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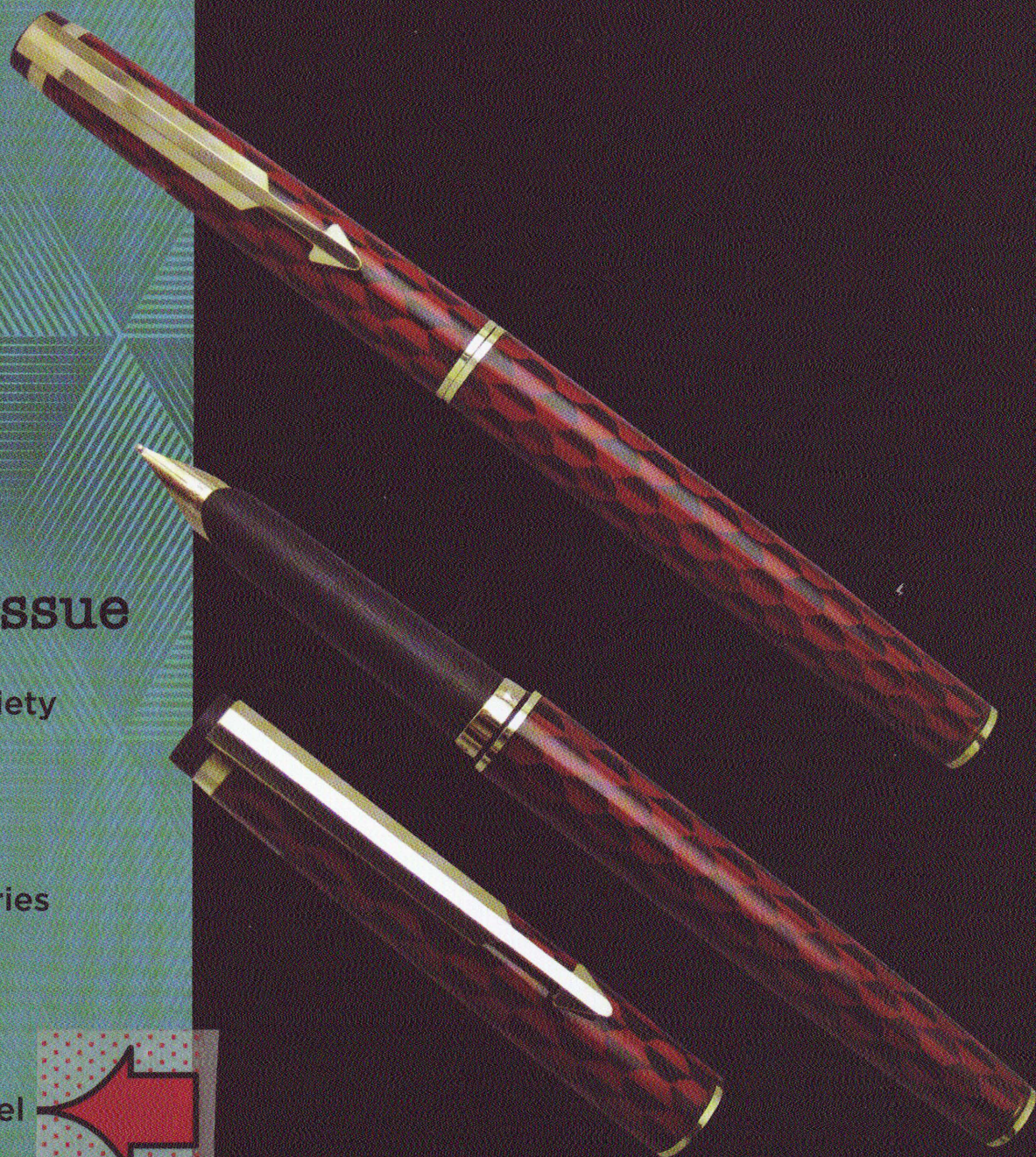
PAUL'S

