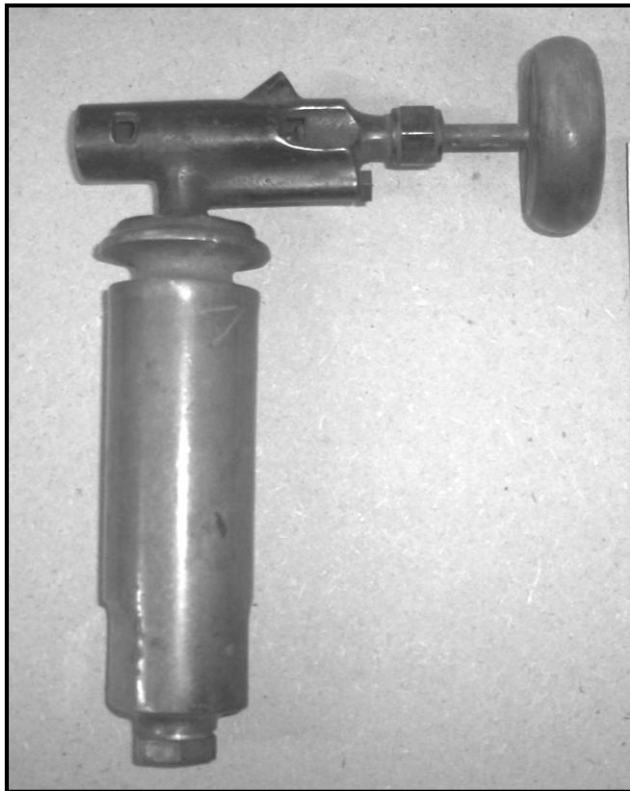
Have you ever seen the movie “Worlds Fastest Indian” featuring Anthony Hopkins? The movie is a 2005 American/New Zealand biographical film based on the Invercargill, New Zealand speed bike racer Burt Munro and his highly modified Indian Scout motorcycle. **Al Austin** recently saw the movie and noted that Anthony Hopkins used a blow torch to melt some lead out of old car batteries. Burt Munro would use the lead as weight on his racing motorcycle. It is worth a look if you have not seen the movie. Al, we hope you are feeling better.

The front page photo was sent in by **Ted Maire**. “I recently acquired a late model Bernz auto torch, a very heavy torch weighing in at 4lbs 7oz. It was manufactured in Rochester NY and bears the No. 6 on the pump knob. This torch must have been manufactured in the very early 1940s since it has a significant amount of brass and bronze in its component parts. As WWII progressed, brass, bronze, and copper were needed for the war effort. During this period, the use of non-ferrous metals was minimized in the manufacture of torches.”

“I find it interesting that this torch was given the model No. 6 by Bernz. The number 6 has been assigned to many other Otto Bernz auto torches.



Prior to acquiring this torch I had five other Bernz model No. 6s, each one different from the other. Some are earlier than the others, some have diamond shapes pressed into the tank and some do not. Of the ones that have diamonds, some have the Bernz name inside the diamond, and some don't. I am also aware of three other 6s that I do not have in my collection. That's a lot of 6s! Could this be the last auto torch assigned the model No. 6? I'm not sure, but I will keep looking."



Ron Hartse submitted a photo, shown at left, of a very unusual looking blow torch. "It seems to be a high quality item. The burner is very smooth with no casting marks and the tank is made from heavy cast brass. The notch on the upper portion of the tank seems to be for some sort of a holding bracket." Can anyone identify this odd looking torch?

The color photo on [the back page](#) was sent in by **Les Taylor**. It is a Montgomery Ward firepot or furnace from the 1950s. It looks very similar to an illustration of a No. 6118 Montgomery Ward Lakeside brand as shown on page 308 in VINTAGE BLOWTORCHES.





TED'S CORNER



BTCA member **Ted Maire** is an avid torch collector, but also an experienced restoration expert. We decided to print some of Ted's restoration tips since so many members do restoration work on blow torches and other similar items. We always welcome feedback and would like to hear from members regarding these restoration tips....please let us know what you think.

Welcome to **TED'S CORNER**.

