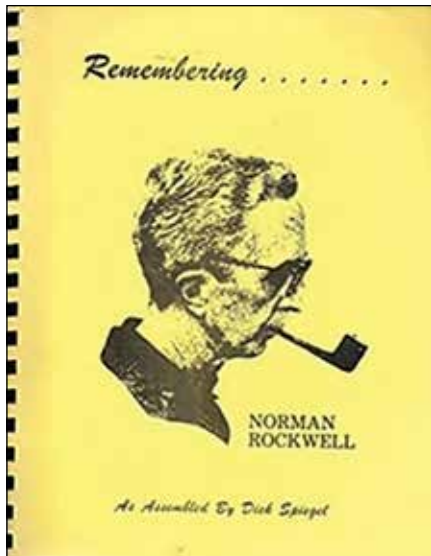


By One of Our Own

by Sue Wakat

Most of us collect lots of bells made by certain people, but always have other bells that are from a variety of sources. There are many of them that we have absolutely no idea of their history or who made them or when, but we just like them. You may find that some of those others were made by one of the two companies run by Dick Spiegel. Those would be River Shores, Ltd. and Dick Spiegel Designs. One thing Sue Moore found that really surprised her was this book. Her reaction was "I never knew that Dick was an author." We knew he made other objects, but authoring a book was almost a shock.



Dick had a brother who was a priest, and he actually studied for the priesthood himself. This probably tells us why he had some of the bells designed and produced by his companies with a definite religious aspect. These three bells were produced in 1997— Brother Dominic is the Bandmaster, 7 1/2" tall; Sister Dominic is the nun singing and playing the guitar, 8" tall; and Brother Barnabas is 7" tall at the top of his tuba.



Another monk bell was one Dick called "My Singing Monk



Brother Dominic



Sister Dominic



Brother Barnabas

Bell." Produced in 1998, he is 5" high and sold for \$25. The monk is made of unglazed bisque terracotta, and Dick believed he was singing a Gregorian chant. These two small, brightly robed monks show the whimsy of some of Dick's pieces. The one wearing a bright red habit and holding a gigantic fish is clutching it so tightly you know he



is afraid it will get away. Thus, we have the nickname of fishers of men. The one in the bright green robe with his toes sticking out at the bottom has flowers in his right hand and, of course, a bell in his left hand. Both are about 4" tall and have faces that peek out from under their hoods with radiant smiles. There were also many other church and church-related bells produced by Dick through the years.



At the Vermont convention, Dick gave out silverplated solid brass 3D "Santa" bells that had his name and date engraved on it as this was his presidential year. (See

next column.). The bell was 6" high with a shiny silver finish and was molded in two pieces. This bell relates to another of his passions and that was Christmas. Dick sent out photos of himself dressed as Santa Claus at Christmas for many years. He made a happy snowman bell which was made of nickel-plated brass which would never tarnish with the handle being an extension of the hat and was a very plump snowman indeed. He also had six assorted 1 1/2" bells to be used as decorations for trees or anything else you wanted. They were cast in brass then polished and nickel-plated to a mirror finish. The bells had a red cord attached to hang and sold only as a set for \$35. The last Christmas item to be mentioned is a 6" tall metal Santa Clause that winds up which causes him to move his head and ring the bell he is holding. It cost \$30.



One of Dick's favorite bells, of which he was extremely proud, was the "Looking Out to Sea" bell produced in 1982. Depicting a Norman Rockwell painting, it shows a young boy and his grandfather staring out at the wonders of the ocean. Dick actually gave a program on the making of this bell at the 2000 convention. He had this bell manufactured in Piedra Negras, Mexico, a town just across the Rio Grande and 150 miles southwest of San Antonio. There, he worked with the artisans of Creative Ceramics who produced museum quality porcelain items. Each of these bells was hand painted so they are each slightly different. Even the porcelain handle of the bell was painted to look like a fine-grained wood.





Dick also promoted children in his bells. He had one series that he labeled his “Children Series” utilizing Norman Rockwell figures. These were designed by Roger Brown and manufactured in Mexico by River Shores, Ltd. He sold these individually, but when buying a set of four, he included a wooden wall hanger designed for this set of bells. On each bell he had the type of activity done by a child.

Dick did like Norman Rockwell and his paintings as you can gather from his choice of images on his works. This bell below titled “Spring Flowers” depicts Norman Rockwell’s only still-life painting. Each of these fine porcelain bells is hand-painted and signed by the individual artist who could complete a maximum of six bells per day. Each had to have the original art design sketched on it, then hand-painted with a multitude of individual colors, and then was hand fired. No two are exactly alike. Interesting that a number of people thought that this was a Fenton design.



