



# British Horology Times

NAWCC CHAPTER 159

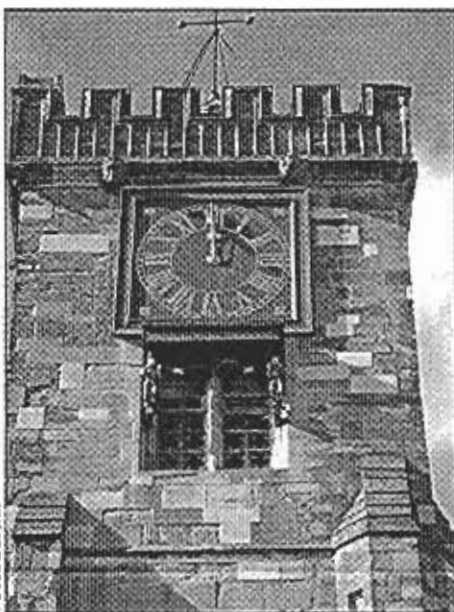
## News FROM CHAPTER 159

There are some people whose dedication and determination can leave you in awe. Paul Odendahl, editor and publisher of *British Horology Times*, is one of those people. Being given almost no time to evacuate in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, he and Martha escaped in boats with only the clothes they were wearing and their three dogs. They suffered substantial property losses from the flooding and one of their beloved dogs died during the evacuation. Their odyssey took them to Mississippi and then to Martha's sister in Virginia before they could return to New Orleans to begin to rebuild their lives. They have recovered to where Paul is confident that he will be able to publish the March 2006 issue of the newsletter where you will read this. In spite of the horrendous experience, due to Paul's diligence we will only miss one issue of BHT, a phenomenal accomplishment.

The only other two items that I want to mention in this "News" column are the National in Cleveland and the proposed trip to England.

Chapter 159 will have its own Mart table at the National. With the exception of some vertical, free standing backdrops on which to mount photos of the

Chapter's first three trips to England, everything for the table has been taken care of. We need two backdrops, about two feet wide and three feet tall of something like Strathmore board or picture mat material and a volunteer to make them would be appreciated. Volunteers to assist in manning the table during Mart hours would also be welcome.



Saint Thomas' Church in Winborne Manor

We are in the early stages of planning another trip to England in early 2007. The centerpiece of the trip will be a visit to the Antiquarian Horological Society exhibition of clocks by provincial makers, at Oxford University. Although we have close to ten people who have expressed interest, we will need a minimum of twenty to make the trip economically feasible. The tour cost will be a few thousand dollars per person, paid beforehand. In addition there will be the cost of transportation to and from England and personal expenses for meals and things not covered by the tour. If you are interested please contact me at <RandJGendron@att.net>, or phone 989-652-6870, or fax 989-652-0594 as soon as possible so

firm arrangements can be started. As in the past, Phil Priestley will arrange and conduct the tour.

I hope to see many of you at the Southern Ohio Regional in April.

## EDITOR'S CORNER

Bad luck! Back in 2005 when I was working on page 2 of BHT36, I swatted at a bug, which caused me to spill ink on the page. The bug zoomed up and then down right into the fresh ink splat. Then he walked across the page leaving his tracks. I felt bad about that.

I didn't take the time right away to clean it up and a few days later I got to thinking: "Was this a bug's

attempt to answer our frequent pleas for material which we can publish?"

If this indeed was a bug's effort to give us new material, think what we could do with yours. Send to the Editor something that you think would be interesting. It doesn't have to be scholarly. Pictures will help.

So I left the bug's contribution in the issue.

- Paul Odendahl



## SECOND LINE



Doug Cowan (OH) gives us a glimpse of modern English clock-“reworking”.

