

"small talk"

official newsletter of Club Olszewski, Inc.
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ISSUE 29

APRIL, 1997

Welcome to Club Olszewski - Year #8. We guess it's true, time does fly when you're having fun! Since it took almost four years to come into being because of incorporating, becoming "non-profit" and delays by Goebel, that's actually year #12 for us. Not counting Bob and our honorary members, 29 of our initial 100 CHARTER members are still subscribing, that's great! The "single" membership currently stands at 118 and there are 32 "dual" memberships which means Bob has 182 active Fan Club members.

Sad news once again. One of Bob's fans, Patricia Lee from Mercer Island, WA died of cancer. Our deepest sympathy goes out to her husband, Jerry, and the family.

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Before we go any further, some of you received this letter with a "chewed up back flap" envelope. We get the envelopes ready before we stuff them and didn't realize some of the gummed seals had closed by themselves. We didn't want to re-do them, especially since they were already stamped, so we taped them shut. Sorry!

The renewal gift for 1997/98 is another patch, this time of "Dashing Through the Snow". We call it "Oh What Fun It Is..." You can fill in the rest, i.e. to collect Bob's figurines, belong to the club, spend time with a loved one, take a little time out to relax - whatever!

Here's what Bob had to say about the 1997/98 club photo. "I'm sending you my selection of the photo for this year. It's me sitting on a rock next to Eva's dad. We walked down to the bottom of this huge canyon to a stream. It was a little bit scary in these woods because there are mountain lions in that area. Ed carries a pistol with him when we go that deep into the woods. The walk was just beautiful. I really like this picture, it's Bob! I thought it would be nice to show one of me on vacation, taking time off."

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Jacci and her dad were vacationing in Florida so I decided to take care of having prints made of this picture. Since last year's membership photo was of Bob and his staff, we decided to make a label for the back to let you know who these talented people are.

In looking over the photos we've sent you over the years, I was unclear which was for which year. Having a little extra time on my hands, I decided to make up labels for ALL the pictures. I checked the members' years of belonging to the club and put the appropriate labels for all YOUR pictures in an envelope and it's being included with this mailing. Hope you kept all the fan club newsletters and things in one folder so you'll have no trouble putting these little "identifiers" on the pictures.

- Wallie -

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In the last newsletter we included a calendar for 1997 with two pictures of Bob doing the latest dance craze, "The Olszewski". Bob loved it and we've gotten several cute comments about it from collectors. Hope you've been practicing so you can perform it for Bob at the International Collectible Exposition in Long Beach or Rosemont!

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Our favorite master artist, Bob, will soon be celebrating his 52nd birthday. Each year in the April issue of "small talk" we repeat our proclamation first made in 1990.

WE DECLARE THAT MAY 2, NO MATTER WHAT YEAR,
SHALL HENCEFORTH BE DECLARED AS ROBERT W. OLSZEWSKI DAY.
In commemoration of that day, every club member should purchase an Olszewski figurine in honor of Bob's birthday! If funds are low, just send him a card, Ok?, OK!!!

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Once again we had a very informative conversation with Bob during which we asked him to send us a copy of the "Rare Items List" mentioned in the year end letter so we could share it with you. We were curious and thought you might be too. A copy of it is enclosed with this newsletter.

We won't be attending the Long Beach show but look forward to seeing many of you at Rosemont.

miniaturely,

Wallie & Jacqui



3/5/97 Phone Call From Bob

"I'm sitting at the window in my office looking out and it's very pretty today. We're getting a little bit of a breeze and the temperature is in the 70's.

- YEAR END LETTER -

The Core Program

I'd like to talk about the year end letter a little bit to give the people in the Fan Club a little insight so they know where I'm coming from. First of all, we decided to hold the year end letter because we had too many things happening to put it out early. We're getting a great response with our advertising and with the museum show; our mailing list has increased to 5,000 people. A mailing list of this size is costly, so Travis and I went through a number of scenarios to clean up the list. Another reason we were late was that we were having a lot of technical problems with "American Beauty" and we needed as much time as possible before releasing the brochure.

