**New Buttons from the WRBA Show**  
*by Gil Biggie*

Every time I come home from a show I sit with a cup of coffee and go over my show button purchases like a pirate looking at precious booty. And at each show, it seems, I find one particular button that tickles me pink and it becomes my brand new favorite.

From this past WRBA show I got a papeweight that is pea pods on a vine. I love the colors, the topic, the cute vine tendril, the little blossom, the neat construction. And the peas on the open pod have a teeny bit of blue glitter. Every time I look at it I get the same pleasure as when I break my diet and eat a Bavarian cream filled donut.

Turns out that papewights by this maker are rather scarce. The story goes like this. Ronald Hanson of Michigan was well known for his desk papewights. If you “google” his name, you find his bio and photos of some drop dead desk weights. He was considered a pioneer in the papeweight making craft in the 1960s, making only a very few papeweight buttons, and they are scarce as hen’s teeth.

The well known John Gooderham was taught by Ronald Hanson. After Ronald had a stroke in 1971, he taught his wife Dorothy the art. Dorothy enjoyed making mini desk papewights. Then from 1975 to 1980 she made papeweight buttons—mostly fruits, flowers and birds. Ill health ended her button making. I own two of her buttons, both signed on the *front* with an H in a white cane. After buying two of Dorothy’s buttons in the mid 1980s, I never saw anymore. This is just background, folks, because neither of these artists made my peas.

The illnesses of Robert and Dorothy have not denied button collectors the talent of this family. At the young age of fourteen, their son, Robert, began making papeweight buttons.

BJ Smith, now of Arizona, was the sole distributor of Robert Hanson’s papeweight buttons. BJ was a neighbor of the Hansons when Robert was a teen. When the lad needed pocket money, he would “whip up” a few papewweights and ask BJ to sell them for him. One batch included two papewights of eggs and bacon. Finding these two egg buttons amusing, she asked Robert why he thought of that topic. He explained that he got hungry while making the papewights and thought bacon and eggs would taste real good at the moment. Robert, the young son of Ronald and Dorothy, is the maker of my beloved little peas. (What was he thinking when he made my peas?) Robert signed on the back with an H in a green cane. One can recognize the work of these three makers without the signature.

The glass used in their papewights is a special old (probably Italian) glass that Ronald, the father owned. The rods were already “vintage” when Robert acquired them in the 1960s. Perhaps there is a method in the creation of these earlier rods that can’t be done today. This would account for the near crystal appearance, the crisp vivid deep hues, and the clean vibrant, almost three dimensional appearance of the set ups. The brass shanks are neat and deep set.

There is a rumor that there will be a few more of these at the Arizona show in February. Check them out...

I don’t know if the distinct look of the buttons are from the glass they used, or the talent of the makers, but they are most cool.

A second button I bought is by Narcie Alexander. It makes me smile. I am going to title this button “Do NOT mess with the old folks!”

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