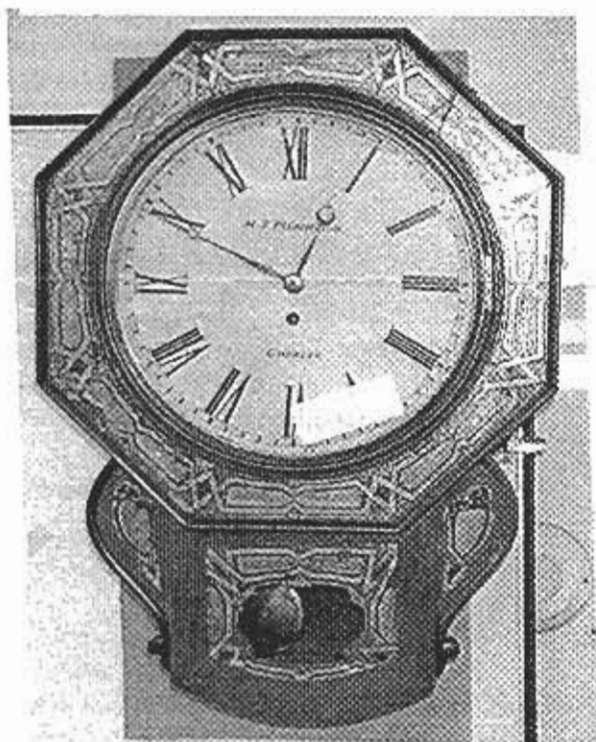
## UNUSUAL DROP-DIAL CLOCK

During a 2004 trip to Newark in England I found and photographed this clock. It is the size of a normal Anglo-American clock but in fact it is an all British timepiece with an 8 day fusee movement. The maker is H J Pilkington of Chorley. Loomes has him working 1834-58 and Chorley is a village about 15 miles southeast of Bristol.

It is the case that is unusual with its picture frame effect. Glass windows all round the dial, pendulum sight glass and glasses in the “ears”, all gold leafed on the inside. Behind that, the recessed wood is painted a rich scarlet color. The ef-

fect is quite striking. The price was £400 and I might have sprung for it except that the beautifully formed wood surround of the dial and ears did not extend to the drop portion. Sure enough, the seller had made the flat panelling because a piece of the finer molding was missing. Worse, he then glued the glass to this newly made molding. Oh well, it still looks great and will find an appreciative home I am sure.

Doug continues to delight with facts and pictures of all manner of British horology.



H. J. Pilkington Drop-Dial Clock

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### NEXT MEETINGS

**Friday, April 7, 1:00PM** at Southern Ohio Regional in Ft. Mitchell KY. Ken Johnston will speak on “Coventry Watches”.

**Wednesday, June 21** at NAWCC National in Cleveland OH. Tom Spittler will speak on “How 19th century longcase clock movements were made”.

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## A CLOCKMAKER IN CANADA

Jordan Renaud (Canada) traces his life and dreams as a youth, an apprentice, craftsman, clockmaker, and tells how he developed his burning interest in English clocks.

**M**y name is R. Jordan Renaud and I am 50 years of age. I began my career in my teen years as an engine mechanic employed by my father in his English car repair business in my home town of Deep River, Ontario. Situated on the Trans-Canada Highway about 120 miles west of Canada's capital of Ottawa, this picturesque community lies a few miles from my present home of 18 years: Laurentian Hills.

In my father's garage all marques of English cars were overhauled and all work was done to a high standard. I remember many customers reporting performance and ride unknown previously. Dad would take things to a new level when it came to engine rebuilding, tire balancing, fine tuning twin choke carburetors, etc. He would adjust, try, adjust just a hair more and try again. This on a vintage MGB, a Healy, a Jag, or maybe an old Riley. My favorite was a 1964 Triumph TR4 in British racing green.

My father had one of Deep River's many crackshot British machinists build for him a high precision wheel balancing rig to his own design. Customers would not know just *what* he did to their cars, but were convinced that he had replaced suspension components, among other things, and were seriously worried about what he would want to charge them for this unexpected work. All that he had done was to properly



Renaud removing rust from pinion

balance the wheels by hand on this superbly designed device and the resulting ride was a world better than what was to be had at the average garage - even with the high tech machines they employed.

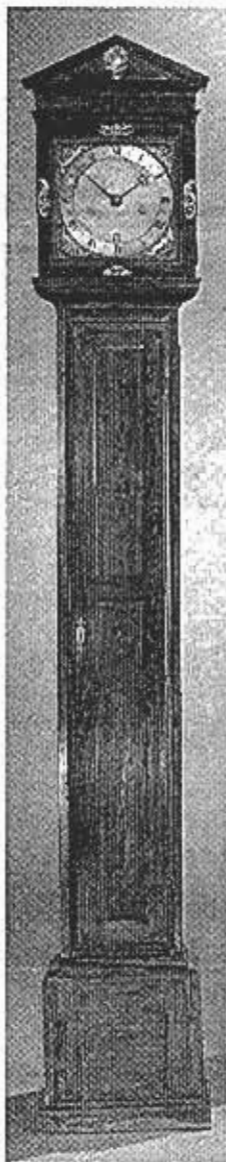
Those youthful years spent with one of the finest mechanics around, working on mostly British cars and half a dozen or so Mercedes Benz fresh off the Autobahn courtesy of returning military personnel recently stationed in Lahr or Baden-Baden, were the formation of my respect and love for things British and engendered a deep respect for excellence.