FOUNTAIN PEN

JOURNAL

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In This Issue

Black Pen Society

Mentors

Fake Levers

Making Memories

Materialize

Montblanc's

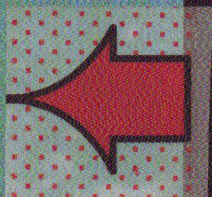
Franz Kafka

Fantasy Snorkel

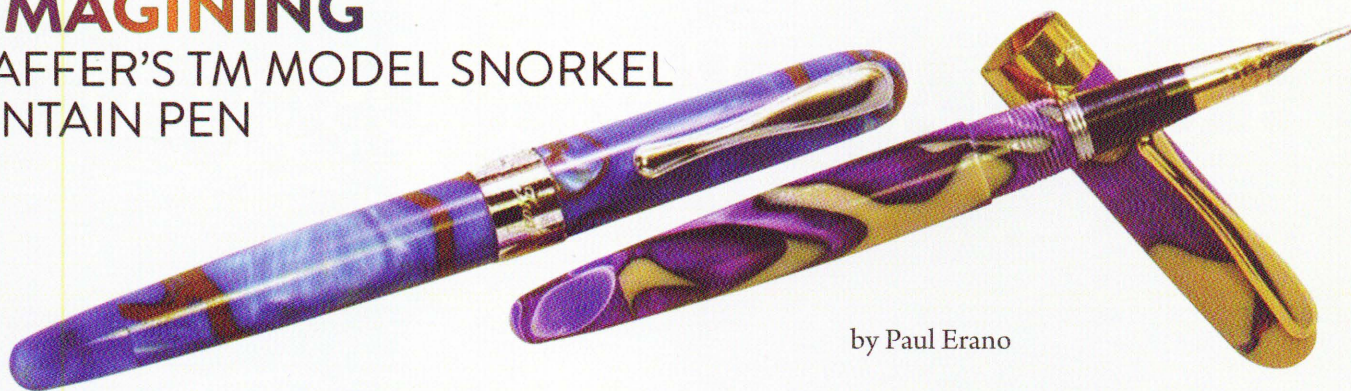
Drawing Pencils

Angle Posting

Mr. Pen and More



REIMAGINING SHEAFFER'S™ MODEL SNORKEL FOUNTAIN PEN



by Paul Erano

■ Fantasy Light Blue Swirl & Purple and Beige Swirl

In the 1980s and 1990s, just about every major manufacturer of fountain pens, from every fountain pen producing country, introduced retro-styled fountain pens. Often sold as limited editions, some were more successful than others. Sheaffer's Nostalgia, Connaissuer, and Grand Connaissuer lines of fountain pens started the trend, and no wonder—they are beautiful, quality-inspired replicas of pens that Sheaffer made in the 1920s. Parker's Centennial and International lines of Duofolds soon followed. They, too, are of the highest quality and there is no mistaking their heritage. Waterman introduced the Le Mann series, and together these four models cemented the concept of high-quality retro pens.

Pen enthusiasts loved the idea of retro-styled pens and many more followed. In 1996, Cross introduced its 150th Anniversary Commemorative pens, a flame-grain beauty that was available as both a fountain pen and a ballpoint. Waterman's Charleston was inspired by the One Hundred Year Pen. Sheaffer introduced the Crest II, and Parker came out with a new "51". The Omas Paragon series is a direct descendant of the same pen that has been in continuous production since 1930. Ercolessi is another gorgeous limited-edition retro fountain pen by Omas. Stipula's Idra and Superba, two more Italian retro pens, were reviewed in Volume 3, Issue 3 of the Journal, and Montblanc's first Writer Series fountain pen, the Hemingway, echoes the classic lines of Montblanc's Meisterstück 139. The flow of retro-styled pens continued even as manufacturers developed new forward-looking models with fresh lines and materials.

How, then, did one of the most significant pens in pen-dom escape retrofication? Why Sheaffer never stepped up to the plate with a modern version of its TM Snorkel we'll never know. Maybe it was just too complicated and too expensive to manufacture on a large scale. Perhaps Sheaffer thought too many vintage pens were still in circulation, though that didn't

stop the company from making other highly successful retro-style pens. What kind of filling mechanism would a new "Snorkel" have, and from what materials would it be made? What would it look like?

When Gary Lehrer told me that someone needed Snorkel parts because he had ideas about a new Snorkel fountain pen, my eyes lit up. I loved the idea that someone had finally decided to take on what would surely be a complicated project. Gary introduced me to John Bedard and I became even more enthusiastic. When I learned of John's background, I knew he was just the right man for the job.

FPJ: What got you interested in fountain pens?

JB: Back in 1996, I attended the New York Antique Pier Show and met a well-known pen dealer, Gary Lehrer of GoPens.com, who sold me my first fountain pen. He asked me several questions about how I write, how hard I press down on the paper, whether I have a need to write on multi-sheet carbon paper, and whether I make facsimile copies or faxes of my writings. After considering my answers, Gary declared he had the perfect fountain pen for me. It was a silver nib PFM. Shortly after, he showed me the amazing "snorkel" filling mechanism and taught me how to fill a vintage fountain pen. This experience started my addiction to pen collecting.

