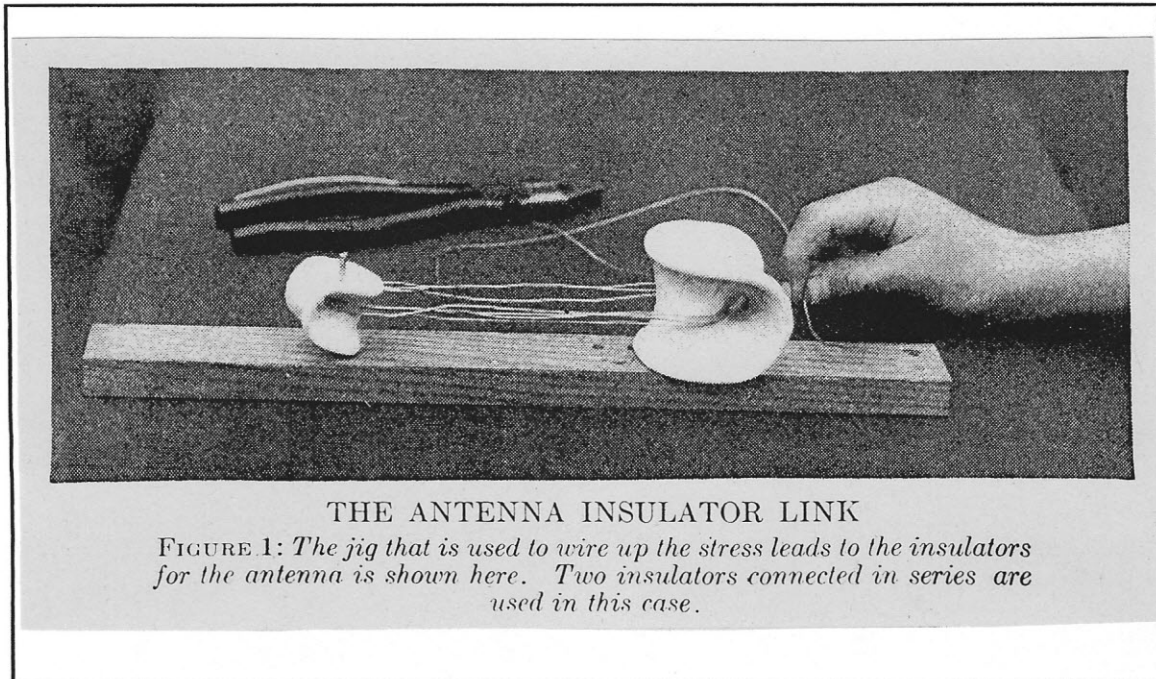


Old Familiar Strains

A newsletter for Collectors of Radio Strain Insulators and related items
Volume 2 No. 6

December 1995



Shell Insulators

(Story on Page 4)

2016 PDF edition

Editorial

by Dan Howard

Here we are at the end of our second year. An incredibly busy year for me (and probably for us all). I hope that you all enjoy happy and relaxing holidays. My Christmas card to you is on the back cover (thanks to the good people at L.S. Brach).

Publicity

We can thank **Carol McDougald** of Crown Jewels for including no less than three mentions about OES in their October issue! Its working! This month OES welcomes ten more readers! (see page 9). Welcome back to **Gene Condon** and **Phil Mayhew**.

Some have asked when I was going to include pictures of my collection in OES. Well, Carol "scooped" me with her Enumclaw Show Report (See Crown Jewels October, 1995 pg. 47). Of course that leaves more room in OES for pictures of your collections!

Articles

This issue features a number of short topics to help us wind up the year.

We return to the topic of cataloging our collections with updates from several readers. **Elton Gish's** tips on measuring and safety are timely and important. You will also enjoy reading what **Bob Drummond** and **Dick Mackiewicz** have to say on the subject.

I have appreciated the help of several readers with research information and article ideas recently. I was telling **Bob Stahr** that I think we already have blockbuster cover articles in place for the next two issues!