Here is a bit of Ted's background: "I was born during WWII and was a child of the 194's and 1950s. I spent two years in the army and I am a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. In 1968 I married my best friend Rose and we are still married and still best friends. I have a degree in accounting and I retired about three years ago. I have one son, also named Ted, and a four year old grandson, Ned Maire who is also the youngest BTCA member."



"I have always enjoyed working with my hands. It was more rewarding than debits, credits, bits, and bytes. I have always sought the dramatic "before & after". In my childhood years it was all about repairing and refinishing old single barrel shotguns. In later years it was about cars, antique trunks, furniture, and anything else a friend or relative would bring me that was in dire need of restoration. It is this background that I pull from to restore blow torches. Some of the information, techniques, and materials used to restore cars, guns, trunks, etc. is transferable to blow torches. All my work is done in my back yard or on my porch with simple tools and materials that are readily available. I think I am probably representative of most BTCA members. If I can do it, anyone can, no major investment required."

REFINISHING FERROUS METAL PARTS

"As you know, ferrous metals like steel and iron oxidize over time. Eventually, the surface of the metal turns a blue/black color under the rust. Also, some ferrous metal parts are heat treated in the forming process. This also turns the surface of the metal a blue/black color. The cleaning process (wire brushing, chemicals, etc.) during restoration usually removes the color and returns the metal to its basic gray color."

"The original blue/black color can be restored by using Instant Gun Blue. This product is used to refinish or repair the finish on gun barrels and other blued parts. The clear liquid applies with a cotton ball and immediately changes the color of the bare metal to blue/black. This is called a "cold" bluing process. The brand I use is "Birchwood Casey Perma Blue". There are many other brands such as "Van's" and "Brownell's Formula 44/40". I don't think the brand you use will matter. You can find gun blue at any sporting goods store that sells firearms or online. It also comes in a paste form that I have never used. I have been using the same three ounce bottle for a few years and it cost less than ten dollars."

"I recently restored an Everhot SHSI model No. 20. The burner shield, feed tube, and front rest were all very well rusted pieces of steel. After subjecting the parts to rust stripper solvents and a rigorous medium wire wheel brushing, they became a shiny gray color. I used the gun blue to bring back what I feel is the "aged metal" or "heat treated" color. With gun blue, the more applications, the darker the finish gets. I find this process works well on steel feed tubes, steel wind guards, the pump knob and cap on White torches, and jet control rods. It is very easy to use; just follow the instructions on the container. The instructions will recommend using gun oil on the refinished surface to prevent rusting. I use an automobile paste wax instead. Some people like shiny steel, but for me, it doesn't get any better than polished bronze, brass, and blued steel."



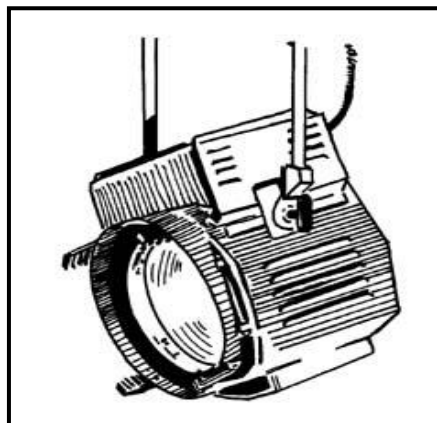
BTCA WEBSITE

Graham Stubbs is considering establishing a new BTCA website. We actually had a website years ago; however, our Web Master was in the military and shortly after establishing our website, he was sent to Afghanistan for an extended tour of duty. That website was later dropped since we could not locate a replacement Web Master.

Graham is willing to start up another BTCA website; however, he is looking for another volunteer that would be willing to help him keep the website up-to-date with current information. All you would need is a computer and access to the Internet. If you are interested, please contact Graham directly at GSTUBBS222@AOL.COM. Please consider helping us to make this new website possible for your information and enjoyment.

IN THE ~~SPOT~~ TORCH LIGHT

This is the sixth in a series of personal interviews with various BTCA members. This interview was conducted via emails between **Dr. Charles Smith** and **Ron Carr**.



