

THE PLUMB BOB COLLECTOR NELSON DENNY †

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www.plumbbobcollectors.info

NELSON DENNY †

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and friend of mine, Riccardo Chetoni from Pisa, Italy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Dear Fellow Collector,  
 this NEWS is written to honor the noted plumb bob collector  
 NELSON DENNY architect, Lyme, CT U.S.A  
 Born September 7th 1946,  
 Deceased April 5th 2012  
 and to remember my collaboration between 2004 and 2012 with him.

I will show what he was thinking about collecting plumb bobs and what he has done for the International Plumb Bob Collectors community.  
 It is the discussion between American and European collectors about tools.

I will let Nelson talk about the collaboration by his own email texts and his own pictures ....  
 about PLUMB BOBS, HIS COLLECTION AND HIS DREAMS ...

2. FIRST CONTACT

In January 2004 Nelson was bidding on Ebay on a BOKER plumb bob made by the German factory Gampper. I asked him if he would be interested in further information about this factory and the Boker plumb bob. (At that time it was possible on Ebay to contact the bidders directly. Today you only see a code-number. ☺). At that time he already knew one other noted plumb bob collector

His very first email:  
*WOLFGANG,  
 YOU, LIKE RICCARDO, ARE A GENTLEMAN AND A SCHOLAR! I WOULD VERY MUCH APPRECIATE WHATEVER INFORMATION YOU MIGHT HAVE ON BOKER INCLUDING CATALOGUE INFORMATION IF AVAILABLE.  
 AS A PLUMB BOB COLLECTOR, MY COLLECTION IS PREDOMINANTLY AMERICAN AND ENGLISH. TO HAVE IT GROW IN AN INTERNATIONAL WAY IS OF SOME INTEREST. RICCARDO HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN INTRODUCING ME TO THE WORLD OF ROMAN AND OTTOMAN PLUMB BOBS. HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS FOR YOU. DO YOU GERMANS HAVE A HISTORY OF MAKING "MECHANICAL" PLUMB BOBS, THAT IS PLUMB BOBS THAT HAVE EXTERIOR OR INTERIOR STRING WINDERS? SIMILARLY, IS THERE ANY TRADITION OF MAKING PLUMB BOBS OF A DECORATIVE OR CEREMONIAL NATURE?  
 VERY GLAD TO BE INTRODUCED TO "PLUMBBOB WOLF"! ---- I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU ON EBAY.*

About his, profession and collection (Jan. 2004):  
*I'M 57 YEARS OLD, AN ARCHITECT THAT WORKS ONLY ON PRIVATE RESIDENCES..... MOST OF MY WORK IS ON WATERFRONT PROPERTIES THAT ARE FOR THE MOST PART, LUXURY VACATION HOMES.  
 I'VE BEEN COLLECTING PLUMB BOBS FOR ABOUT TWENTY YEARS BUT ONLY SERIOUSLY FOR THE LAST 3 OR 4 YEARS.*

*I AM IN THE PROCESS OF PHOTOGRAPHING AND CATEGORIZING MY COLLECTION IN A DIGITAL FORMAT THAT CAN BE SHARED WITH*

OTHER COLLECTORS ..... NOT THAT THE WORK IS EVER REALLY FINISHED (BECAUSE WE'RE ALWAYS ADDING AS YOU KNOW) BUT I AM HOPING TO PUT OUT THE FIRST DRAFT BY THE END OF THE WINTER.....ALTHOUGH I LIKE THE DIRECTION MY COLLECTION IS TAKING, GENERALLY SPEAKING, I AM AWARE THAT YOU AND RICCARDO COLLECT FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE AND WITH A DIFFERENT FOCUS WITH MUCH MORE EMPHASIS, I IMAGINE, ON EUROPEAN EXAMPLES..... SHARING INFORMATION AND CORRESPONDING WITH OTHER COLLECTORS AND SEEING OTHER COLLECTIONS IS AN IMPORTANT FEATURE IN MY INTEREST IN THE SUBJECT SO WILL DO MY BEST TO HELP YOU WITH ANYTHING YOU NEED ON THIS SIDE OF THE ATLANTIC.

### 3. PATENTS and SOME SPECIAL PLUMB BOBS

His answers were very detailed and helped me very much to understand inventors and users of plumb bobs (below he talked about the PERFECTION PLUMB BOB) see PATENT NEWS 2007-31 mercury and lead filled:

PERFECTION PLUMB BOBS ARE NOTABLE AS AN EXAMPLE THAT GO TO THE OPPOSITE EXTREME OF EXTRAORDINARY SYMETRICITY. THERE CLAIMS ARE THAT IT IS SO SYMETRICAL "THAT IT COMES TO REST IMMEDIATELY" AND "POINTS DIRECTLY". DON'T BELIEVE EVERY CLAIM MADE IN A PATENT



APPLICATION; MOST OF THEM ARE PURE MARKETING HYPE. IN THE CASE OF THE PERFECTION, THE BRASS SKIN OVER THE SOFT LEAD CORE IS SO THIN, THAT THE FIRST TIME IT BUMPS ITO SOMETHING SOLID, IT IS IMMEDIATLY RENDERED UN SYMETRICAL. LOOK AT ANY OF THE LARGER PERFECTION PLUMB BOBS THAT HAVE BEEN USE, THEY'RE FULL OF MAJOR DENTS THAT OF COURSE MAKE THE BOB UNSYMETRICAL.