Please continue sharing article ideas, letters and photographs. It is amazing how several readers can share bits and pieces on a subject that, when put together, paint a fairly complete picture.

Renewals

Several of you have already sent in donations to for 1996. Thank you, I appreciate your support. I am budgeting to include color periodically throughout 1996 and plan to continue using the mailing envelopes. The February issue will include a complete roster. Please send in any address updates (E-mail addresses) etc. with your donations.

Shell Insulators!

by Dan Howard

Everybody probably has an EGG insulator. Right? Well, how about these English SHELL insulators!

My folks retired about four years ago and it has been hard to keep them here in Portland ever since. Loosely translated that means that I have two traveling "personal shoppers." When visiting antique shops in Bath, England, a few years back, they chanced to find a very strange looking strain insulator.

Although this large green insulator always generates comments when I show my collection, no one seems to know much about it. It is made of very thin, glazed porcelain. For its size, it is very light. I would expect the insulator's light construction to make it very susceptible to fracture (and a poor candidate for high-powered transmitting work).

During October, I attended a week of training in Eugene, OR, the home of the University of Oregon. Now, I assure you that I studied at least four hours a night. (Don't tell the boss but my "studying" was doing insulator research at the U of O library!) I about fell over when I turned the page in the October, 1926 Popular Radio and laid eyes on English strain insulators! I have reprinted the picture on this month's cover. Mine is like the one on the right.

The thrust of the article "How I linked up My insulators" is C. A. Oldroyd's jig for linking compression insulators in series. (See OFS April, 1995 pg. 1) Mr. Oldroyd writes, "...the insulators are the shell type--the usual type in England where I live." (He hails from Barrow-in-Furness, Lancashire, England).

My parents said that they saw shell insulators still in use on the English trolley lines during their visit. The article, however, is my first documentation that shells were used as radio strains.

The insulators in the picture appear white. I don't know if the color (white or dark green, like mine) is indicative of the intended application. If you know or have information about the green glazes that seem common to European insulators, please write in and let's share it with the readers.

Source: Oldroyd, C. A., "How I Linked up My Antenna Insulators," Popular Radio Vol. X no. 6, October 1926, pg. 550.

Measuring and Cleaning Insulators

by Elton Gish

In July, Elton Gish wrote a letter in reply to some of the topics covered in the June issue. The following tips were excerpted from his letter. [Ed.]

Measuring:

On page 6 [of the June issue], you talk about cataloging strains to the nearest inch whereby 2-7/8" would be rounded down to 2". I agree that you have to draw the line somewhere, but why not round up to 3"? The 2" category would be anything from 1-5/8" to 2-1/2".

I assume that you are cataloging based on overall lengths in which case it would make more sense to me to round up to the nearest whole number and/or use 1/2" increments.

US vs. Metric measurements:

Most people do not relate to the metric system and...find it confusing to convert. If an insulator is 3-1/2" long, why not enter 3.5 in your computer listing or 4.875 for 4-7/8"? Spreadsheets allow various formats that would yield numbers rounded to the nearest tenth (4.9) or whole number (5)...although I see your point in using mm for the diameters, using metric lengths will probably result in odd looking numbers and confuse many people. Old US strains were not produced using metric measurements so why catalog them that way?

Cleaning insulators:

Lighter fluid is essentially high flash, narrow boiling range gasoline which produces vapors that hang low to the ground, are not easily dispersed, hence quite flammable and can readily travel to a source of ignition (on a warm day). May I suggest Acetone for removing the "sticky" from labels? It evaporates and disperses much more readily into a diluted form that is much less flammable and will not easily seek an ignition source since it is lighter. Try a hardware store or use non-oily fingernail polish remover.

Insulator Shapes by Bob Drummond

The following items were excerpted from a recent letter by Bob Drummond in reply to the June, 1995 issue. [Ed.]

1) Since the alphabetical descriptors [see OES June, 1995 pg. 3-4] - V, M, U - seem to describe the center area - why was Figure 2 classed as a "V"? It looked like an "O" to me. Maybe I missed something.