Dr. Charles Smith and his lovely wife **Pat** reside in Northport, Alabama. Northport is a city in Tuscaloosa County in the west central part of Alabama. Located on the Black Warrior River across from downtown Tuscaloosa, it is currently the 24th largest city in Alabama with an estimated population of 25,000. The name Charles Smith is well known to BTCA members from Charles' extensive contributions made to the two BTCA published torch reference books as well as hundreds of other bits of data that have been utilized in our newsletter articles. His access to a vast array of old trade magazines and periodicals through his previous library affiliations has proven to be most valuable for torch data. A large portion of data for both reference books was sourced by Charles, and he continues his research work today.

TT: Are you originally from Alabama?

CS: No, I was born in Paris, Texas, a small town in northeastern Texas. My parents owned a farm west of Paris, with milk cows, pigs, sheep, chickens, bee hives, and even a small apple orchard.

TT: Any siblings?

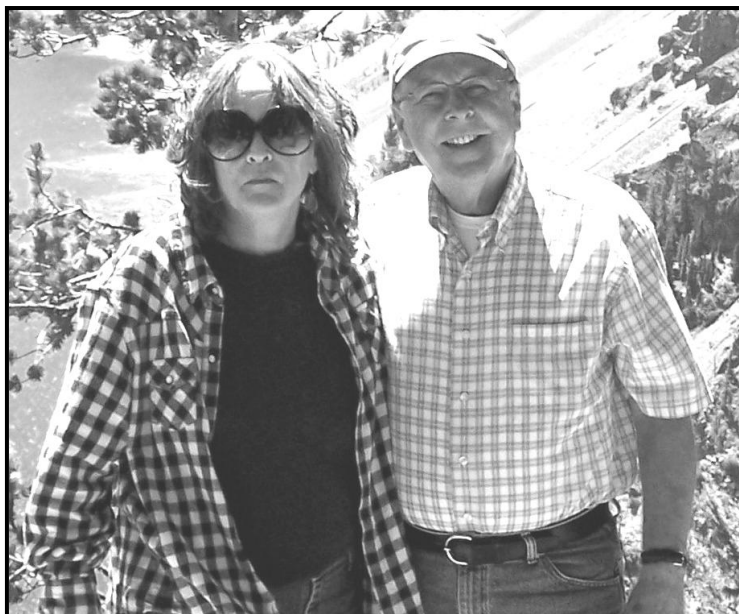
CS: Yes, I have an older and younger brother. The three boys and Dad made an effective farm team, managed to be sure by my Mom.

TT: Tell us about the family farm and your farm experience.

CS: Our main source of income was from our dairy herd which required milking, by hand, twice daily. After breakfast, and before sunrise, the milk cows required our attention. Then later in the day, a second milking was necessary. I think we had maybe 40 milk cows, and a bull or two. At times, those 40 cows often seemed like 100 or more! Between milking chores, most of our days were spent bailing hay for the cows. With the three boys and Dad, we made an efficient team cutting, then raking, then bailing the hay. Dad had several large fields dedicated solely to grass for our dairy operation. We also bailed hay for many neighbors, never taking money but simply asking for a share of the bailed hay.

TT: Wow! That sounds like a lot of work for a kid. Was life tough on the farm?

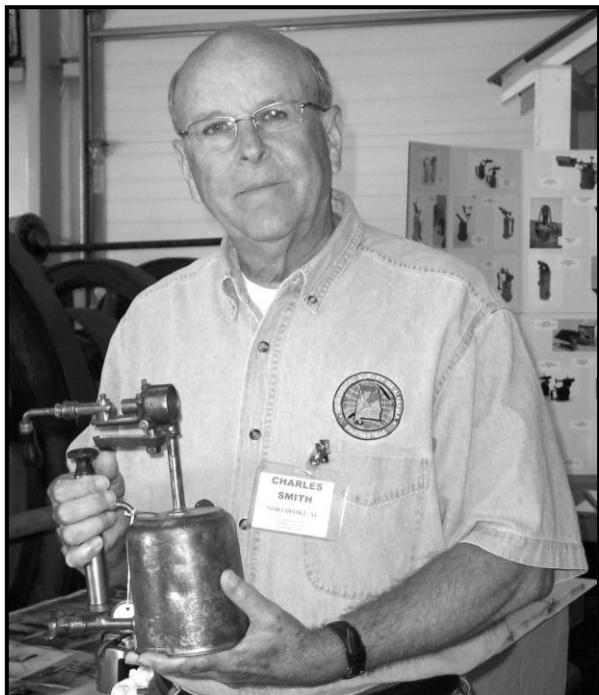
CS: During those years on the farm, we had no electricity. Although in the late 1930s and 1940s fully 90% of urban dwellers enjoyed the availability of the resource, we were in that 10% without electricity. Lighting in our home, and barn, was from pull-down lamps fueled by butane. Some lamps had three or four mantles and were quite impressive at illumination.