THE SKILL OF THE USER IS FAR MORE A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR THAN THE SYMETRICITY OF A BOB. WHERE YOUR EYE IS IN RELATION TO THE TIP OF THE BOB AND ACCOUNTING FOR THE VISUAL PARALLAX FACTOR WHEN YOU

MAKE YOUR PENCIL MARK AT THE POINT OF THE BOB, TAKES SKILL AND PRACTICE AND OFTEN A NUMBER OF LITTLE MARKS ARE AVERAGED TO COME UP WITH ONE CORRECT READING. TAKE ONE OF YOUR BOBS AND FIND SOME WORK OR LAYOUT TASK TO DO WITH IT. YOU WILL DISCOVER THAT IT IS A TOOL THAT DOES NOT WORK AUTOMATICALLY, IT TAKES SOME TECHNIQUE TO GET ACCURATE READINGS.

About COMMON SENSE / LAMP plumb bobs (in 2004):

NUMBERED SET - 00, 6, 1/2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (SMALLEST TO LARGEST)  
NOTE: 00 AND 1/2 ONLY APPEARS IN "LAMP PLUMB BOB" SEQUENCE OF SIZES

EXAMPLE #2B



HERE IS WHAT I HAVE PAID FOR COMMON SENSE PLUMB BOBS OVER THE LAST 5 YEARS. BEAR IN MIND THAT ALL OF THESE ARE NUMBERED AND ARE ALL GOOD+ EXCEPT FOR THE #5 AND #6. THE #5 HAS HAD THE TIP GROUND DOWN FOR REPAIR, PROBABLY 2 OR THREE TIMES SO THE TIP IS ABOUT 1/2" SHORTER THAN IT SHOULD BE. IT THROWS THE PROPORTION OFF A BIT WHEN YOU SEE IT RIGHT NEXT TO OTHER BETTER EXAMPLES. MY #6 IS CLOSE TO MINT UNUSED CONDITION AND HAS A VERY NICE HAND CARVED BOX THAT FITS TO THE EXACT CONTOUR OF THE SHAPE OF THE BOB. THIS BOB AND BOX IS THE ACTUAL BOB THAT BRUCE CYNAR PHOTOGRAPHED FOR THE "PLUMB LINE" IN THE SECTION THAT DEALS WITH SHAPES.

#0 - \$178.00, #1/2 - \$99.00, #1 - \$79.00, #2 - \$286.00, #3 - \$153.00, #4 - \$150, #5 - \$156.00, #6 - \$450.00 ( ALL ARE EXCLUSIVE OF SHIPPING)

ODDLY ENOUGH THE TWO THAT I HAVE THAT WERE HARDEST TO FIND WERE THE #1/2 AND THE #1. NOTE THAT THEY WERE THE LEAST EXPENSIVE. THEY WERE NOT, HOWEVER, BOUGHT AT AUCTION. RATHER I FOUND THEM BY CHANCE AT LITTLE SHOPS OUT IN THE COUNTRY. AS I SAID IN MY LAST EMAIL I AM STILL MISSING THE #00, THE SMALLEST OF THEM ALL. I AM ALSO LOOKING FOR A BETTER #5 THAN THE ONE I HAVE. AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT, I ACTUALLY BOUGHT ANOTHER #5. WITHOUT A CAP THINKING THAT I WOULD JUST EXCHANGE THE CAPS. THAT DIDN'T WORK. AS YOU PROBABLY KNOW THESE WERE MADE BY MANY DIFFERENT MANUFACTURERS, WITH NO SPECIFIC INTERCHANGEABLY OF PARTS. IN THIS CASE THE THREADING OF THE CAP AND

THE PRECISE TAPER OF THE SHAFT WERE QUITE DIFFERENT. WILL PUT IT ON MY TO DO LIST TO SCAN THOSE PAGES FOR YOU AND WILL GET THEM OUT IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

#### 4. DISPLAYING AND INVENTORY

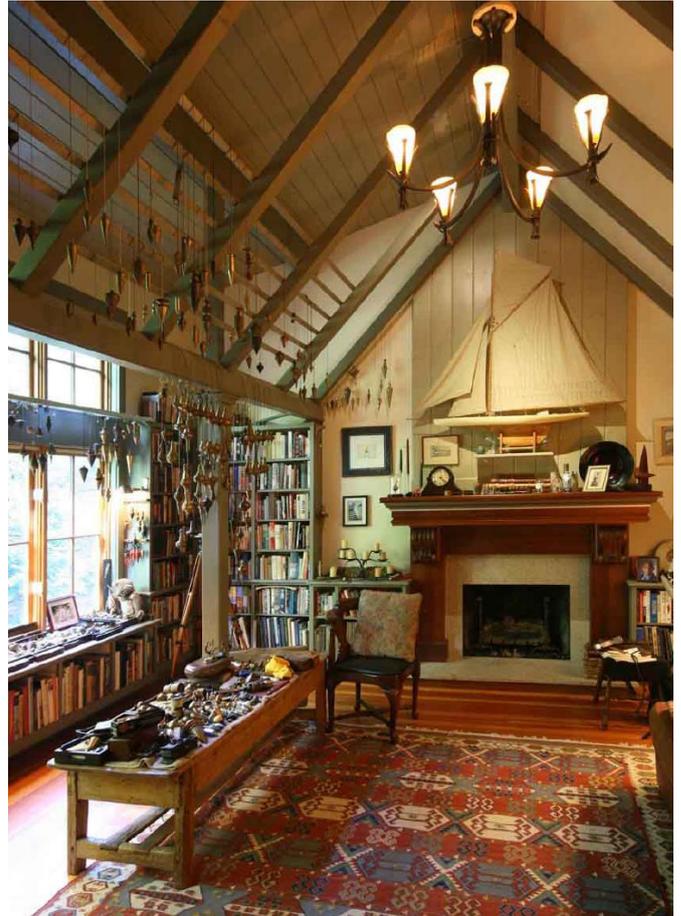
About displaying and inventory:

THE STORY OF DISPLAYING PLUMB BOBS AND KEEPING AN ACCURATE INVENTORY OF THEM IS A STORY OF ITS OWN AND LIKE MANY THINGS IN LIFE IS A PROCESS OF LEARNING BY MAKING MISTAKES.



FORTUNATELY, BACK IN THE DAYS WHEN I COULD COUNT MY COLLECTION ON MY FINGERS AND TOES, I HAD THE FORESIGHT TO PURCHASE A SIMPLE DATA BASE COMPUTER PROGRAM ON WHICH I DESIGNED A FACT SHEET THAT ALLOWED ME TO RECORD THE ESSENTIAL INFORMATION ON EACH ITEM AS IT WAS COLLECTED. I ASSIGNED A NUMBER TO EACH ITEM AND A DESCRIPTIVE NAME BUT IT BECAME CLEAR AT ABOUT THE COUNT OF 50 PLUMB BOBS OR SO, THAT THE BOBS THEMSELVES AND NOT JUST THE LISTING HAD TO HAVE A NUMBER TAG AFFIXED TO IT, AND A PHOTOGRAPH ATTACHED TO THE LISTING. FINDING A SPECIFIC ITEM WAS PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT THOSE THREE ELEMENTS. SO DIGITAL DESKTOP PHOTOGRAPHY AND LIGHTING (SO THAT THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO BE PHOTOGRAPHED OUT DOORS) BECAME ANOTHER LEARNING PROJECT, GOING BACK THROUGH THE ENTIRE INVENTORY I ALREADY OWNED.

BEING A PERFECTIONIST, I WANTED THE PHOTOGRAPHY TO REFLECT THE QUALITY OF THE ITEM, THAT GOT ME INTO SPECIAL LENSES FOR THE CAMERA. I ALSO NAIVELY THOUGHT THAT AN ITEM SHOULD BE PHOTOGRAPHED HANGING. IF YOU'VE EVER WAITED FOR A PLUMB BOB TO COME TO REST, SOMETIMES HOURS FOR THE HEAVIER OF THEM, I GAVE UP ON THAT NOTION PRETTY QUICKLY. I DO SEEM TO ACCUMULATE FASTER THAN I HAVE SPARE TO DO THE PHOTOGRAPHY.<sup>1</sup> I'M ALWAYS SEVERAL HUNDRED BEHIND. AT SOME POINT I'M GOING TO TAKE A FEW WEEKS OFF TO CATCH UP ON THIS ELEMENT OF THE EQUATION.



About the danger to hang plumb bobs over his head:

ON THE SUBJECT OF DISPLAYING PLUMB BOBS: FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, WHEN I STILL HAD THE ENERGY TO STRAP ON A TOOL BELT, I BUILT THE HOUSE I STILL LIVE IN. WITHOUT PLUMB BOBS IN MIND AT THAT TIME, I BUILT A LIVING ROOM WITH A VAULTED AND BEAMED CEILING. AS PLUMB BOBS CAME MY WAY I BEGAN TO HANG THEM FROM THE BEAMS AND CROSS MEMBERS, WHICH INVOLVED HAULING OUT A STEP LADDER AND DOING A BALANCING ACT FOR EACH NEW ARRIVAL.

AS YOU ACCUMULATE MORE, YOU BEGIN TO WANT TO MAKE SENSE OUT OF THE RANDOM

<sup>1</sup> See THE PLUMB LINE CONTINUUM page 9 THE GREAT SHAPE DEBATE (Bruce Cynar and Bernhard Ridens)

ORDER OF THINGS BY GROUPING BOBS INTO "LIKE KINDS." THAT INVOLVES MOVING THINGS AGAIN AND AGAIN.



THEN WITH THIS OVERHEAD HANGING ARRANGEMENT, I HAD ONE RATHER HEAVY POINTY BOB GET AWAY FROM ME; IT DROPPED TEN FEET OR SO AND CAME TO REST IMBEDDED AN INCH OR SO IN A HARDWOOD FLOOR. THEN I STARTED HAVING DREAMS OF THE NEWSPAPER HEADLINES THAT MIGHT APPEAR, "NOTED COLLECTOR KILLED BY FALLING PLUMB BOB."

SPACE. HOPEFULLY BY KEEPING THE OVERHEAD ITEMS TOWARD THE PERIMETER OF THE ROOM I HAVE AT LEAST MINIMALIZED THE RISK OF AN UNTIMELY DEATH.