In the letter we described the Core, the Landscape and the introduction to the Sterling Program. In the last Study Group letter people were raising questions about what we were releasing and also the Sterling Program. So that collectors can view this from my point of view, the Core Program artistically is what I have been working on for the past 20 years. I have a good grasp of what makes those pieces work and what doesn't. I felt during the mid-years at Goebel I wasn't growing in the single figurative designs as much as I wanted. The Core Program reflects my goal to see how good I can make these four figurines and see if I can stay within the price range we have stated. I think it can be done. When I was at Goebel and releasing 40 designs, there was a time limit on how much we could spend on each piece. Now I'm trying to make each one of the new pieces come out as individual works of art and will give it the time it takes to achieve that.

The Landscape Program

The Landscape Program is more experimental and I have less experience in this work. I've only done two now and they are very difficult. To keep me fresh artistically, I need to have some experimentation in the painted art form. The other night I couldn't sleep and lay there from about two in the morning till five, so I thought about the landscapes. I decided since I was lying there anyway, I might as well think about something worthwhile. I went through the landscapes in my mind and thought about my ideas for next year and the future. I came up with a great approach. Collectors will have to wait and see how this evolves. There is some cross over between the core pieces and the landscape artistically but I think the landscape will take the art form to a different level. These will not be shipped automatically, all pieces in this program will have to be ordered.

The Sterling Program

Let me just say, I don't want you people to feel that you have to buy everything. The Sterling Program is experimental and we hope they will pick & choose. Because of our ongoing relationship over 20 years, people will stop and look at it and say, 'Gee, let's look and see what he's doing new and enjoy it!' I don't want people to feel we're putting stuff out there that they have to buy. If they get into that mode of thinking, they'll become frustrated and that's not what we want.

On the art side, I found when I worked at Goebel Miniatures, there is a certain style of work suited for precious metal. Because of the original art, smooth models such as Disney's Snow White, are difficult to read in Sterling. Without texture and contrast it is hard for the eye to discern one area from another. When you carve for Sterling, you have to carve with the objective of positioning smooth areas against textured areas.

The Sterlings, as you saw in our year end letter, are going to range in price from \$85 to \$850. I'm excited about the Sterling art because we can do a lot that we can't do with painting.

The Bracelet & Boxes

I don't see me ever doing a bracelet again. This is going to be a rarity. The earrings and bracelet came out as a natural extension of the Tinker's story. The real thrust of the design of the Sterling Program will be boxes. I am intrigued with them. This is not just a matter of sticking pieces on top of boxes. In miniatures, as an art form, boxes are very viable and I have been looking at them for years.

Last year at the start of the box concept I asked, 'Gee, I wonder how many boxes are in my house?' I collected around 18 and if someone would have said to me, 'Are you a box collector?' I would have said, 'No!' Some were given to me and some I purchased by myself. All are under 4". They are made out of sterling, wood, leather, bronze and porcelain. I have one that is 350 years old and another that was made around 200 years ago. They are pieces I have purchased because I liked them.

Closing Thoughts

I can understand people saying, 'Oh geez, I thought there were only going to be four or five pieces and now he's doing sterling!' We will stick to our word on releasing only four painted pieces in the core and one painted landscape per year, but please understand that the sterling is experimental and open stock. If you miss a piece one year, you'll be able to order it later.

- FOUR YEARS IN BUSINESS -

I feel comfortable with our dialogue with the Fan Club and the Study Group. When I went out on my own, I had a couple of choices. One, I could have said to Eva, 'Let's you and I do this, I've had it with a large studio!' That was four years ago and I was too young for that. We can always downsize in the future.

When I look back, the first year was just spent overcoming the start up and getting off the ground. The focus of our second year was getting production under control and trying to understand it. Last year, the third, I would say we redefined ourselves in how we look in the market. We built the booth, upgraded the brochures and expanded advertising. This year our focus will be on R & D, trying to refine the whole organization inside and simplifying things.

Last year I was saying to myself, 'You're a designer when you do this!' During my early years at Goebel Miniatures I was Bob the Master Artist Sculptor. Over the years I believe I have really evolved into Bob the Designer, a statement true now more than ever which is reflected in my work.

We now have a staff of 13. I think we're more organized but I'm still trying to gain on the schedule. We're working on the first of the 1999's right now, finishing the coloration on the 97's and carving the 98's. If you go back to the old issues of 'small talk' you'll notice I was carving the first six months of the year and painting the second six months. I've switched, right now I'm painting in the morning and carving in the afternoon.