I had taken an old American clock apart when I was around six but (no surprise) it did not quite look right and did not seem to want to run when I had gotten all the bits be-

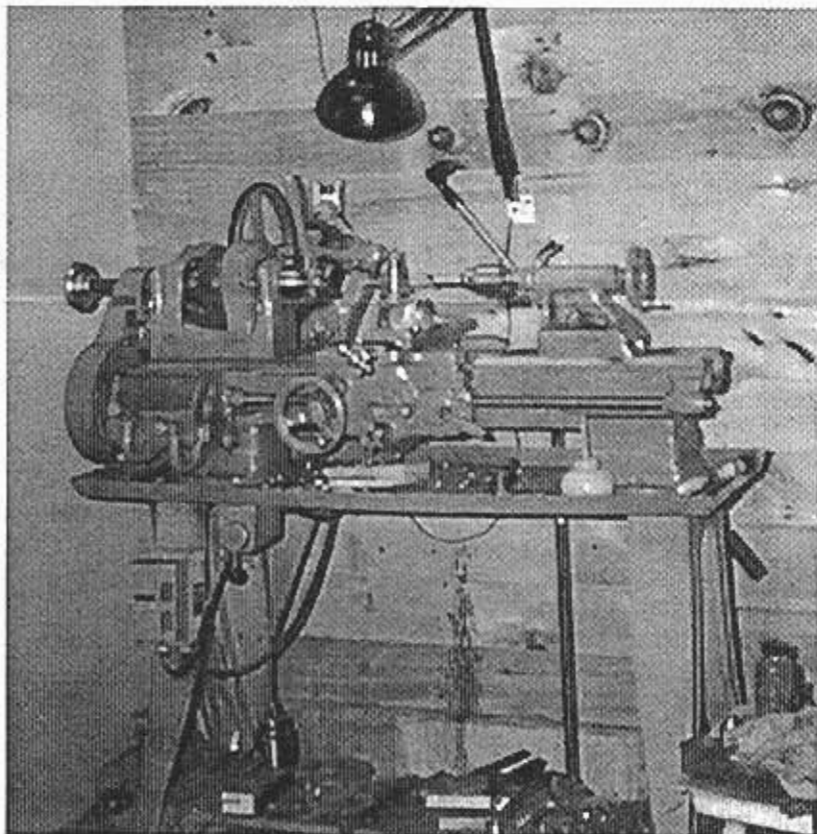
tween the plates again. Later I played around with modern English and German clocks, repairing for a meal or a favor. *Then I heard it.* The sound of an English longcase. It had just been cleaned and adjusted by an old instrument maker in the area. That man, John "Les" Wilson would later mentor me in the appreciation of a long pendulum. That life sound of a Royal pendulum.

The years went by. College and a dozen years at Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. at the Chalk River Nuclear Laboratories brought me to a realization. Something was missing. It was the sound of the longcase pendulum.

The events that transpired from that time (1990) to today resulted in a journey that brought me back to the point where I was when I still had that yearning to do something as well as it could be done and with a passion for it. I read everything I could lay my hands on regarding traditional horological work and joined NAWCC. Next came a course in clock repair employing De Carles' book *Practical Clock Repairing*. With a few tools I repaired countless American and German clocks including a five tube chime clock (it is still running well). I will never want to see another mass-produced American clock again. Save for Ansonia or maybe Waterbury, it is about as pointless as trying to repair a



The stuff of Renaud's dreams.



1956 Southbend Model A with 20 mm collets.

disposable plastic razor or a throw-away non-refillable lighter. I had many satisfied customers but they never know what it took to do it. Now it's true there are people who can work magic on them, and God bless them. The better of them seem to come from industrial engineering and design backgrounds and understand the mindset of those clever designers who could make a working clock from a ridiculously small amount of stamped out steel and brass bits powered by serious horsepower. I am just a clockmaker, not a magician.