## 5. COMMUNICATION WORLDWIDE

His dream in 2004 of a WEB SITE for all plumb bob collectors: (a part of this dream is realized with this web site here and by publishing the PLUMB BOB NEWS)

I AM TOLD THAT THERE ARE ABOUT 5 OR 6 MAJOR COLLECTIONS OF PLUMB BOBS IN THIS WORLD (OVER 500) BUT THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF COLLECTORS THAT MIGHT HAVE SIGNIFICANT PIECES IN RELATIVELY SMALL COLLECTIONS. I ALSO DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A PERMANENT COLLECTION ANYWHERE, IN A TOOL, ART, OR NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM. IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO WRITE A BOOK ON THE SUBJECT BECAUSE NO ONE REALLY KNOWS WHAT'S OUT THERE; COLLECTORS AND COLLECTIONS SEEM TO BE SOMEWHAT SECRETIVE.

### PLUMB BOB INVENTORY

ID # 220

#### HIGHLY ORNATE, EXQUISITELY DETAILED, "CLOCK MAKERS" P. B., ENGLISH

DEFINING SHAPE:	RADICAL	WEIGHT (OZS.):	1.3
PRIMARY MATERIAL:	BRASS	LENGTH (INCHES):	2.75
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:	ENGLAND	WIDTH (INCHES):	0.9
TRADE:	CLOCK MAKER		

#### PARTS:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SEPARATE CAP	BRASS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SEPARATE TIP	STEEL (ORNATE)
<input type="checkbox"/>	SEPARATE FILLING	NONE
<input type="checkbox"/>	ON BOB STRING STORAGE	NONE
<input type="checkbox"/>	INTERNAL MECHANISM	NONE
<input type="checkbox"/>	EXTERNAL MECHANISM	NONE
<input type="checkbox"/>	SPACER	NONE
<input type="checkbox"/>	BOB BOX/CASE	NONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SEPARATE REEL/STORAGE	HIGHLY DETAILED TURNED IVORY SPOOL
<input type="checkbox"/>	REVERSABLE	NONE

#### CHARACTERISTICS:

PHYSICAL CONDITION: MINT  
 DECORATION: COMPLEX TURNINGS DECORATE TIP, BODY AND CAP OF PLUMB BOB. BAND OF VERTICAL KNURLING ENCIRCLES TOP OF CAP.  
 COLOR / FINISH: BRIGHT BRASS AND STEEL  
 MANUFACTURER MARK: NONE  
 PATENT MARK: NONE  
 PATENT NAME/NUMBER: NONE  
 OWNERS MARK: NONE

#### REMARKS:

EXTREMELY DETAILED RARE MINIATURE WITH EQUALLY ORNATE IVORY SPOOL. UNIQUE ARTISTIC EMBELLISHMENTS.



220-A

#### VALUE:

DATE OF ACQUISITION: 10/26/2002  
 SOURCE: YUCAIPA, CALIFORNIA  
 PURCHASE PRICE: ~~XXXXXX~~

THE WEB SITE THAT I HAVE IN MIND IS TO DEVELOP A MUSEUM OR A PLUMB BOB COLLECTION ON LINE, USING MY OWN COLLECTION AS THE INITIAL CORE OF THE DISPLAY. THE NOTION IS TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO ENCOURAGE OTHER COLLECTORS TO CONTRIBUTE LISTINGS OF ITEMS IN THEIR COLLECTIONS INTO THE DATA BASE FOR COMPARATIVE PURPOSES. IT COULD ALSO BE A FORUM WHERE PHOTOGRAPHY OF COLLECTIONS IN SITU COULD BE DISPLAYED. ON ONE LEVEL IT WANTS TO BE A COFFEE TABLE BOOK (LIKE VISITING AN EXHIBIT AT A MUSEUM) ON THE OTHER HAND, WANTS TO HAVE ACCESS TO MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ON A SUBJECT FOR THE GEEK.

THE PROBLEM IS THAT I AM ENOUGH OF A BUSINESS MAN TO KNOW THAT I ONLY SEE MONEY GOING OUT OF POCKET. I DON'T THINK THAT THERE IS AN ADEQUATE MARKET FOR SUBSCRIPTION SUPPORT. AND, I QUESTION WHAT WOULD MOTIVATE OTHER COLLECTORS TO TAKE THE TIME TO CONTRIBUTE "MUSEUM QUALITY" LISTINGS. EVERYONE HAS DEVELOPED A DIFFERENT TIME CONSUMING SYSTEM FOR RECORDING THEIR COLLECTIONS.

THEY ARE STILL ALL HOUSED IN THIS ONE ROOM, SUCH A DOMINANT FEATURE I MIGHT ADD, THAT THEY OVERSHADOW THE 2,000 OR SO BOOKS THAT ALSO OCCUPY THE SAME

## 6. HIS COLLECTION

His wish to get information and plumb bobs from other parts of the world (here from Spain):

AS YOU KNOW I AM SOMEWHAT OF A GENERALIST IN MY COLLECTING HABIT ..... RECENTLY, PRIMITIVO SENT ME A WONDERFULL AND COMPREHENSIVE INVENTORY OF HIS COLLECTION. I HOPE THAT YOU ARE ALL FAMILIAR WITH IT.....ONE THING THAT I NOTED IN PARTICULAR WERE THE 20 OR SO PIECES THAT I WOULD CALL SINGLE PIECE LUMP CASTINGS IN LEAD (SOMETIME WITH A WIRE LOOP OR PRIMITIVE POINT MOLDED INTO THEM), THE MOST PRIMITIVE OF PLUMB BOB TYPES.....I DON'T SEE ANY OF THIS TYPE AVAILABLE IN THIS COUNTRY..... SO, IF YOU SEE ANYTHING LIKE THIS IN THE COURSE OF YOUR TRAVELS I WOULD BE VERY INTERESTED.....I THINK THAT THE PILGRIMS (OUR EARLIEST IMMIGRANTS) MUST HAVE BEEN CARRYING FANCY ENGLISH MADE TOOLS WHEN THEY LANDED AT PLYMOUTH ROCK.....