Heating water for bathing or washing clothes or dishes was furnished by a butane water heater. There was no piped-in water, nor a water-well. Our water was from rain which drained off our roof through a series of gutters and retained in a large cistern, or tank. To be sure, there were many summer months with little or no rain, this requiring the hauling of water from the nearest town.

TT: Wow again! Most of us never experienced such hardships as children. There must have been many “lessons learned”?

CS: I mention these early beginnings because the work ethic they instilled had such a positive impact on my later years. I think one can even see it in my current philosophy of torch collecting. Additionally, the lack of electricity on the farm resulted in the necessity for Dad’s first blowtorch, a Sears Roebuck torch proudly residing in my current collection.



TT: What happened to the farm?

CS: In my sophomore year in high school my parents sold the farm and moved to Dallas, where I graduated in 1956.

TT: Your degree is in Geology, how did you decide on that direction?

CS: You may not know but Dallas is sitting on chalky sediments that accumulated about 80 million years ago in a warm shallow sea. These sediments are rich in a diverse assemblage of fossils, including abundant shark, ray, and sawfish teeth which immediately caught my attention. This was the beginning of my future geological career.

TT: Did you collect any fossils in Dallas?

CS: While in Dallas, and later in Austin where I worked toward my undergraduate degree in Geology, I collected shark teeth both locally and

throughout eastern Texas. I soon had amassed a large collection of teeth, supplying both the Smithsonian Museum in Washington DC and the American Museum in New York City with collections of teeth.

It was the British Museum in London, however, that I recall most vividly. They wanted bulk material from my collecting sites, not individual teeth. So away I went with shovels and large burlap sacks with plastic inner liners, filling each to my carrying limit. Hundreds of bags of tooth-rich sediment, thousands of pounds, were shipped to London, thankfully at their expense. And for my effort, the Museum sent me beautiful collections of fully identified teeth from the British chalks. Plus, I received lists of the genera and species of teeth the Museum recovered from my shipments. When I graduated from The University of Texas at Austin in 1962, I possessed the premier collection of shark, ray, and other marine vertebrate fossils in private hands in the entire southern United States.

TT: What did you do after graduation?

CS: After graduation, I married and moved to Houston to continue graduate studies at the University of Houston. Two children soon came into the family, a son, Gregg, and a daughter, Debi. I had a full-time job as a laboratory technician with Tenneco Oil Co., a large exploration and production company with operations in many foreign countries. Can you imagine? I now had contacts with geologists all over the world, including Nigeria, Bolivia and Columbia, Alaska, North Africa, and other areas. Shark teeth started arriving from many exotic locales.

Although the collection was expanding exponentially, in my graduate work I was becoming more-and-more interested in microscopic fossils. These fossils are amazingly abundant, in most marine sediments totaling 80 billion per cc of sediment! One small sugar-cube size piece of rock, 80 billion fossils! I soon realized that the tooth collection was better in hands other than mine, and my collection was donated to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City where it is currently accessible to researchers from throughout the world.



Charles is holding a circa 1889 Clayton & Lambert "The Boss" Paint Burner in his right hand and a circa 1893 Quick Meal Stove Co. Paint Burner (recently acquired from member Mark Pedersen) in his left hand.

TT: Did you donate your entire fossil collection?

CS: No, I still have large collections of several types of fossil microscopic organisms, fossil vertebrate specimens, plus smaller collections of mineral and crystal specimens. I love collecting.

TT: Where did your Master's Degree lead you?

