

# The Washington D.C.

BY JULIAN KREEGER

## Fountain Pen SuperShow at 27

Bob Johnson keeps the show running, but it's the people he attracts to it who make it special.



Bob Johnson, director of the Washington D.C. Fountain Pen SuperShow, and the view from above at the 2015 D.C. pen show.

For over a dozen years, I have found Bob Johnson's Washington D.C. Fountain Pen SuperShow, the largest pen show in the United States, to be far and away the most interesting and productive of the many pen shows that I have attended in various parts of the country.

It was there that I first met Nobuyoshi Nagahara ("Nagahara Sr."), the legendary Sailor nib designer. Nagahara graciously modified and corrected a Sailor King of Pen that Sailor's California Service Department had told me would take "months" to evaluate.

Johnson started the Washington D.C. Fountain Pen SuperShow 27 years ago. Since then, it has been featured on the CBS network's Sunday morning news shows, CNN, Fox News, the *Washington Post*, and the *Baltimore Sun*, among others.

His interest in pens began in junior high school when his father gave him a Sheaffer Snorkel—but amusingly, Johnson's father did not encourage him to develop any interest in pens. Over the years, however, Johnson discovered pens on his own, particularly Parker pens of the 1930s and 1940s, with a focus on Parker 51s. He notes that flex nibs were rare because people needed rigid, firm nibs for carbon paper copies before the advent of copying machines. Among his favorite rare Parkers are the Parker 51 "Buckskin" pens.

Today, with over 146 exhibitors from 30 states and from over 14 countries including Germany, England, Japan, Italy, and France, the D.C. show boasts over 200 tables that attract more than 1,500 guests from over 16 countries. Exhibitors include manufacturers, distributors, major pen dealers, specialist dealers, and collectors, as well as nib and repair specialists such as Michael Masuyama.

Many of the repair and adjustment techniques of Nagahara have been perpetuated by Masuyama, who spent considerable time with Nagahara at pen shows as well as privately. In recent years I routinely bring pens that I feel need nib work or adjustments to the D.C. show for Masuyama to restore or adjust.

Visitors can find a vast array of current, vintage and limited edition writing instruments, rare collectors' items, and custom-made pens, not to mention a huge variety of inks, refills, and converters. Among the attractions at the D.C. show are ink testing tables with over 300 different bottles of ink, which guests can sample with dip-pens and Q-tips, along with Blumberg Excelsior's high-quality, lined legal paper.

Other attractions for visitors include various seminars and workshops, including a calligraphy workshop and a Pen Collectors of America Pens for Kids seminar with calligrapher

Top to bottom—Steve Wiederlight at the Fountain Pen Hospital table in 2018; Yafa Brands president and CEO Yair Greenberg; Suzanne and father Jimmy Dolive at the 2018 D.C. show; Robert Marciniszyn accepts a 2016 RCA at the D.C. show on behalf of Germany's Montblanc.



and *PW* Contributing Editor Deborah Basel, and regional club meetings. Noted internet pen dealer Brian Goulet will be featured in a seminar entitled "Fountain Pens 101: The Basics."

New York City's Fountain Pen Hospital ("FPH"), founded by the Wiederlight family 73 years ago and still the largest pen store in the United States, is prominently represented each year at the D.C. show. FPH's Steve Wiederlight and Ed Fingerman bring contemporary specials and vintage pens from 1920 to 1950 to the D.C. show, along with special bags of pens and pen parts priced at \$50 each. Interestingly, Wiederlight remarked that basic customer demand in recent years has moved from broad nibs to extra-fine nibs.



For years Jimmy Dolive, now joined by his daughter Suzanne, has been one of the most prominent and popular dealers at the D.C. show. Typically, Jimmy and Suzanne bring rare collectibles as well as "every day" pens and related items. From Jimmy I got a 16-pen Sheaffer nib testing display and a Conway Stewart nib testing kit along with various limited editions.



Montblanc has been represented by the highly knowledgeable Robert Marciniszyn, who brings a most interesting cross-section of Montblanc pens and accessories. Taccia's charming Shu-jen Lin has introduced Taccia pens with a range of Japanese nibs and the new Taccia line of inks. Yair Greenberg of Yafa Brands, a major pen distributor, provides the show's door prize as well as canvas bags and an annual D.C. show Monteverde ink to attendees (while supplies last). "Crazy Alan's Emporium," from North Carolina, offers a broad selection of paper and other accessories.



Among my favorite pen acquisitions at the D.C. show have been two early Montblanc 149 pens (c. 1950) that had flexible nibs, vintage Waterman Red Ripples (Nos. 7 and 58), and a vintage Patrician from Gary Lehrer, one of the most highly regarded vintage pen dealers.

On a personal basis, the show gave me an opportunity to meet and get to know Paul Erano, a vintage pen dealer who publishes *Paul's Fountain Pen Journal*, and Laura Chandler, the former outstanding editor-in-chief of *Pen World*.

*See more pictures on p. 24.*

*See "Date" (p. 12) for more information on the Washington D.C. Fountain Pen SuperShow, and visit the show's official website at [pencentral.com](http://pencentral.com).*

*Julian Kreeger is a PW contributing editor.*

May 2–5, 2019



2019 **Chicago Pen Show**

**Chicago Marriott Northwest**

4800 Hoffman Blvd.,  
Hoffman Estates, IL 60192

**Public Show: May 3-5**

12 noon–5:30 pm Friday  
9 am–5:30 pm Saturday  
9 am–4 pm Sunday

**Admission:**

\$25 Friday • \$10 Sat. or Sun.  
Children 12 and under free

**Trader Show opens 10:00 am, May 2**

Entire show \$60 • 3-day trader pass \$50

New and Vintage Pens • Ink, Stationery and Ephemera

Ink Testing Stations • Pen Auction 8:00 pm, May 3

Pens for Kids 2:30 pm, May 5

Seminars on Wahl-Eversharp, Esterbrook, Pen Repairs

Pen Blogging & Using Your New Pen

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**Hotel reservations:**

847.645.9500 or 800.395.5921

Request \$110 special room rate

Exhibitor registration: Roger Wooten

815.547.9348 or rwootencpa@gmail.com

**chicagopenshow.com**



Top to bottom—Santini-Italia owner Giovanni Santini at the 2018 D.C. show; Taccia's Shu-Jen Lin at the 2018 show; PW Contributing Editor Deborah Basel teaching a Pens for Kids seminar at the 2016 show.