FPJ: Where were you working at that time?

JB: My official education was in Business and Finance. However, my true love was the automotive industry. In my younger years, I began tuning & rebuilding engines, racing cars, performing bodywork, and painting cars. I loved rebuilding broken or dilapidated cars and returning them to like-new condition. In those days, rebuilding car parts was considered one step above the junkyard business. Today, the rebuilding process is called "recycling" or "repurposing"!

I could rebuild anything, no matter the part and no matter the vehicle. From carburetors and master cylinders to water pumps and calipers, I was a real automotive remanufacturing expert. Eventually I specialized in remanufacturing drive axles for passenger vehicles. Our facility included a machine shop with 13 Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machines for precision-cutting metal parts. Several years ago, I decided to call it quits and sold the company.

FPJ: How has collecting pens affected your life?

JB: I really enjoy attending pen shows, meeting new people, traveling around the country with my wife Deb, and seeing the vast assortment of new and vintage fountain pen designs and colors. For many years I was a Parker collector. I was so impressed with the “51”, we named our dog Parker!

FPJ: What piqued your interest in the Sheaffer snorkel design?

JB: Since buying my first pen from Gary Lehrer in 1996, we have become great friends. We speak regularly and vacation together several times each year. When I told him I was going to retire from the automotive world, he said: “With your background in CNC machining, engineering, and finance, you should make a snorkel fountain pen.” He warned me that the barrel housed a complicated filling mechanism. He was right! But I accepted the challenge. No one has made a real Snorkel since Sheaffer stopped making them in 1959. It has proven difficult, but I am making it happen.

FPJ: How did you start your due diligence?

JB: First, I love new challenges—especially when it comes to fixing and rebuilding things. I purchased several Sheaffer Snorkel fountain pens and thought about what the fountain pen user of today would like. The original Snorkel is thin and only came in solid colors. Many people have larger hands and want a pen with a better feel and more aesthetically pleasing than a solid-color pen. I wanted to make an exceptionally smooth pen, with great balance. Perhaps most important, I wanted my Snorkel to make an extraordinary statement about style and function. My Snorkel is unique.

FPJ: What was your next step in this process?

JB: After purchasing several Snorkels, I started cutting them apart and measuring the internal dimensions and calculating the internal measurements to maintain the proper compression and O-ring position. Along the way, I made design modifications and improvements to fit my vision of balance, style, and comfort.

Once these design measurements were completed and documented, I calculated the spring stop location, section location, and barrel length to ensure a proper pen balance while maintaining the internal compression specifications to achieve a full bladder fill when pressing the filler tube to compress the bladder.

FPJ: What internal components do you use?

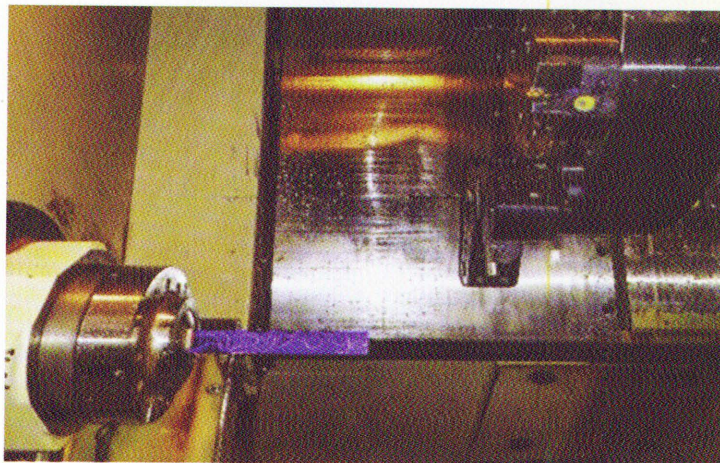
JB: All the internal components, including the filler tube, spring, section, feed, and nib are all original Sheaffer Snorkel parts from the 1950s. There are no “aftermarket” components in my pens. Each part is inspected, the assembly is restored, bladders are replaced, and the nibs are brought back to an exceptional writing condition. The downside of making a pen with restored vintage parts is the limited availability of nib variety and components. If it wasn’t made in the 50s, I don’t have it.

FPJ: How did you set up your manufacturing?