School Play

Football Hero





Another series in essentially the same vein was the “World of Children.” Each bell was hand-painted and made of high-quality porcelain. Each originally cost \$50, but he reduced the price for a set of four to \$100, and included a wood wall rack. These were designed in 1979 to celebrate International Children’s year. A portion of the cost of each was donated to the American Freedom from Hunger Foundation. The bells were made of glazed bisque, 7” high shown below.



Katrina, sculptor Roger Brown, was hand-painted on museum quality porcelain in 1980 representing Europe.

Allison, sculptor Roger Brown, representing the U.S.

Rei-Ling, hand-crafted and hand-painted by Yen-Rei, an immigrant to the U.S. from China. Represents Asia.

Kuluk (pronounced Koo-Loo) Crafted and hand painted by Yen-Rei 1980. Represents the Artic regions.

A third series offered in 1987 finds a totally different concept of children portrayed. The “Kap Kids Kollection” features bells hand-painted and made of fine bisque porcelain that epitomize the quaint and simple activities of children. He called the bells Kap Kids because they had oversized caps, hats, bonnets, and attempted to express their feelings without the benefit of many facial features.





*Caroline
Southern*

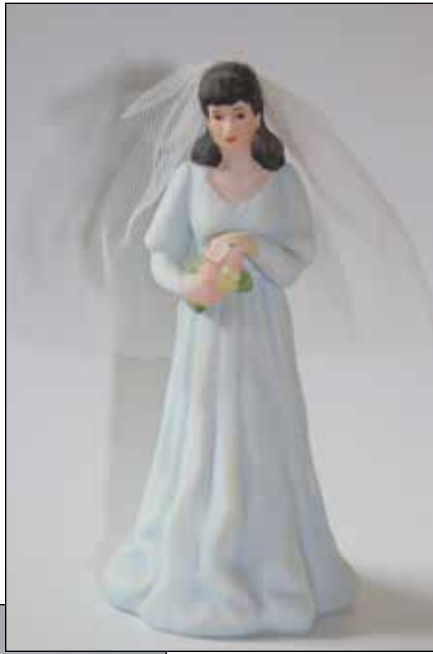


*Emily
The Roaring 20s*



*Jacqueline
Victorian*

A series of eight bells based on authentic portraits of brides and their wedding gowns in different eras was presented by River Shores, Ltd. in 1990. The series was called the American Bridal Collection and designed by Rob Saubers. All are 5" high.



*Laura
1940s*



*Sarah
Contemporary*



*Meredith
Edwardian*



*Rebecca
Empire*



*Elizabeth
Colonial*

Some of the outlier bells would be a cat jumping over a fence and six bell designs (dolphin and pup, swimming sea turtle, old lighthouse, Ship's anchor, Ship's wheel, and seashell) in metal. Pictured are two of the lighthouses on the next page.

He also offered a "Law & Order" Bobbie police helmet bell in shining brass. You often see these, but have you ever checked out if they were a Spiegel? They sold for \$25 and were 3" tall by 2 1/2" wide. He had a cloisonné bell, a beehive bell with a Winnie the Pooh clapper for \$25, and silver plated bell blossoms for \$50. There is also a porcelain Madonna hinged musical bell box that plays "Ave Maria" and has a small storage area, 3" diameter, \$50. Another group were French hand-



This bell is not known to be of a specific lighthouse but was obtained from Dick Spiegel at the 2003 Grand Rapids, Michigan ABA convention.

This bell is a replica of the Old Presque Lighthouse built in 1840 and was the first lighthouse in the Presque, Michigan area. It is the tallest lighthouse in the Great Lakes area that the public may climb.



painted Limoges porcelain bell boxes with a choice of a Floral bell with hand-embroidered tassel, Village Bell with Bird inside, and Sunflower bell with a price tag of \$250-\$259.

One of his favorites was a special edition of ten sand castings of the Wolf of Gubio (Italy). These bronze bells represent the story of St. Francis and the Wolf which is legendary and has led to the town of Gubio being a tourist attraction as the final resting place

of its famed, tamed wolf. Here is the small ad picture which sold for \$125.

The well-known painting of Grant Woods of a rural farm couple, The American Gothic, was produced and hand painted in 1982 and is shown on the next page.





The Gothic bell was given to Bob and Louise Collins by Dick Spiegel at the 2001 ABA Convention.

This 6 ½ inch angel bell has a 3 ¼ inch ornate bronze base and a delicate angel with downcast eyes blowing her horn to summon the people. The clapper consists of keys to the kingdom of heaven.

This is just an overview of what we have found out about Dick's different types of bells. Another

surprise were the necklace bells that he had his Dick Spiegel Designs make. One set of nine bells was produced by the "lost wax" method and featured unusual clappers. They all were 1 ½" long with a 32" silken cord and were \$50 each, four for \$150. He also had a group of five bells in a variety of shapes. We only have found two of these. One is a Santa with Santa boots for a clapper, and the other is an angel with a regular clapper.