Around 1992, my first close encounter with an English longcase brought excitement that I had difficulty hiding from the owner. You know you're hooked and you've got it bad when you can think of nothing else but British clocks, all you want to read is books on English clocks and clockmakers, and you even dream of English clockmaking. Even bathroom reading is horological. Fortunately I was single again at the time with no children. The clock was an 18th century brass dial, count-wheel strike, 8 day longcase by Samuel Stevens. It had been butchered

badly but the lady who owned it did not want it restored, only wanted it packed for transport out to her son in Alberta. Pity she would not accept my offer to restore it for her son. I made sketches of it anyway. As it turned out, her son traveled the 1500 miles from Calgary to pack it himself. He knew what he was inheriting. I pray he chose a competent repairer, not a boil and oil shop.

After learning of the existence of some English trained clockmakers still working in Ontario in their seventies and eighties and striking up correspondence with them, I was fortunate enough to spend much time at the bench with many of them. There is no way I can explain how it feels to be fortunate enough to wake up from half a lifetime of travel in the wrong direction and be just in time to be taught some of the "art and mystery" of the craft by these men, some of whom are now in their graves. Just a little later and it would have been too late.

One of these men still living and about 80 is John Plewes. You may know of this clever Yorkshireman by his book *Repairing and Restoring Pendulum Clocks*. Longtime AWI Master Clockmaker, he wrote several excellent articles for *Horological Times*. The instruction received from this great teacher is of the best class you will find. Alas, John is no longer offering instruction.

Another superb clockmaker who made 26 longcase clock movements and cases from scratch here in Deep River over about 27 years was John Barks. He once remarked: "I like to make the whole damned thing if I can". He bid me to keep his clocks running after his death - an honor indeed. However a tall order as they are spread around the world in the hands of lucky owners. About a dozen are still in this area.

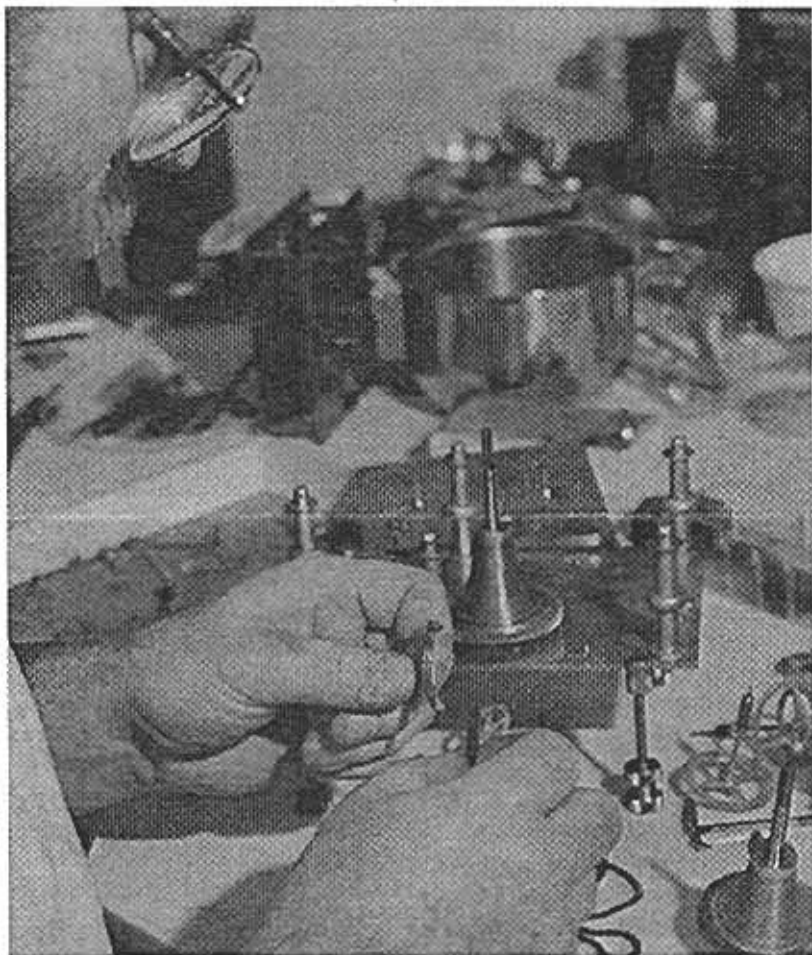
By late 1992, I had spent my

life savings traveling around the country and in the USA building a collection of vintage clockmaker's tools and I had outfitted a workshop intended for traditional clockmaking. From that point onward I repaired only English longcase and bracket clocks, and became well known in undertaking this work. It is perhaps hard to fathom but there are more British clocks in Ontario than one would think. The thing is that English, Scottish and Irish immigrants brought these clocks here during the 19th century. And to top that off, the town I live in was populated just after WW2 with almost entirely British professionals who either brought the clocks