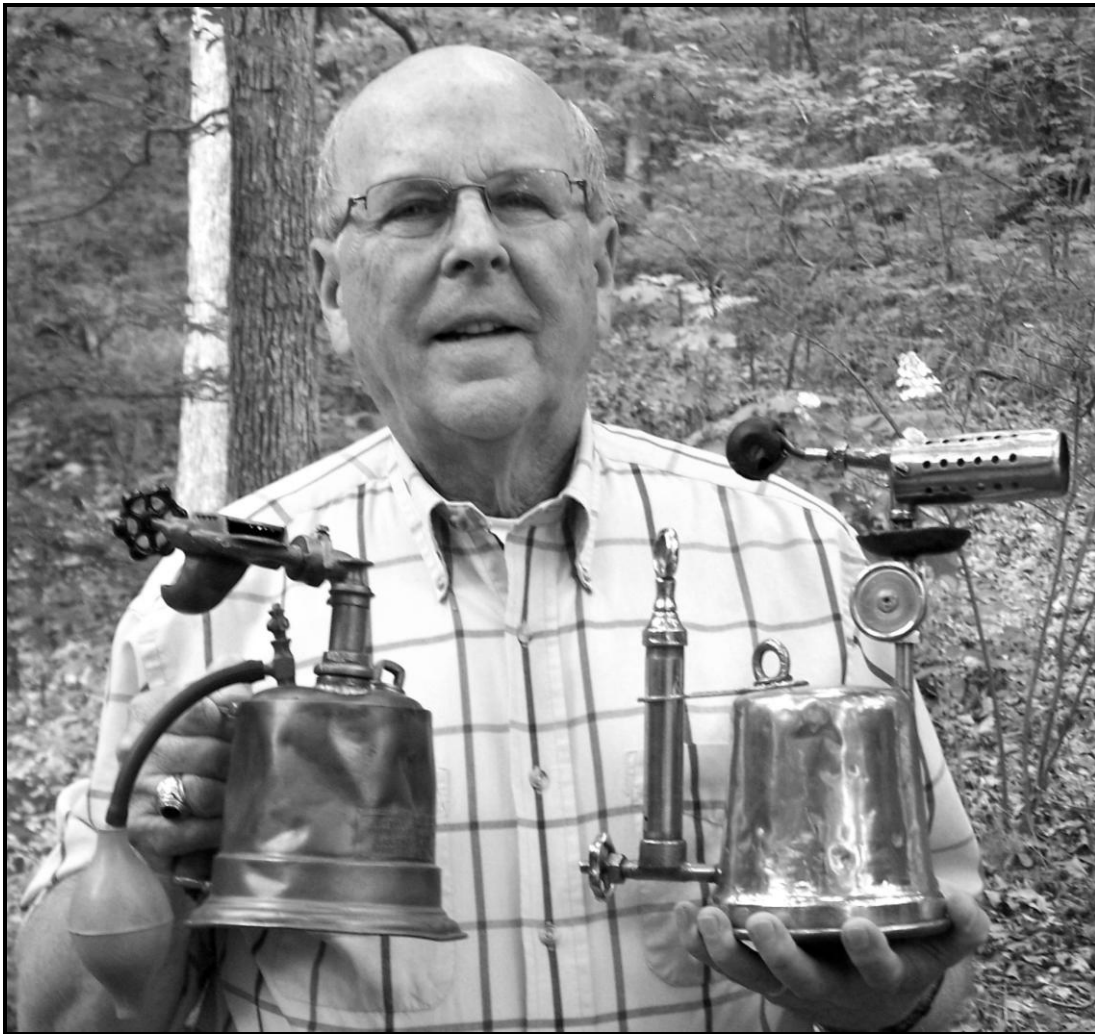
CS: After graduation with my Masters Degree in Geology, I remained with Tenneco Oil Company in Houston and later in Lafayette, Louisiana as a paleontologist with their offshore Louisiana operations. In 1969, I left Tenneco and returned to Dallas to enter further graduate studies at the Southwest Center for Advanced Studies and Southern Methodist University.

TT: What direction did you take after earning your Ph. D.?

