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Welcome to *Nib Noise*. I hope you'll enjoy reading this month's issue.

**PLEASE DO NOT REPLY TO THIS NEWSLETTER!**

The robot that sends *Nib Noise* out refuses to learn to read. If you have comments or questions, send email to:

[richard@richardspens.com](mailto:richard@richardspens.com)

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Harvest time has come, and it's got me thinking about labor-saving devices. Throughout history, farming has relied increasingly on machinery and better kit to save the farmer's time and effort while allowing the production of more and better crops: the scythe, the moldboard plow, the disk harrow, the seed drill, the hayloader, the traction engine, the combine, and the modern tractor. Pens are that way, too. Early fountain pens were labor intensive: dropper filling and the ever-present problem of inky fingers and clothes, the syringe filler, the crescent filler, the twist filler, the lever filler, the Vacumatic filler, and in England the **Leverless** filler. Patented in 1934 by one Edward Stephen Sears (U.S. Patent No [1,954,952](#)), Mabie Todd's Leverless was really a cleverer twist filler. Embedded into the filler knob was a stiff bar attached to it that ran the length of the barrel and was placed near the inside wall of the barrel. Turning the knob moved the bar around inside the barrel, grasping the sac by friction and twisting it. One moving part, no springs, no gaskets or other seals.



After World War, or probably during the war for introduction when it was over, some bright individuals with too much time on their hands decided to re-engineer the Leverless filler. The new version still used a twist knob, but gone was the simplicity of the original. Now the mechanism was an ordinary button filler, except that instead of a button for the user to push, it used a cam screwed to the knob. Turning the knob rotated the cam, which pressed against the end of the pressure bar. More parts, more complexity... It produced an elegantly streamlined pen, though.



The only catch was a big one: they made the knob out of casein. Soaking the pen to clean the knob would kill it. Here are a normal button and one that was killed by soaking:



## Get Thee to a Pen Show!

It's a month away, but the Ohio Pen Show will run through the first weekend in November, so I figure it's better to make note of it early than too late. Festivities crank up on Thursday, November 3, and close down Sunday afternoon, November 6. Barbara and I will be there Friday through Sunday. I will be working on nibs. As always, Barbara will be making sure I keep my nose to the grindstone. Pen repair will also be available.

Please read our **"Table Talk" FAQ** to learn how we operate at a show.

If you plan to come and haven't ever been to a show before, you might want to read my article on **Your First Pen Show**.

Come on out to Columbus,, Ohio, and visit us at the Crowne Plaza Columbus North- Worthington, at 6500 Doubletree Avenue.

For more information, visit the **Ohio Pen Show's site**.



Also, I will be giving my hands-on nib smoothing seminar at the Ohio show. It happens Sunday morning, beginning promptly at 8:30. Attendance for hands-on guidance is limited to 16 registered participants. Your \$20.00 registration fee will cover all the materials you will be using; please do not bring your own pens expecting to work on them during the session. **Registration** opens promptly at 9:00 Eastern time on Friday, October 21, and it usually fills up quickly. If you aren't a registered participant, you are still welcome to audit the workshop. We'll have extra copies of the handout for you, and we'll take questions from auditors just as from paid participants.

We look forward to seeing old friends and meeting new ones. We hope to see you there!

## NEWS FLASH

**InkZap!** is back! The *world's greatest ink remover*, from Indy-Pen-Dance, has returned, and they've improved it. It even has a clean new fragrance. **You need this stuff.**



## FROM THE CRYPT

A decade ago, I wrote a series of seven quickie articles that I posted somewhere. The Internet being a graveyard, I've exhumed them, and I'll be running

them here. Here's the second. Please note that "Thursday" refers to February 9, 2012, and that the Glossopedia entries referred to might have been corrected and/or expanded since that time.

### Camel and... ?

It's amazing what you can come up with when you're not looking for it. This week I learned something really cool (or not, depending on your viewpoint) about Camel pens. In case you're not familiar with Camel, here's my glossary entry on the company, as it appeared Thursday morning.

**Camel.** (*Camel Pen Company*) A pen company located in Orange, New Jersey; founded by Joseph Wustman in 1935. Wustman set out to produce pens that made their own ink when you filled them with water. At the back end of the barrel, built into the button filling mechanism, was a replaceable cartridge that contained an ink pellet (U.S. Patent N° 2,024,228, issued December 17, 1935, to Russell B. Kingman and Ralf L. Hartwell). Unlike the ink pellets for trench pens of World War I, the Camel's pellet was intended to be good for many fillings, up to a year's worth. The concept was good, but the execution was unsatisfactory, and Camel was out of business by the end of 1938. Shown here is a "junior" sized Camel.



So I was researching Varsity and Wilrite pens, and I stumbled across an item on the Dictator pen. Just for grins, I followed the trail of bread crumbs, and I ended up adding the following entry to my glossary.

**Dictator.** (*Dictator Fountain Pen Company, Inc.*) A pen and pencil manufacturing company located in New York City; founded in 1920 by J. Hendricks, W. B. Burruss, and E. A. Paulton to bring to market a fountain pen that was claimed to use a replaceable cartridge containing sufficient ink concentrate in powder form to last a full year, requiring only filling with plain water. (The design was probably based on U.S. Patent N° 1,450,398, one of several related patents issued to Arthur Winter.) There was a matching Dictator pencil that had storage for 18 spare leads, and this pencil was also claimed to go a year without refilling. In 1921, ownership of the corporation was transferred to Arthur Winter, who apparently dissolved it and reconstituted the company without incorporating. U.S. records of Dictator do not continue past the end of 1923, from which it can be inferred that the pen design was a failure. Evidence suggests that Winter moved to the United Kingdom and there set up to make button-filling pens under the Dictator name.