A great part of his collection Nelson bought from Bruce Cynar (the author of *THE PLUMB LINE*) when he wanted to add some excellent plumb bobs to his collection.

Bruce wrote me for this topic:

*"The Internet, and one of its earliest, very successful children, eBay, have been a wonderful gift to collectors around the world. Yes, because of eBay, prices of items have gone up as more people are drawn to collecting and become aware of the amazing things that are out there. But on the positive side, it has brought incredible things to market that we would never have found in a lifetime of searching; and it has given us the opportunity to connect with new friends, all around the world.*

*It was eBay that brought Nelson and I together: first as friendly competitors, then buyers and sellers and eventually good friends and collaborators. I had collected bobs for 20 years and had written the original Plumb Line in the early 1990s. As my collecting interests evolved I became more focused on steam whistles, governors and gauges. Nelson and I began talking about his interest in purchasing the core of my collection. Along with 250+ beautiful, early and unusual bobs (the other 500 in my collection had already been sold on eBay) this comprised some 20 miner's plummets, some individually boxed and some in*

*boxed sets of 2 or 3 plummets; also there were about 25 bobs with internal winding mechanisms. A few of these had their original packaging from the late 1880s. And there were 8 or 10 complete sets by different American and English manufacturers. I drove out to Lyme and personally delivered the collection to Nelson. The photo of his study shows less than half of his collection, even before mine were added.*

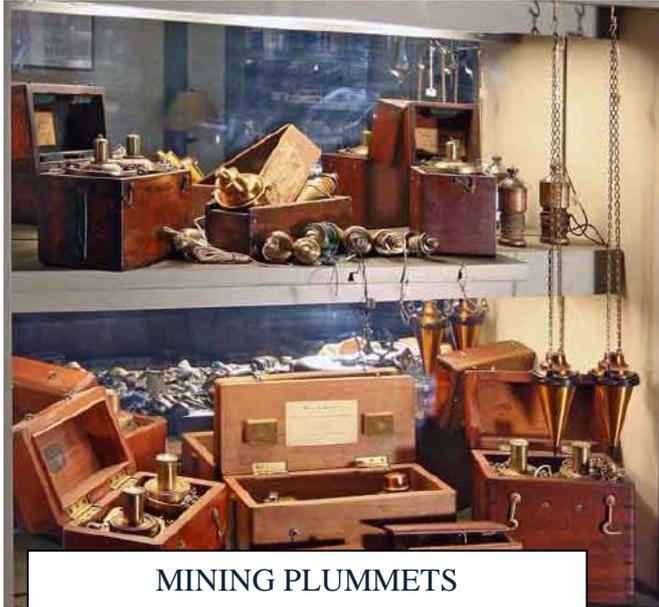
*Nelson brought several significant assets to the world of plumb bob collecting: he had an excellent artist's eye for the bobs he collected and the way he displayed them; his organization and record keeping (which Wolf shows elsewhere in this newsletter) is the finest I've seen from any tool collector, and finally his willingness to connect and share with other collectors is a lofty model for all of us.*

*He shall be missed."*

Figures below: Bruce Cynar and some of his "new friends", the steam whistles. (But he still is an expert in plumb bobs!)



Even when Nelson was a generalist in collecting plumb bobs, he had some special highlights in his collection: The mining plummets and the mechanical plumb bobs. Below some examples (With his marking of the photos):



MINING PLUMMETS



COP-PB-BRASS-CASE-2-C



WD-BR-BOXED-FINIAL-1-C



WILLIAMSON's 659-1-C



457 WILCOX



HAMBURG Germany



660-1-C



587-4-C



402-IN&OUT-TIP-TURN

## 7. THE LEISTNER & HEIMBACH STORY

### THE PLUMB BOBS OF PAUL GUSTAVE LEISTNER AND JOSEPH OSCAR HEIMBACH

The German Art of Metalwork  
St. Louis & St. Charles, Missouri  
7-24-2008



By Nelson Denny and Mike Urness

This story was published also in *THE GRISTMILL*, a publication of the Mid-West Tool Collectors Association in December 2008.



