

FROM SIMPLE BEGINNINGS

by Linda Fiedler

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Welcome to the 35th annual NDPCS Convention. What I'm about to tell you is what I was so surprised to find out in the historic books- that by the way were so beautifully put together by Bonnie and Arley Olson over these past 35 years! Please feel free to take a look at them when you can as they are very interesting and informative!

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So let's begin.....

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The First meeting was, as many of you know, an invitation only picnic lunch at Chihinkaph Park in Wahpeton. The invites were sent out by Cliff and Mavis Olson. 63 people were there! It was June 4, 1989. A “birthday” gift to Mavis. Guests were invited to bring a dish to share, all their utensils, etc, and a piece of pottery to show and tell! They also included a “swap” if participants so desired.

So there it is the beginning!!!

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The next year, 1990 they became a little more organized. Another letter was sent out in May. They were going to meet at the Travel Host Hotel in Wahpeton, on June 10, from 9-5. With a brief meeting at 1:30 to plan for the next year. They would have a swap and sell again and show and tell. They could reserve tables from Cliff for \$8. All 63 people invited and in attendance became charter members. They also chose Board Members and a Board of Directors at this meeting. In 1990 they also became the NORTH DAKOTA POTTERY COLLECTORS SOCIETY, officially. The logo was later designed in 1992. Sandy Short, membership chair, created the member application. They designated the second weekend in June to gather as the official weekend to hold convention from 1991 going forward.

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That year the convention was held in Wahpeton again on Saturday and Sunday. There was no banquet, no registration fee. Their speaker Howard Lewis spoke at the meeting Sunday morning. They held the first convention auction on Saturday night. This was the year of the first commemorative. Designed by Don Miller. At a cost of \$10. It was the paperweight.

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In 1992, the convention was held in Grand Forks, June 12-14. There was no registration fee. There was a buffet Friday night. But no banquet on Saturday. The auction was held Saturday night at 6 p.m. On Sunday morning at the annual meeting, Marie Fiedler spoke on UND pottery. The commemorative was a coyote figurine patterned after the UND coyote. Mike Robinson from California was the artist. The cost was again \$10.

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In 1993 the convention was held in Mandan June 12-14. For the first time there was a registration fee. But, as you can see this was a convention of FIRSTS. Noted on the highlights from that year. These were all made possible by Jan and Bob Barr-- convention chairs. This type of convention agenda continues to present day. Which includes a social on Friday, board meeting and educational seminars on Saturday, auction Saturday afternoon, banquet Saturday evening, annual meeting and show and sale on Sunday. This particular year the Saturday banquet was a dinner cruise on the Missouri River. Way to go Bob!!

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In 1994 the banquet was back in Wahpeton. In 1995 it was held in Fargo, June 9-11. But of special note, the group celebrated Oz Sveum's 95th Birthday at their March meeting prior to convention in June. Ardeen and Oz Sveum had a much talked about collection which was eventually donated to Bonanzaville. In 1995 Endowments were established. An Endowment was an application process which was given to a qualified non-profit organization to purchase, preserve and display North Dakota Pottery. The first endowment went to the Richland Historical society.

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Endowments have gone to: Bonanzaville, Pioneer Trails Museum, Ramsey County Historical Society, Three Tribes Museum, National Buffalo Museum, Prairie Village Museum and others. It is decided upon by the board as to the designated group and amount. Many endowments have been given over the years.

So as you know or may have noticed, conventions have bounced around the state since 1993. Locations were mainly Wahpeton, Fargo, Grand Forks, Bismarck/Mandan, Dickinson, and Minot.

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I was surprised by the amount of newspaper articles in local papers throughout the state that were printed in these initial years and beyond. Bob Barr was one of the local celebrities, as was Bonnie and Arley Olson, and several others. But lets remember, this was before the digital and social media age we live in now. It was the way to get information out there.

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Convention agendas became more detailed and they continue to be so today. Memberships were incredibly strong. Starting from a simple 63 charter members in 1989 to over 400 for many years. With dues being only \$10 for many years.

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One convention highlight that caught my eye was- in 1997 NDPCS had an all female board of directors. It also said, "this would be corrected in 1998". Ha! Just imagine, ladies, how much was accomplished that year!! This convention was in Wahpeton. Also, in 1997 Cliff and Mavis were awarded the First Founders Plaque.

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Maybe some of you remember the Dickinson convention of 1998. Con and Sandy Short hosted an open house with a cowboy style backyard barbecue. Bonnie and Arley also hosted an open house. 176 members registered for this convention. Sandy sent out a special invite so people could make a plan. They roasted a pig. Weather looked to cooperate.