CS: I graduated with my Ph. D. in Geology (paleontology) in 1973, and moved to Washington, D.C. where I conducted research in paleontology at the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History and taught Geology at George Washington University. Most of my research, and publishing, was conducted on sediments in the southeastern Gulf Coastal Plain, principally in eastern Mississippi, through Alabama, into western Georgia. In 1982, Tenneco offered me a senior-level position in Houston where I remained until 1987 when the company was sold.

TT: Did you remain in Houston?

CS: Following a divorce, I moved to Tuscaloosa where I joined the Geological Survey of Alabama. My research on Alabama's geology was soon resumed now while living on Alabama's richly fossiliferous sediments. Other studies followed, with my resume totaling over 250 titles on worldwide geology and paleontology, including co-authorship of a college-level textbook on paleontology, and innumerable technical presentations at professional society meetings. During my career, I have served as a member and officer of a number of local, national, and international professional society organizations. While employed by the Geological Survey, I taught Geology at The University of Alabama (U of A) part-time (I was given the title of Senior Professorial Lecturer!) and supervised a number of masters- and doctoral-level students.



Charles is holding a circa 1895 Union Heater Supply Co. "Favorite" Paint Burner in his right hand and a circa 1897 copper-tank Globe Gas Light Co. of Boston Globe Blow Torch in his left hand.

TT: Your PH. D degree is in Geology, paleontology, however, in past discussions, you have referred to your work as a micro paleontologist. Does a paleontologist require a higher level of education to become a micro paleontologist?

CS: By the time one begins to study for the Ph. D. in paleontology, the level of intensity, or difficulty, or the academic demands placed on a student are fairly uniform regardless of the specialty in paleontology. Some folks just don't like microscopes and prefer to work with things that can be seen with the unaided eye. For me, the realm of the tiny is a whole new world.

TT: How and where did you meet Pat?

CS: In 1990, while at the Alabama Geological Survey, I met a young secretary in the Survey who said "yes" to my marriage proposal. Her son, Jim, and daughter, Lisa, agreed and Pat and I have now been married twenty two years and live in Northport, Alabama. I retired in 2009 to torch research, honey-dos, gardening, long walks with our two dogs, and advisory activities with the U of A Department of Geology. Mine has been a wonderful journey.

TT: What would you guess is the total number of torches and torch related items in your ever growing collection?

CS: I would guess that I have about one thousand torches; maybe fifty soldering irons; a few alcohol irons (of the clothing variety for ironing fabric) which are, after all, just upside-down blowtorches; several methanol-fueled catalytic lighters; maybe fifty miniature blowtorches; and some Norman Rockwell blowtorch-related paintings.

TT: You have supplied torch restoration information in the past for the newsletter, and have restored torches. Do you still restore torches?

CS: In general, I leave most of my torches as found. However, if one is only partially refinished or needs to be illustrated, then I usually use my "magic fluid" techniques or ship it (them) to Ted. **Ted Maire** does a far superior job of restoration and polishing than I am capable of doing.

TT: If you were asked to choose, what would be your favorite torch?

CS: That's a tough question for me. I have five or six torches which are my favorites. Of those, I suppose I'd select the Quick Meal Stove Co. Paint Burner (page 337 in *Vintage Blowtorches*) which I recently acquired from my good friend and fellow BTCA member **Mark Pedersen**. I have wanted that torch since I first saw it at our BTCA meeting in Brookings, Oregon in 2006. To my knowledge, mine is the only known example in existence.

TT: What would you consider to be your most valuable torch?

CS: I would have to say my Clayton & Lambert No. 1 "The Boss" Paint Burner (page 67 in *More Vintage Blowtorches*). That one cost me several home mortgage payments!

TT: Do you collect any other items other than torches and torch related material?

CS: As I noted earlier, I collect mineral and crystal specimens. Additionally, I collect arrowheads and blades, ballpoint pens made from exotic woods, and polished oil-well core samples. I also have a few uncut sheets of US paper currency.

TT: Does Pat collect any items?

CS: Pat tells me that one collector in the family is quite sufficient, thank you! Pat enjoys making jewelry, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, anklets, and such. She makes Christmas decorations like small reindeer, Santa's, and several types of tree ornaments mainly as gifts for family and friends. She also makes all sorts of objects from small rounded rocks: cars, turtles, penguins, lady bugs, cats, spiders, even a hot dog. I sometime think she is having as much fun as I am!