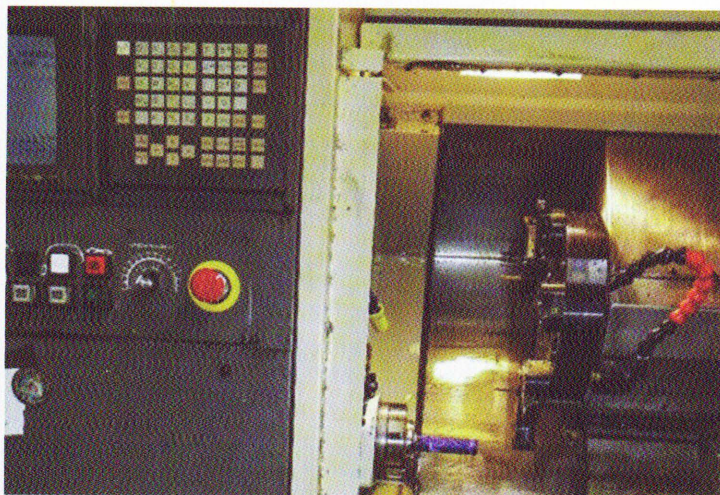
JB: I needed a machine shop with CNC capabilities to cut the barrels, caps, and blind caps. Several were recommended and I chose the one that could do the best job in making a quality part while maintaining the close internal tolerances of the cap, barrel, and O-ring groove. After a year of trial and error, assembling and reassembling pens, and setting up testing procedures, my “Fantasy Snorkel” was born.

I personally designed the cap bands and affixed quality, well-designed clips to complete the process. Cap bands are engraved “Tega Pen Co. Made in USA.” Tega is Polynesian for “beautiful.”

The next step was to choose a variety of high-quality acrylic barrel materials to create that “Wow!” factor which completes the beauty and design of the pen. This combination of vintage style and modern beauty really speaks to today’s vintage fountain pen enthusiasts.



Barrels cut on a CNC lathe

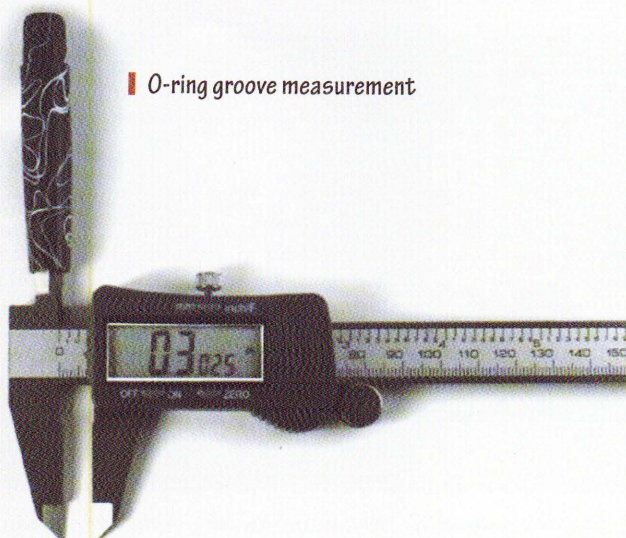


■ Caps cut on a CNC lathe

FPJ: What problems did you encounter during the manufacturing process?

JB: Nothing was simple. I had to build, refine, and rebuild many times before creating a single working prototype. It took a lot of time and considerable investment to get the CNC programming just right. Unlike my process, the original Snorkels were injection molded to maintain consistent close characteristics. Cutting different acrylics with a CNC creates new levels of complexity not present in the original manufacturing process. Cutting tools wear from piece to piece. Blade friction causes different acrylics to expand at different rates. Some acrylics are hard and some soft. All these factors affect the final pen dimensions. The O-ring groove **MUST** be exact to maintain a proper vacuum of 25 inch-pounds to ensure a full bladder on compression. Caps are tested to ensure an air-tight seal to prevent drying when capped.

FPJ: How do you describe your finished product?



■ O-ring groove measurement

■ Vacuum testing



JB: The “Fantasy Snorkel” fountain pen presents a combination of vintage style, function, and modern beauty. I was very mindful of the need to provide a smooth transition between components, and to maintain a balance that embodies the elegance and complexity of an every-day writing instrument. To ensure a precision finish, every pen’s barrel and blind cap are sanded and polished as a matched set. The cap and cap end are also sanded and polished as a matched set. The soft-textured exterior undergoes a 5-step wet sanding process to create a truly supple feel. All internal components are meticulously restored to original condition and the Sheaffer nibs are adjusted to achieve a superior, smooth writing experience for any nib style or grade.