Circuses are always fun and the following bells belong in this category. The large bell is a great depiction of the famous Lou Jacobs of Barnum and Bailey fame. He popularized the clown car and is credited with originating the red clown nose. He was voted into the Clown Hall of Fame in 1989 and was the first living person to appear on a U.S. postage stamp. There were only ten of these bells made, and it is 10 ½" high and 2" across and was manufactured by the lost wax method in bronze.

This is a smaller bell that is also of Lou Jacobs but has a surprise. It is not technically a real bell even though it has a sort of clapper. The hat is a nodder, and it has a really nice sound. The bell is 5 ½" by 2 3/8", again made of bronze with the lost wax method.

Shown above right is an elephant in silver that is balancing on a bell reminiscent of the old days when



elephants actually did balance on a ball. It brings back memories of yesteryear. Made of polished aluminum, 10 ½" tall, sold for \$150.



Below are a few more miscellaneous bells.

This Crown Jewels bell is 3" tall and designed after a crown in the Tower of London. Polished brass with "ripple" design, it has gold and colored stones and was produced in 1998 costing \$18.



This unusual piece below is an iguana on a tree stump created in 2001.

As he is bronze, he is not warm-blooded and will not fall out of the tree and play dead when the weather falls into the thirties. He is 8" high, 11" from nose to tail, and 4" at the base. His clapper seems to be an extension of his tail and is signed and dated.



A court jester is supposed to make you laugh and entertain, but this one seems to be a bit frightening and possibly sadistic. Made of bronze, lost wax method, it was produced in 1997 and is 6" high and 2¼" across.



Below is another very interesting piece depicting a cat that is supposed to be a meditating cat. There is a partner to this piece, a meditating dog shown below and handcrafted with a deep bronze patina, 5 ½" high. This piece is absolutely awesome, but it is really difficult to imagine that a cat is really meditating. Plotting maybe, but meditating? The clapper seems to be a piece of agate. The cost was \$95 for one or \$175 for the pair.



These Asian bells are interesting and very different. This amazing Japanese lucky god is representative of Jurojin, God of Wisdom. He has a walking stick and a scroll which is thought to contain all of the wisdom of the world and all of the good and bad deeds that have been done. He often appears with a crane which represents longevity. His clapper is a Buddha on a chain (see picture). He is 12 ¾" high, 5" square at the base, bronze, and wonderfully detailed.



This wonderful Sumo wrestler was another of Dick's creations. The body of the bell is a large bronze chung with a sizeable resin Sumo wrestler as the handle. The clapper consists of two Sumo wrestlers. Total height is 10 ½".

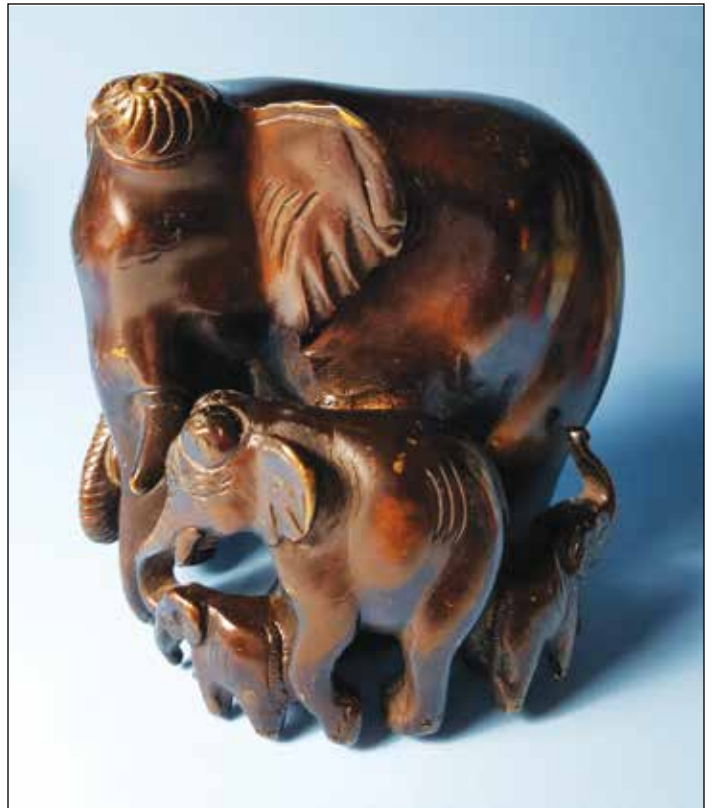


Dick also made two small immortals that represent longevity and wealth. Each is hand crafted and has bright colors and a rich glaze finish. They are 4" high with a porcelain clapper and dressed in native Chinese costume of the period. The pair cost \$50.



Another bell at the top of the next column is very different. This 4" by 4" brass bell depicts one large elephant, two medium elephants, and four small elephants. Only 99 were made of this Asian elephant and was produced in 1996. They have a medium dark brown patina.