2) My brother asked me one day - "Why don't you guys just call them End-sulators?" I kinda like this version myself. What do others think?

[In reply to suggestion 1, I guess that we were looking at how the ribs looked in profile (from the center axis to the edges of the ribs) in order to make the system work. Since each rib was larger in diameter than the one next to it culminating in the largest center rib, this formation is loosely classified as a "V." The rate of increase was certainly gradual enough to make my wife ask virtually the same question.

As for your second suggestion, Bob, your brother may have a natural knack for marketing. The Unadilla Company (Andover, MA) thinks that End-sulators is such a good term that they trademarked it a few years ago and use it as a brand name for their insulators! Ed.]

Measuring Insulators by Dick Mackiewicz

The following information was excerpted from two letters from Dick Mackiewicz in response to the June, 1995 issue. [Ed.]

July 17, 1995

One thought on measurements is that metric measuring instruments cost a lot more than inch. You can buy a six inch steel dial caliper for about \$15, accurate to .001". The same basic metric unit is over \$30!!! Most of us are still more comfortable with inch than metric, also.

(continued on page 10)

World's First Strain Swap Meet

by Dan Howard

Oh, come on! I have to go to a wedding? My confirmed-bachelor brother has finally decided to tie the knot. Although he lives in Los Angeles, he and his fiancée decided that they wanted to be married during their trip to New England. How romantic.

OK. So, where is Gloucester, MA? Hey! That's only about 25 miles from Jim Singleton's house. Now the wheels are turning.... As long as we're traveling clear to the East coast, we wouldn't want to miss seeing the New England area readers of OES, now would we? Quick call to Dick Mackiewicz..."Your house is central for most parties involved...how about Sunday October 8th?...You can? Fantastic!"

Hence was born what we believe was the world's first strain insulator swap meet. I contacted all of the readers on the OES mailing list that sounded like they were within reasonable driving distance of Dick's home in Coventry, CT. It turns out that Phil Mayhew and Larry Emmons both live within about 10 miles of Dick and Alice's home! Jim Singleton and I drove in from the Boston area on Sunday, but it's not a long drive. Bob Puttre had made plans to come up from Long Island but he had to change them. He sent a box of trading stock anyway and called a couple of times during the meet to see how things were going.

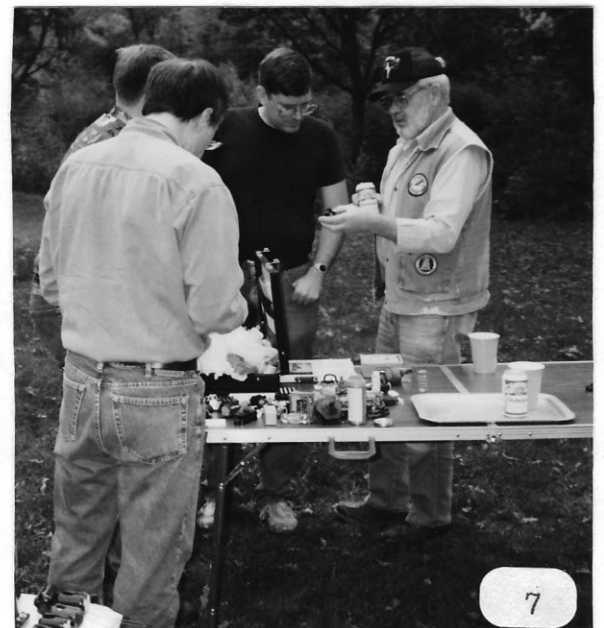
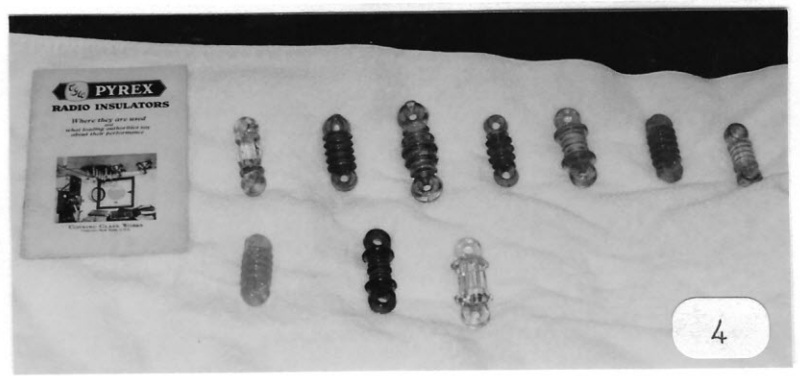
Dick and Alice Mackiewicz live in a beautiful woodsy New England farm area. Phil was the first to arrive (by a long shot). The story goes that he thought that the swap was Saturday at noon instead of Sunday. Dick and Alice were surprised...to say the least.