■ Barrel sanding



■ Cap sanding



FPJ: Where are the pens made, and how can they be purchased?

JB: The "Fantasy Snorkel" fountain pen is made by the Tega Pen Company in South Carolina. "Fantasy Snorkel" is a registered trademark and the variety of color offerings and nib availability can be seen on our web site: www.fantasysnorkel.com. I can be contacted by email at fantasysnorkel@gmail.com. Updates for new offerings and our pen show schedule is listed on our site. If you want a "Fantasy Snorkel" fountain pen you can only get it from the Tega Pen Company!



Fantasy Snorkel™ Pen

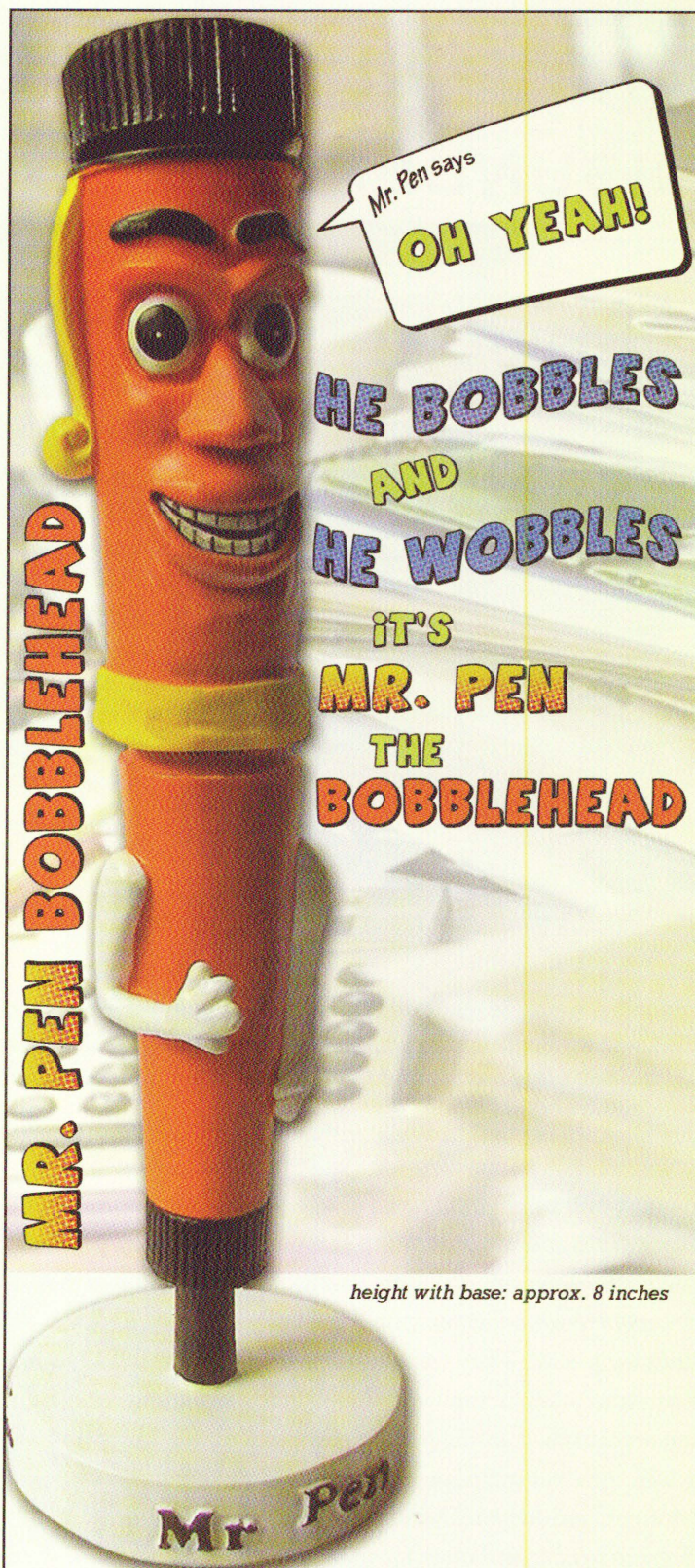


Tega Pen Company

Made in the USA

www.fantasysnorkel.com

973-722-1450



height with base: approx. 8 inches

To order contact Paul Erano
at plerano@aol.com

Mr. Pen Bobblehead will also be available at this year's
Long Island, Baltimore, and Raleigh pen shows

Limited Quantities. \$25.00 + \$4.95 shipping.