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At the convention they celebrated Oz and Ardeen's 58th wedding anniversary as well as the usual birthday for Mavis. Guest speaker Saturday night was cowboy humorist Bill Lowman. As in previous years show and sale continued to be a highlight of convention gathering.

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1999 was the 10 year anniversary of NDPCS. It was held in Wahpeton. 182 members were registered. The educational seminar included a discussion with employees of the Rosemeade Pottery company. There was also a display of lunch hour pieces. Don Miller was the guest speaker at the banquet. Show and sale was Sunday after the annual meeting. Wahpeton convention always includes an open house at the Richland County Museum.

So that's the first 10 years. But there was 25 more as you know, cuz here we are at the 35 year celebration. So many speakers, so many gatherings over these next 25 years. Conventions were definitely established: 3 days, educational seminars, auction, silent auction, guest speakers and banquet, show and sale. Oh, and of course, annual meeting!

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Speakers throughout the years were: Genna Pelham, Darlene Dommel, Rita Carew(daughter of Howard Lewis)Bob Barr, Elizabeth Morsette, Ammy Mossett, Ken Forster, Pat Grantier, Lorene Jasper(friend of Margaret Cable)Todd Hanson, Heidi Heitkamp, Curt Rustand, Bill Bakken, Sandy Short. Just to name a few...

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All conventions were fun and it was just good to get together with friends that you only maybe would see once a year. But some conventions were more memorable! The convention of 2001 in Mandan comes to mind. Some of you may recall. I wasn't there but I certainly heard stories. A severe thunderstorm blew through leaving a path of broken windows and dented cars from the hail that was in it.

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In 2002 Grand Forks hosted. Members stayed in the dorms. Activities included tours of the new Englestad Hockey Arena, open house at the Cable home. Also, pottery demonstrations and painting on campus were a highlight.

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In 2003 The first Pottery Road Show was presented at the convention in Minot. There was an open house at Christman's in Rugby on Thursday. Also, Prairie Village Museum hosted an open house, as did Vivian and Bill Myers with lunch.

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As I mentioned, the first NDPCS Road Shows were held in 2003. The working committee was Bob Barr, Arley Olson and Quent Christman. Their mission was to provide historical and general information about the major North Dakota pottery companies from the past. These included: UND, Dickota, Turtle Mt., WPA Ceramics, Rosemeade, Ceramics by Messer, Little Heart, and 3 Tribes. They presented road show programs in various cities and towns across North Dakota and Minnesota. To various groups. Showing in libraries, historical societies, museums, women's groups, flea markets, even a turkey barbecue festival in Aneta, ND.

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In 2003 the first WOW Award was given. "Wonderful Original What"? It was all meant in fun. Given by Bonnie and Arley.

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We also had a pottery exhibition and competition. These were in categories and voted on by the members. This pottery show and competition became a chair position for a few years.

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NDPCS over the years established some honor awards. One being Founder's Award, and Honorary Lifetime Membership Award.

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Can't forget to mention the numerous table decorations/door prizes made over the years specifically for our convention.

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Our “show and sales” eventually evolved into Room Sales and social. A lot of good buys happened in the room sales! So Sunday morning was for the annual meeting with breakfast rolls and coffee . Then all members would hit the road for home.

We really have had some wonderful conventions these past 35 years. Some more memorable than others. To think of all the knowledge that has been shared and learned by us as members. And continues...even our last newsletter with the article by Mary Sand. Who knew?? We have so many “treasures” within our membership. So many friendships formed over the common bond of collecting.

With the onset of technology, we have encountered and adjusted to the new way of life. Collectors and collecting are not the norm. We have a club that doesn't boast a membership in the 400's. But the members we do have hold a strong bond. That of collecting NORTH DAKOTA POTTERY. Call it a Pride Thing!!

I hope you have enjoyed this bit of history. And now will take some time to look through “our annuals”! If I can call them that. All of my information came from the books.

I wish to mention, we have 5 original charter members here with us tonight: Bob Barr Ann and Quent Christman Eugene Peterson Sandy Short.

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I will leave you with this poem.

The Song of the Pot by Margaret Kelly Cable

I am a lucky little lump of North Dakota clay,
My heart is filled with gladness
And I sing a song all day,
For a potter found me worthy of his very finest ware,
And fashioned me upon his wheel
With tender loving care.
With the magic of his fingers gave me form and life and soul,
Transformed me from a shapeless clod
Into a flower bowl.
And as I hold within my arms, a prairie rose bouquet
I bless the hand that made me
All from North Dakota clay.