The net result of this entry, other than the entry itself, was that I had the pleasure of adding the following sentence to the entry on Camel:

Camel was not the first company to have tried to produce a pen of this type; in the early 1920s, the short-lived Dictator company had attempted the same feat, apparently with a similar lack of success.

Are we having fun yet?

## BROAD STROKES

My son-in-law, Don Fluckinger, is a past master at dealing with online auctions, and he's offered some guidelines in more than one of his Extra Fine Points articles. Now it's my turn to offer a little advice based on my own experience. You'll find it in my new article **Caveat Emptor: In an Auction, You Get What You Pay For.**



**Parker Duofold Ringtop Fountain Pen in Lime Green - 14k nib**

Condition: **Used**  
Time left: 3d 10h | Friday, 9:29PM

Current bid: **US \$34.00**

Bid Amount  
Enter US \$35.00 or more

[ 8 bids ]

**Place bid**

♥ Add to Watchlist

### The Nib Noise Archive

For those who love delving into history, the *Nib Noise Archive* is now on line.

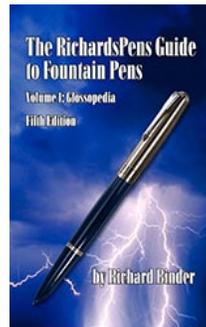
### PEN WORLD and Me

Part I of my new series for *PEN WORLD* is being published this month. This is a two-parter, stepping back 25 years in time from my obsession with World War II to look at the trench pens of the Great War. If you don't already subscribe to *PEN WORLD*, I recommend it as good reading and an excellent way to keep abreast with what's going on in the (pun intended) pen world. Print editions are available by subscription or on newsstands, and digital editions are available by subscription. Back issues are available.

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## My Books

Two months ago, I published the *Fifth Edition* of my *Glossopedia*. The new edition is available from Apple, Amazon, and Barnes & Noble. If you had an earlier edition, the update is free, and there are instructions for updating on my **Books page**.



I invite you to visit my website's **Books page**. It has a complete listing of all my books, with direct links to the vendors' pages where you can buy them for your own library.



As an Amazon, Apple, and Barnes & Noble Associate, I earn a commission when you purchase one of my books by following a link from my Books page.



By Don Fluckinger

## December 2004: Modern Vintage Style

*After several years of vintage militancy, I've warmed a little to modern pens again. Here are the best that caught my eye in this year's FPH catalog.*



Filcaio Columbia

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## From the *Glossopedia*

With more than 1,600 entries comprising (with subentries) more than 1,750 individual terms, more than 1,000 illustrations, more than 200 patent citations linked to their respective patent documents at various archives, and extensive cross-references, the RichardsPens *Glossopedia* is the most comprehensive resource of its kind anywhere. Each month, *Nib Noise* includes a randomly chosen *Glossopedia* entry.

**ABC** A brand of writing instruments produced in the early 1930s by Parker. Shown here is a twist-action ABC pencil, the only ABC-branded writing instrument I have seen. Except for its branding, this pencil is a duplicate of the 1933 Parkette pencil. With its ABC imprint, it could have been either a sub-brand or a test-market model for the Parkette. The barrel imprint has been filled with white for visibility; below the letters **ABC** in a diamond, it reads **MADE BY / PARKER PEN / COMPANY U.S.A.** See also [Parker](#).



Photo © David Rzeszotarski. Used with permission.

If you would like to suggest an entry for the *Glossopedia*, I invite you to send an email to me at [richard@richardspens.com](mailto:richard@richardspens.com) with your proposed entry. If you don't have a definition for your entry, I'll do my best to find one. And if you don't think you can wait more than 133 years (note how this number keeps growing as new entries are added) to see the whole *Glossopedia* here, one entry at a time (if I don't slip up and repeat an entry or three), you can easily jump the gun by purchasing your own copy in ebook form. When I release the next edition, your ebook vendor will notify you (or make the update silently).

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To help you find reference articles on my site that have been edited recently, there is a handy heading right at the top of the reference index, listing the five most recently added or edited reference pages. For edited pages, there are brief descriptions of what was changed.

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## The Pen Doctor

The Pen Doctor is a regular visitor to the Nashua Pen Spa, and every so often he puts a few prescriptions up on my site. Each month (except when I forget), I'll be reprinting one of his past prescriptions here.

**Q:** I have several pens that are not as smooth as I'd like them to be. After I receive a new pen like that should I immediately send it off to an expert such as yourself for smoothing or should I allow some "break in" time first? If I should wait, about how many pages should I write with one before I send it off?

**Rx:** The implication of that bald statement is that smoothing is needed. Tipping material is very hard. Contrary to what some pen companies (the original Esterbrook among them) told their customers, a pen will not wear in during a few days or weeks of use. Even when used all day every day, a modern high-ruthenium alloy takes several months, or even years, to show perceptible wear. So "breaking it in" is not going to work.

Compounding the problem is the fact that a surprising number of nibs, especially on higher-end pens that are finished by hand instead of by machine, are scratchy because they're misaligned. I know of one manufacturer whose italic nibs may all be misaligned in the same exact way. At least I've never seen an italic from this maker that *wasn't* misaligned, and I've worked on a nontrivial number of them.

The inescapable conclusion is that if you're not comfortable aligning and smoothing your own nibs, then you should send them off to a nib technician. I have several clients who figure the cost of nib adjustment into the purchase price of a pen, and many of these people actually have their dealers ship the pens directly to me. I'm quite sure other nib people have similar situations with some of their clients.



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