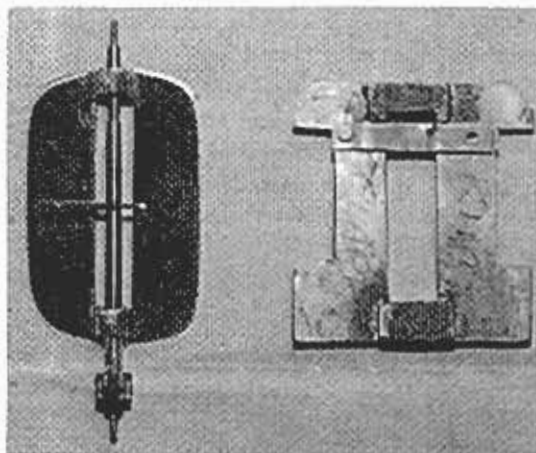
with them or are now having them brought over the ocean from home as inheritances.

I became an associate of the BHI and joined AWI. The odd issue of *Antiquarian Horology* made it into my hands and my bedtime reading literally became a pile of books from De Carle to Penman.

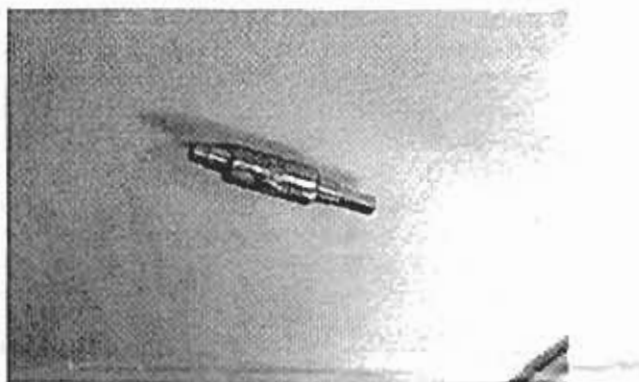
Somewhere in that period I ordered the distance learning course from the BHI. I am still working at it but have never been able to get away from the bench long enough to finish it. At the bench I follow the code of conduct of the BHI and I work to a standard I am proud of, but when I'll be



Renaud working on Thwaites and Reed 1920 Bracket Clock



Replacement fly for 30-hour English rope driven long-case clock at left, at right the previous poorly made replacement.



Main Arbor of Dial Clock from Silver Steel.

writing the finals in England is anyone's guess. One English pound is worth \$2.40 CDN, so probably not anytime soon. My dream is to study at West Dean College in the south of England; especially the final year material. The training at West Dean is highly esteemed as the highest order of high class horological training on British work.

In time, I could not keep up with the bench work while employed at Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd, and began to wonder...what if?

I threw in the towel in 1994 when it was revealed that my health was at risk there. I sold my nearly new car and bought a good older one. Made the choice to live on a little less than what I had become accustomed to.

It is a continuing struggle to obtain quality materials to make and restore English clocks here in Canada. Sort of like banging one's head on a wall. The only thing to do is to order from Merritt's or LaRose, etc. but most often I must go to the source in England. My dollar is worth about 65 cents US

and it will only buy me about 37 pence worth of English materials.

Then there is the blood tax at the Canadian border to pay. Getting a chapter ring re-silvered is a joy. Finding someone who knows what a chapter ring is, can be an adventure. And don't get me started on the dismal view the Canadian government has of those poor souls wishing to get start-up funding for their own businesses.