He also offered a royal Chinese couple 7 ¼" high by 5 ¼" wide and 4 ¼" deep for \$200 each or \$300 for the pair. The pair had great details in bronze with amazing facial definition.



These are truly an imperial pair waiting for their subjects to come in and genuflect before them.



Another unusual type of bell made was his wind bells. All were made in Korea and had a black cord hanging loop and clapper with a wind-catcher hanger.

On the next page is the seal-shaped wind bell, 2" diameter, 13" length with a gray-blue patina.

This wind bell has the same measurements but has a tulip flower shape with copper patina and is shown on the next page.



Coffee mug made by Spiegel Designs.



Mississippi River Mud souvenir coffee mug of St. Louis River Boat.



The frog shape wind bell not shown has a 2" diameter and 11 ½ total length with blue-green patina.

Dick also made items that were not bells.

He made plates of the Freedom of Speech, Freedom from Want, Freedom from Fear, and Freedom of Worship from Rockwell's pictures referencing Franklin Roosevelt's 1941 Four Freedoms State of the Union Address.



Matilda the Koala



Paperweight of the Triple Image of Norman Rockwell

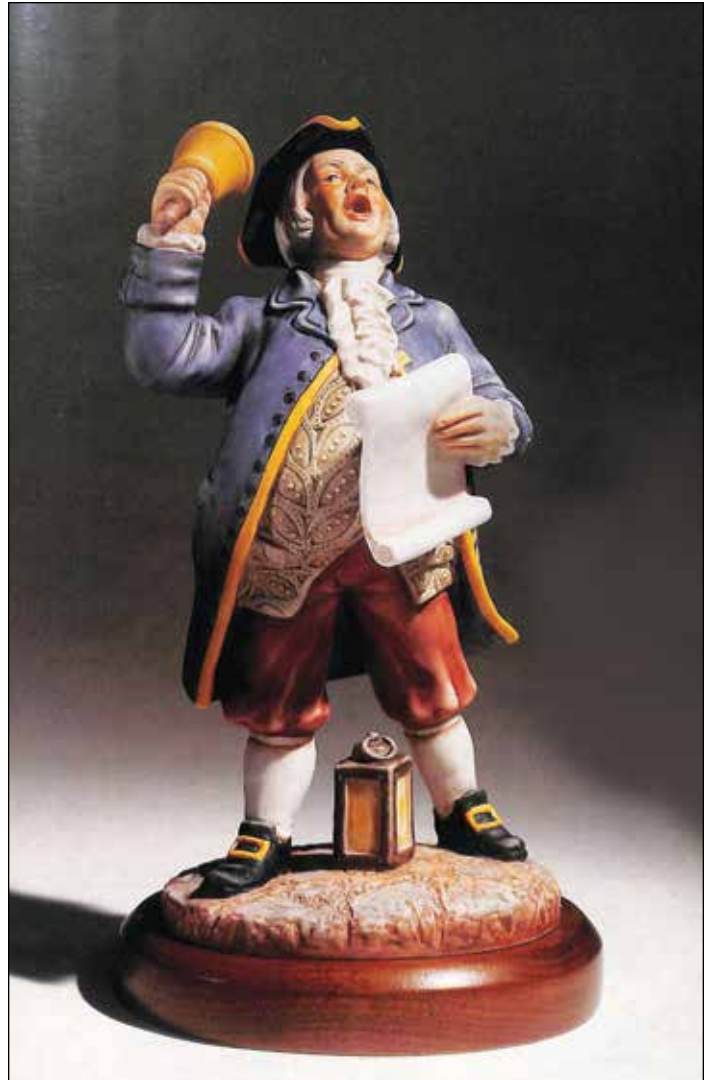


This middle-aged male elk bell made of bronze is only one of numerous animals featured in so many forms of Dick Spiegel's designs.

Just a couple more items.

One is a group of medallions made by River Shores, Ltd. to be given away at convention each of four years. These are still cherished and kept by many of those who attended these conventions.

Last but not least is Dick's tribute to our wonderful Town Criers.



This article is a group effort. Kathleen Collins searched diligently for any mention of these bells in old *Bell Towers* and provided pictures of many bells.

We thank many others for their information and pictures they provided: Judy Blake, Bruce and Jane Clayton, Art and Ruth Ann Frank, Marilyn Grismere, Connie Hitts, Bob and Annette Hunt, Van and Carol Jurin, James and Nancy Kirk, Mary Levins, Sue Moore, Wade and Pauline Prentice, and Kay and Ron Weaver.



I suppose we should also possibly thank Bruce Clayton for instigating the writing of this article. It was interesting that none of the people contacted had any idea of the scope and depth of Dick's products and delving into the history of them has provided us with many more things to add to our search in our quest for bells.