At the end of the story we read:

*“Some readers may have Heimbach and Leistner artifacts. We would be greatly interested in details about those items.*

*Nelson Denny is an Architect from Hadlyme, Connecticut. Needless to say, he collects plumb bobs.*

*Mike Urness is a tool dealer & patent researcher from Chesterfield, Missouri. His research uncovered some of the essential material from St. Louis and St Charles.*

*A very special thanks to Wolfgang Ruecker of Germany, fellow plumb bob collector (new member of MWTCA) for his research into the Leistner family in Germany (much more information that was included here) and his skillful work in uncovering the Leistner patents and dog wheels used by German “needle makers.” “*

Nelson always was happy when he found new details of these interesting plumb bobs: THOUGHT YOU GUYS MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE SOME NEW EVIDENCE ABOUT THE MARKING ON HEIMBACH PLUMB BOBS.....SITUATING HIM FOR A TIME IN ST. LOUIS. IN THE STATE OF MISSOURI AND APPARENTLY WORKING INDEPENDENTLY FROM PAUL LEISTNER.....I HAVE ANOTHER BOXED BOB THAT HAS THE DISTINCTIVE HEIMBACH CAP DESIGN (BUT NO MARKING ON THE SHAFT), BUT DOES HAVE AN INKED LABEL ON THE LID SAYING, "LEISTNER & HEIMBACH, ST. CHARLES, MO." INDICATING A WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO, AT LEAST FOR A PERIOD OF TIME.....



We needed some years to find all the details for the story. You can read and download it on my web site [www.plumbbobcollectors.info](http://www.plumbbobcollectors.info) on page LEISTNER & HEIMBACH.

## 8. THE PLUMB LINE CONTINUUM

With the huge collection that he bought from Bruce Cynar Nelson Denny also got the rights for THE PLUMB LINE and wanted to continue this good work as "T P L continuum" and digitalized it: Below you find the his introduction ...

THE DEFINITIVE WORK ON THE SIMPLE PLUMB BOB

### THE PLUMB LINE CONTINUUM

NEWSLETTERS FOR THE PLUMB BOB COLLECTOR



VOLUME I - 2005  
THE ORIGINAL 16 ISSUES  
JANUARY, 1991 THROUGH SEPTEMBER, 1994  
NEWLY INDEXED AND ANNOTATED

BY BRUCE CYNAR, EDITED AND AMENDED BY NELSON DENNY  
PUBLISHED BY NELSON DENNY, P.O. BOX 488, HADLYME, CT. 06439  
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Introduction

## THE PLUMB LINE CONTINUUM

### MILESTONES

**Died Metaphorically. Bruce Cynar, 58,** As the Author of the Newsletter and CEO of the Publishing Empire known as The PLUMB LINE, published 1991 – 2005, whose success was to be the repository of "known" and "sometimes speculative" information on the tool, The Simple Plumb Bob. He was born in Harlem, Manhattan, New York and grew up in Hempstead, Long Island, son of Helen and Bob. Bob, an Industrial Arts Teacher and Printer, had a printing press set up in the basement where Bruce learned to read upside down and backwards, by hand setting type, intellectual gymnastics he systematically applied to most questions he encountered in his life. As an adult, he took a Bachelor Degree from the New York Institute of Technology, majoring in Television Production which launched his "day job" in sales for a major television network. For entertainment, he started buying Plumb Bob Shapes at tag sales and auctions, eventually building a collection of great import. His innate intellectual curiosity led him to collect and interpret as much detailed information on the subject as he had Plumb Bobs in his collection. The PLUMB LINE was an avenue to that end. He is a member of MENSA and Interrel and a self taught machinist. He has been married to Kari for 36 years. He is survived by his wife (she must be a saint), his son, a physician in Dallas, his daughter, a 911 Operator for Allen County, and a grandson, Joey, to say nothing of all the Friends he made in the Plumb Bob Collecting Community.

### EULOGY

To those who already know it, The PLUMB LINE has become like the Bible to the Believer, the Holy Word on the subject of Bobs to the Plumb Bob Collector. In fact, it remains to this day, the only book on the subject of Plumb Bobs. In a self conscious and modest way it sweeps from being a Primer for collecting Plumb Bobs by "shape" in the first newsletter, to introducing and outlining the big questions left for future research, in the later issues. We learn by reading The PLUMB LINE as Bruce was "learning by doing" the major work of The PLUMB LINE publication.

I met Bruce Cynar several years ago on the internet in order to arrange for the shipment of a Plumb Bob. Casually, I happened to ask a very short and, as I recall, a rather naïve Plumb Bob question. His response was in the form of no less than 250, kind, well crafted, informative, encouraging and witty words. This is the generosity of spirit of the Bruce Cynar that the Tool Collecting Community has come to know, rely on and respect.

Unfortunately, I have only met the man once in person, such is the distance from New England to the Mid West; but hundreds of exchanged emails have allowed me a fair picture of the man. As we exchanged correspondence, it became clear that I had met Bruce at that moment in time when he had accomplished his personal objectives concerning Plumb Bobs, and was on to other interests, Steam Engines and Whistles and GRAND CHILDREN. He was selling off the last of his Bob Collection, and The PLUMB LINE was coming on its 9<sup>th</sup> birthday as a self published book incorporating the original 16 newsletters.

Earlier this year, as I referred some new Plumb Bob acquaintances to The PLUMB LINE, I discovered that the stock of copies was gone. Having inspired so much of my own thinking on the subject of the Simple Plumb Bob, it seemed unthinkable that reprints would not be available to new and seasoned collectors. Attempting to be encouraging about keeping The PLUMB LINE in print, I confess to badgering Bruce to get the originals to a printer.