TT: Your torch collection became so large; you extended your home with a large addition to house your ever growing collection. Did it meet your expectations?

CC: Given the quality of construction these days, I suppose the addition met my expectations. However, the space is far too small and I am thinking about getting a crew back out here and adding on another equal-size room. The addition floor size is 18 X 18 feet and even though I have several rows of front to back floor to ceiling shelves, there is still too little space. I have only about half of the collection on display; that is, they are readily accessible. The other torches are still in boxes stored above the "torch" room. The storage area above the room is all floored, so I can still "see" the torches in their boxes. It's not what I would desire, but until I can come up with additional shelving and air-conditioned space, I'll just have to struggle.



The addition onto Charles' home, during the early stages of construction.

TT: You never mentioned on how you became interested in torches....what motivated you?

CS: My earliest interest dates from my childhood days on the farm, the early 1940s, watching my Dad soldering copper pipe and making farm-related repairs with his blowtorch. Several years later, I acquired my Dad's torch as the first one in my collection. The torches really sat idle for many years, and then the interest renewed and the collection "exploded" after I joined the BTCA in 1997. At about the same time I became interested in torch-related trade literature research.

TT: That is a very interesting life story...from a small town farm boy to a world renowned micro paleontologist. Any final comments?

CS: I credit my family and early life on the farm with my curiosity about the natural world, interests in fossils both large and small, and intense desire to learn and share my knowledge with others. These traits, with my great satisfaction in conducting research and publishing those findings, seem absolutely consistent with my current interests in torches and sharing findings. While I was employed doing geological research, and teaching part time, I published some 250 professional papers. I don't want to try to impress anyone. I only wish to make a point. I love research, and I love to stay occupied conducting research. My association with Ron and with Graham and our joint efforts to document blowtorches and unravel their history has been a great blessing. The fantastic BTCA members I have met personally, and those I have only corresponded with through emails, have made my days joyous indeed. My happiness is, in part, because of friendships. Thank you all!

In Memoriam

RAY HYLAND

By Graham Stubbs

Ray Hyland, the editor of the British blowlamp newsletter, BLOWLAMP NEWS, passed away recently at his home in Stowmarket, Suffolk, England, after a short illness. Ray was sixty-two years old. He leaves his wife Carole, and sons Jaime and Andrew.

Ray will be greatly missed by his family and friends, including those in the blowlamp/blowtorch collecting communities. His interests extended to farm machinery, including stationary engines and steam plowing. Ray was a good friend and colleague; Carole and Ray were generous hosts on the occasions when my wife Stephanie and I visited their home. Two years ago, Ray invited me to join him in a trip by van to the Blowlamp meeting in Belgium, one of the top highlights of my experience as a collector.

Ray ran his own business from home, providing a design and planning service, directed at extensions and alterations to property. He navigated the local authority approval process and also provided project management. His professionalism in his business activity carried over into the high quality of newsletters that he produced for the Blowlamp Society during the past nine years.



2012 BTCA EAST COAST CONVENTION

We mentioned the possibility in the December 2011 newsletter of arranging a September 2012 east coast BTCA convention. **Bob Fritz** graciously offered again to host the event at his facility in Joppa, Maryland. Unfortunately we did not receive sufficient responses to proceed. We suspect that a combination of the current economy and the impossibility of traveling by air and checking luggage filled with torches may have discouraged many members from attending.



A circa 1950s Montgomery Ward Firepot.
From the collection of Les Taylor.

THE TORCH

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three times per year; March, June, & December.

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THE PURPOSE of BTCA is to preserve the history of blow torches and related equipment, to encourage the identification, classification, and exhibiting of such equipment, also to promote the study and better understanding of operation, purpose, and application.

Membership in BTCA is open to any person sharing its interests and purposes. For membership information, write to: Blow Torch Collectors Association, 6908 April Wind Avenue, Las Vegas, NV 89131-0119, email to: RONLV@cox.net, or by phone: 702 395-3114.

THE TORCH encourages contributions from anyone interested in our purpose. Articles can be submitted in any format and should include supportive literature whenever possible. All submittals should be sent to Ron Carr at the above address.

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