The only thing I don't do yet is cut my own wheels. I have used Fendley's in Texas and was pleased with them. A wheel cutting engine is in the works in my mind, based on engines of English design in the 18th century. A few years ago I went to the NAWCC museum in Pennsylvania and made drawings of one of the engines they have on exhibit there. Would like to make it one day. Somehow I just can't bring myself to want one of the modern kind. After fighting over the years with badly engaging teeth and leaves of wheels and pinions in provincial longcase clocks, whether due to bad workmanship from the outset or idiots attempting to play with things that

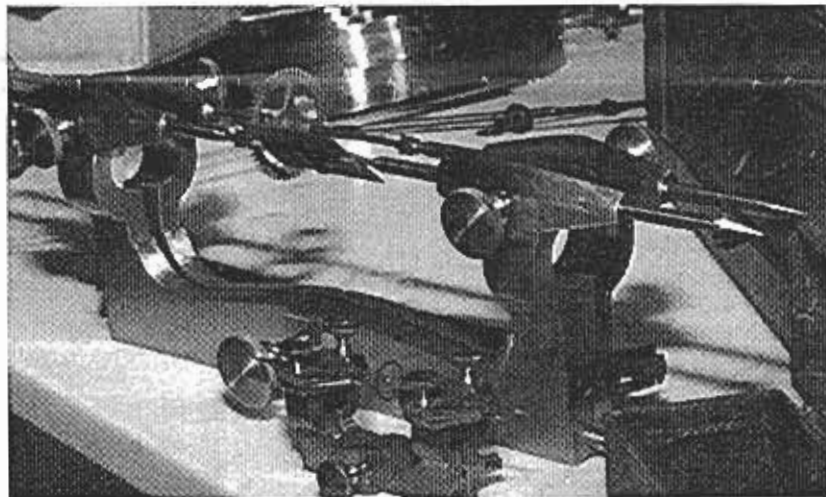
could hurt them, I bit the proverbial bullet and purchased one of Malcolm Wild's fine depthing tools. Sadly no longer in production, these are the best tools that can be had. They are an exact reproduction of a traditional English tool and are superbly accurate. It came to more than \$900 CDN sitting on my bench, but I have never been at a loss to correct a poor depthing situation ever since, and when I am making my own movements, laying out the trains comes a lot easier. No doubt I could get what I paid for it if the need arose. Of course I would have purchased an original but never found one that would part company with the possessor.

So many fine vintage tools we antiquarian clockmakers need to undertake our work are in the collections of those who will never attempt to try their mettle. Many would not know how to anyway.

*To be continued*



Renaud with the Malcolm Wild depthing tool.



The Malcolm Wild depthing tool.

## RECOIL

When Doug Cowan and I envisioned the British Horology Chapter, Doug knew that its eventual success would lie with its newsletter - which became the British Horology Times. You are reading it now. Doug took on the early publishing duties and I even did one issue, but when we found an able volunteer in Paul Odendahl to take over the responsibilities of publishing the newsletter we were both very happy and very relieved.

Paul couldn't have done a better job, and we got an added treat with Paul - we got "Henry". I probably shouldn't admit it but I'm a total sucker for a good story and I read "Henry" before any of that other stuff about clocks and watches.

And now "Henry" has gone. I'll miss him. Possibly Paul has another treat in mind to replace him. I hope so.

-Tom Spittler

### British Horology Chapter 159 NAWCC, Financial Report, December 31, 2005

2005 was a good financial year for the Chapter. We had 130 members at December 31, 2005, about the same as last year and dues stayed the same at \$5 per year. At those levels income would amount to \$650 and with our co-sponsor income from the Southern Ohio Regional, we should show a modest positive cash flow. Since we had a significant number of members prepaying from prior years and we didn't send out the usual dues request in November, our cash receipts were only \$897 which compares with \$1,071 last year. We record income and expenses on a cash basis.

2005 saw the unfortunate result of Katrina which limited us to two newsletters for 2005. The November BHT could not be published as it is done so from New Orleans. Accordingly we did not incur the cost of postage and publishing for that newsletter. We had a request from NAWCC for a contribution and gave them \$100. Our total expenses for 2005 were \$619 versus \$922 the year before. The result of all of that was a net income and positive cash flow for 2005 of \$278 versus \$149 for 2004. It is reasonable to assume that we will continue, at least in the near future, on a solvent basis. Efforts have commenced to establish a web site at reasonable cost. We anticipate the cost of the site will be more than offset by membership increases as a result of the site and savings on some of the Chapter's expenses.

We had \$3,300 in the bank at December 31, 2005.

Respectfully,

Dave Kern, Treasurer Chapter 159

### HONORS

At the National Convention banquet in Fort Lauderdale in 2005, three Chapter 159 members:  
Lee Yelvington,  
Dennis Radage,  
and Roger Gendron  
were made Fellows of the NAWCC and one member

Frank del Greco, past chapter president and current BOD Chairman of NAWCC was made Star Fellow.

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