Two days later, I suspect in retaliation to my incessant prodding, I received a package from Bruce, sent Priority Mail (Plumb Bob material, to those who know Bruce, always warrants Priority treatment), which included the original 16 newsletters and the following document:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN  
Re: THE PLUMB LINE

*This document is to confirm that I Bruce Cynar, author and original publisher of The Plumb Line, do hereby sell all right, title, interest, and future profit potential, including future publication in any form, or amorphous; to Nelson Denny, of the Brush Hill Road Denny's, in exchange for the sum of one U.S. Dollar (\$1.00) and the promise of a future meal (anticipated); ever lasting friendship (appreciated); and the occasional cocktail (sometimes needed, sometimes over-served, but always enjoyed).*

*This document outlines the totality, sum and complete transaction, except for the things I may think of at a later date.*

(signed)  
R. Bruce Cynar, Party of the First Part.....Indeed The Sum of all His Parts  
(dated)  
(Witness)  
Rainbow Bird

Bruce, once again, you have taught me a lesson, this time about Endings and Beginnings!

### THE PLUMB LINE CONTINUUM – The Immediate Future

Having been tagged as the new Editor and Chief my immediate priority was to get The Plumb Line back in print quickly. In the form of THE PLUMB LINE CONTINUUM, the New Edition incorporates some "structural improvements", a new Table of Contents, a sequential page numbering system linking all 16 issues, and an Index, all adding to the convenience of navigating the original newsletters. A new article and additional photographs supplement the content.

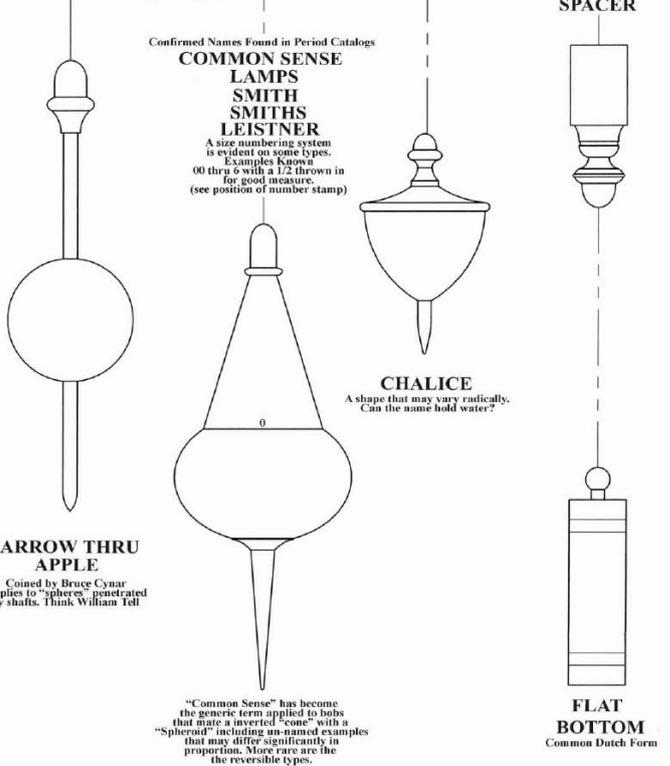
### THE PLUMB LINE CONTINUUM – What's Ahead

Operating in the spirit of the original newsletter, it is hoped that readers, will come to see the "CONTINUUM" as a repository for additional information on Plumb Bobs. Bruce's *Original Three Goals* still stand, as my own. During my term as Editor, aside from keeping this New Edition in print, it is my personal goal that future volumes will appear, made up of New Newsletters on Advanced Plumb Bob Topics and feature stories on the Great Collectors and Plumb Bob Collections of the World.

The Editor

### Shape Vocabulary

Traditional Early Shapes



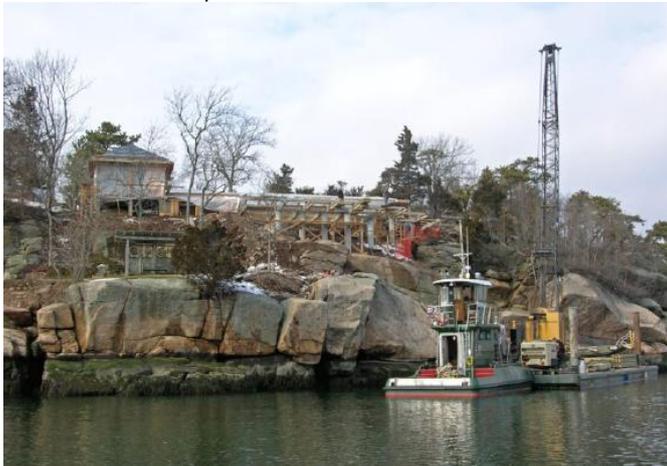
The complete Plumb Line Continuum you can read and download on my web site [www.plumbbobcollectors.info](http://www.plumbbobcollectors.info) on page The Plumb Line Continuum.

## 9. HIS WORK AND THE FUTURE

Sometimes he was so busy that he had no time for his hobby. His clients had first priority. About his work (when I asked him in 2006 why he did not answer to my emails for some weeks):

AH WOLFGANG.....I AM HERE! AND YOUR COMMUNICATIONS HAVE BEEN COMING THROUGH.....AND AS ALWAYS MUCH APPRECIATED.