On Sunday, after the group arrived, we trooped over to the shop building where Dick's collection is stored. As we went through his boxes, Dick pulled out some interesting duplicate items for trade (and I helped out by making sure that he didn't have to put quite so much away at the end of the day). Regrettably, many goodies were one-onlys and had to be drooled over and returned.

Back at Dick's house, we set up tables on the lawn and Larry and Jim began unpacking. Larry brought a photo album of his collection to share as we didn't have time to travel over to his home. As you can see from the accompanying photo page, there were plenty of mouth-watering items to choose from. Jim's display-only section was incredible.

I carried-on a brief case packed with insulators and lightning arresters. Although I expected that airport security might make me open the case and unwrap everything, they didn't look twice. Must be my honest face.

(continued on page 9)



Swap Meet (continued from page 7)

By the time I began shopping, I was thoroughly overwhelmed by the number of choices. Larry had over fifty items for sale! And Jim's glass was wonderful. It was definitely sensory-overload for me. I don't know about the rest of the group but I sure brought home some beauties.

Dick and Alice's hospitality was phenomenal. In addition to chips, nuts, soda, adult beverages, etc., their cats provided security services during the show. Just like big times. Thank you both for a wonderful swap meet.

Now then. I am planning to be at the National Insulator Association convention in Long Beach, CA July 19 - 21, 1996. Does anyone care to join me for a second annual swap?

Photo Captions

- 1: Larry: And then Papa bear said...
Dick: Someone has been messing with my insulators!
Phil (thinking): So many insulators, so little time.
- 2: Jim's traders.
- 3: Larry's trunkload of treasures.
- 4: Jim's "display only" area. Note the cornflower blue L.S. Brach insulator in the top row. This one missed our survey last issue.
- 5: Black Security Cat: I thought that you said that there was going to be snacks and drinks here!
White Security Cat: Where's that woman that hired us for this gig?
Background - Dan's traders.
- 6: (Left To Right)
Dick Mackiewicz (thinking): Who's going to help me clean all this up?
Phil Mayhew (thinking): What is Dan doing back there?
Dan Howard (thinking): If I stretch, I can almost reach that milk glass insulator in Phil's pocket.
Larry Emmons (thinking): Where did Dick say the bathroom was?
Jim Singleton (thinking): Wow! What a day!
- 7: Larry: Hey...this reminds me of a story...
Phil (thinking): I wonder where Larry found that Bud.
Jim (thinking): When is Dan going to get out the really good stuff?

Measuring Insulators (Continued from page 6)

Now, I agree that insulators often have odd measurements (say 47/64" instead of 3/4") but, measuring these to .001" presents no problem.

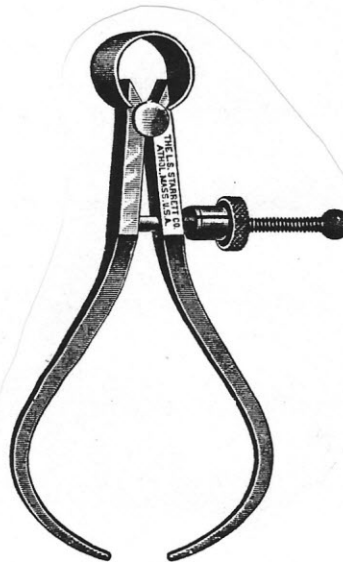
I do go along with length being described in categories of one inch, but believe, that mold variations aside, the only way to go for the greatest accuracy is down to .001 rather than 1 mm.