Pieces Are More Complex

In the early years of Goebel I carved 60 hours on the simplistic pieces and up to 400 hours on the more complex pieces like the "Poultry Seller". The pieces we are doing today are running 300 to 400 hours on the low side and 1,200 on the high side. If you're looking at my time, you know I've only got 2,000 carving hours a year. I couldn't carve this many pieces with this level of intricacy by myself, they're too complex. To have this certain level of business and cover this many employees' incomes, expansion is a natural result.

- 1997 RELEASES -

The "American Beauty" is a piece we struggled with. Those flowers were just murder to do. I took a month out of my normal coloration schedule to work with Eva on the flowers and I'm extremely happy with the results.

I showed the "Summer", "Spring", "Winter" and "Fall" pieces three weeks ago at the show in Cambria. Two of these seasonal pieces will come out this year and the other two seasons next year. They are core pieces. When I showed them at the show, people said, 'Put me down for all four.' They're really an exceptional group! I can't see anyone buying them and ever breaking them up in the future. I think these will go out in sets, like the "Lady with an Urn".

The last core release of the year will be a commemorative piece and I'm also excited about it. I've already gone through the coloration of it. I've been carving for 20 years. No, it's not a self portrait, it's better than that. It's a replica of Meredith's doll house in miniature with her playing in front of it. I carved it so it would come out this fall. It's just real special. I did my first carving in November of '77 and here it is 20 years later. I thought it would be a nice way to commemorate the event. I'll have it at the Long Beach show.

The Landscape piece for this year is the hunt scene. The one seen at the Miniature Museum was not finished in coloration. Since then I muted the trees. The one at the museum was about my fourth run through and I did about eight or nine altogether. The hunt has moved the concept of landscape to a new level and I am certain collectors will enjoy it.

- 1997 PROMOTIONS -

I did the first show of the year at Mike Cluff Fine Art in Cambria, California in February. He had never sold our work. We had a great show and Eva and I loved staying at the beach. We've already committed ourselves for next year. We introduced our work to a whole new group of collectors again. Mr. Cluff told one of his customers to visit the museum show. He did, and this gentleman was so thrilled that he bought one of everything I've done since we started Olszewski Studios.

The other scheduled 1997 appearances are:

April 19-20	Int'l Collectible Expo	Long Beach, CA
June 28-29	Int'l Collectible Expo	Rosemont, IL
Oct 31-Nov 2	Miniature Show	Philadelphia, PA

We're looking forward to Long Beach. The people in California haven't seen our booth yet. I think we'll go with two cases for that show. The one on the left will have our new releases and the right one will display the past releases. I'm sure we're going to see for the first time a lot of new people that have been added to our list since the last Long Beach show in 1995.

The show at the Carole & Barry Kaye Museum of Miniatures in Los Angeles is coming down April 27th. People coming to the Long Beach show will have a last chance to see it. It was a great run and experience for me. We haven't picked up the second 'sign in' book yet, but I think we've pulled around 850 names out of the first one. That pushes our mailing list to around 5,000.

- PERSONAL NOTES -

Eva's in here throwing stuff at me again. 'You know Eva, this is so you!' I call her the rock throwing Italian. 'Now cut that out!!!'

How are my eyes? Unfortunately they've changed. You know, I've hit that over 50 mark. When I'm working here I use an opti-visor so I can't tell any difference. I can't tell when I read the paper, but when I'm signing at shows, I can tell without my opti-visor. I had a sense it wasn't as clear as I wanted it to be. Last week I went for an eye appointment and my doctor said my far vision had strengthened but my near vision had weakened a little. She was surprised I held on as long as this and now I have new glasses. I've had them for five days and I'm still trying to get adjusted to them. I don't use them for carving because I would rather use the opti-visor.

How was Christmas? We had a big Christmas Eve party here and Christmas Day was spent at Eva's folks. We brought in the New Year at Eva's parent's house as well and really enjoyed the holidays. I got some great shirts and new pants for Christmas. David came down for the holidays and we had the best visit ever. I took him down to the museum show and that particular weekend was packed. They have 6,000 people go through the museum in one week. The afternoon we were down there they probably had 600 people in the museum, I couldn't believe it.

Well, this brings another Phone Call From Bob to a close. I enjoy this informal way of telling collectors where I'm coming from and look forward to seeing everyone at the promotions."

- Robert Olszewski -

BUY BOB'S STUFF - BUY BOB'S STUFF - BUY BOB'S STUFF