I MUST CONFESS THAT MY ENERGIES HAVE BEEN DIVERTED FOR THE LAST 6 MONTHS ON A VERY IMPORTANT ARCHITECTURAL PROJECT FOR ME.....I HAVE A VERY WEALTHY CLIENT THAT I HAVE WORKED WITH PERIODICALLY FOR MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS THAT COLLECTS HOMES IN EXOTIC AND BEAUTIFUL PLACES IN MANY PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. HIS NEW ACQUISITION IS A THREE ACER ISLAND OFF THE SHORE OF THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT. WE HAVE A TWO DIFFERENT LARGE AND LAVISH HOMES UNDER CONSTRUCTION AND A SWIMMING POOL; THEY SIT ON A GRANITE CLIFF OVERHANGING THE OCEAN, ABOUT 40 FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL. .... SO AS AN ARCHITECT IT IS PARTICULARLY CHALLENGING, NOT ONLY IN THE SENSE OF



DESIGN, BUT ALSO IN THE SENSE OF HAVING TO INVENT THE TECHNOLOGY OF DELIVERING WORKERS AND MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF WOOD, STEEL AND STONE TO A VERY REMOTE AND INACCESSIBLE LOCATION.....WORKING WITH A LOCAL CONTRACTOR WHO IS GENERALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION, WE EMPLOY BARGES AND CRANES AND ON OCCASION A HELICOPTER TO TRANSPORT EXCAVATORS, REDI-MIX CONCRETE AND ALL SORTS OF CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL TO THE ISLAND. IT IS ONE THING TO DESIGN IT, AND ANOTHER TO MAKE IF HAPPEN IN AN EFFICIENT WAY.....

About the future (2006):

I HAVE ANOTHER FEW YEARS TO GO FOR COMPLETION OF THIS PROJECT.....THEN, RETIREMENT, TO INVEST MORE TIME IN THE IMPORTANT THINGS IN LIFE.....PLUMB BOBS!

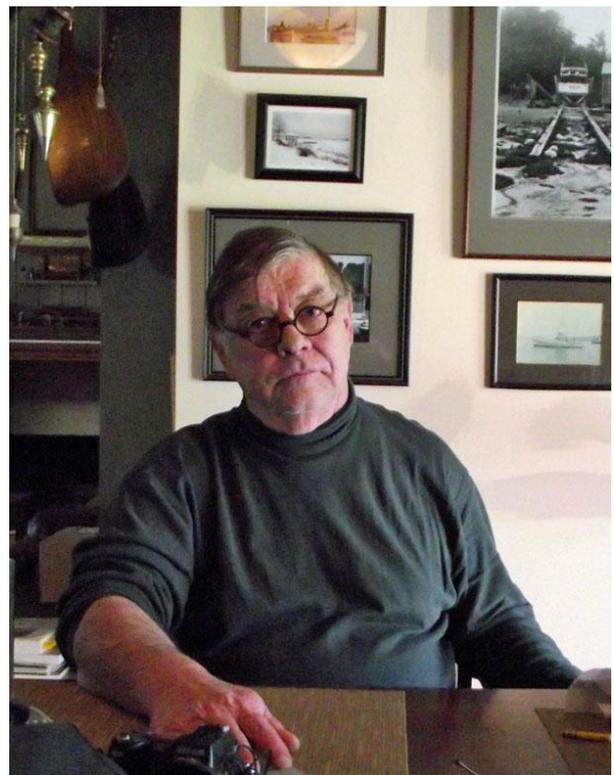
The last revision for the English version of the monthly WOLF'S PLUMB BOB NEWS he did for us end of 2010 with the report of the International Plumb Bob Collectors Meeting in Cologne, Germany.

The last email news from him I got on March 09, 2012 (asking if a special plumb bob – the J.W.ANDREWS- of his collection is offered in the auction of Martin Donnelly in Nashua):

My life is an open book! Fine to tell him the item is mine and some other selective item.



NELSON DENNY



NELSON DENNY in his favorite chair at his dining room table surrounded by his boats and bobs.

These statements from Nelson Denny should give you an idea how he was thinking about collecting plumb bobs and the collaboration with others.

I will continue working in this mind of my friend Nelson.

Wolf Ruecker

## 10.ADDITIONAL INFO

You can read a short version of this NEWS on <http://www.plumbbobcollectors.info/209101.html>

**LINKS** TO OTHER INFORMATION AND PICTURES OF THE COLLECTION NELSON DENNY on my web site.  
**I recommend visiting these pages!**

(click on the line and you get the file; perhaps you must press the CTRL-button before. If it does not work, feel free to ask me)

**- PICTURE GALLERY 1**

**- THE PLUMB LINE continuum**

**- LEISTNER and HEIMBACH plumb bobs**

**- SPECIAL PLUMB BOBS**

**- SHOWROOMS, DISPLAYS, SHOW CASES from plumb bob collectors worldwide**

**- HIGHLIGHTS FROM plumb bob COLLECTIONS**

REMARK:

This is an article of the monthly published **WOLF'S PLUMB BOB NEWS** that is sent on demand as PDF-file attachment by email. FREE.

You can see all former publications on the website [www.plumbbobcollectors.info](http://www.plumbbobcollectors.info)

Remarks and contact by email: [plumbbobwolf@t-online.de](mailto:plumbbobwolf@t-online.de)

Thank you for your interest

Wolf