I recently bought a set of micrometers 1", 2", 3" for \$29.95 from Enco Mfg. Co. 1-800-860-3400. You might write for their catalog 5000 W. Bloomingdale Ave. Chicago, IL 60639.

July 25, 1995

Another catalog that you should have is from Harbor Freight Tools P.O. Box 6010 Camarillo, CA 93011-6010 1-800-423-2567 (price \$2.00) They sell a stainless-steel frame 6" dial caliper for \$9.99 + S & H. This is the best deal I have ever seen.

[Thank you for your suggestions, Dick. As we continue working on the cataloging system, some of these issues are bound to come up. We are going to have to eventually decide at what point dimensional differences become significant. Personally, I have more fun collecting and displaying insulators with obvious differences. If the only way that I can tell the items apart is with a micrometer, I probably will keep one and trade the other. Others may feel differently. Ed.]



Display Suggestion

by Dick Mackiewicz

If you have a pair of insulators, why not display them with a short length of bright copper or brass wire between?

[Good idea, Dick! By the way, this concept was used by Budwig Manufacturing on a "salesman's sample" board that I have. They wanted to show the insulators "in use" so they fastened them to a piece of masonite with bolts and stand-off sleeves. Budwig even went so far as to coat the joints with silver paint to simulate solder! Ed.]

What do You Think?

by Dan Howard

Do you have a "3043" lightning arrester in your collection? Although this a rather large, brown porcelain arrester may sound rather plain, the 3043 is intriguing in the fact that it carries no brand name other than the number "3043".

The Heinemann Electric (H.E.) Company (Philadelphia, PA), makers of "Sensory" brand insulators and lightning arresters often numbered their products with numbers in the 3000 range (for example 3017) but they were uniformly marked HECO or Sensory as well.

I think that it is highly coincidental that these arresters turn up with such similar numbers. Maybe the 3043 arresters originally had fragile decals or paper labels with the manufacturer's name. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Dick Mackiewicz reports that he found "slim pickings" at the annual Antique Wireless Association swap meet in Rochester, NY this fall. He said that he used to find lots of insulators and arresters to pick up but found very little this year. OK. Who else went there and picked up all the goodies? Come on now. Write in and tell us what you found.

Keith Roloson told me that Jim Overstreet's strain insulator collection was sold to dealers this Summer. I have not yet heard about the collection being resold. If you can update this information, please do so.

Recent Letters

I am an insulator collector with a fairly good collection of insulators, mostly glass. I have accumulated, and display, about thirty-some antenna strains of various sizes, mostly glass, some porcelain, and have several lightning arresters.

I am glad to know of your publication and would like to subscribe to it, as I am sure it will provide me with some very useful information on the subject. Is there a guide book listing types and manufacturers, similar to the McDougalds' insulator book? Are you planning to put one together?

I'll be anxiously waiting for the first issue of Old Familiar Strains. Are back issues available?

Yours truly,

George R Webster 10/17/95

George:

Glad to have you with us. I have seen some of your nice glass in Crown Jewels. As far as I know, there aren't any books on the subject of strains, although considering the amount of new information we are plowing up and putting together through OFS, one may be written some day.

Back issues are currently available back to Vol. 1 no 1. Some of the issues may go out of print when current stocks are exhausted. You can order ones that you are missing for \$2.00 each, post paid.

Dan

We found out about glass insulators in May of 1993 and have been collecting ever since. We found out about radio strains in Feb. of 1995 and now about lightning arresters and antenna kits.

My golf game would increase my stress, and collecting insulators seems to relieve all stress. This is truly a GREAT hobby. Well my search continues.

Stephen R. Konon and Family 10/20/95



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Popular Radio December, 1926 Vol X No. 8