

356 WHITE OWL MATCH STAND ASH TRAY

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This just in....

Back in January, I wrote about the 353 Medium Flat Panel nesting ash trays. By way of getting into the topic, I noted that a 1927 Table Talk had mentioned a nesting set. It was not identified there, but I ventured that the set was most likely Medium Flat Panel. Through an oversight, a side-note about another nesting set was omitted from the published article. A couple of sharp readers pointed out that the 1186 ash tray was known in three sizes. Here is what I had intended to say about those earlier:

"We know 353 Medium Flat Panel was being produced in 1927. Until a few years ago, we could say that was the only nested set being produced at the time, as far as we knew. However, at least one other nesting set is possible. The 1186 ash tray was in production at that time. While nearly always found in only the 4" size, at least one nested set of these has been seen. See the Heisey Newsletter, February, 2005. It was found with the 5009 Diana carving, which dates that particular set to 1934 or later. However, 1186 as a nested set is still a possibility in 1927, although the set's rarity argues against it. This is just one more case to demonstrate that almost every statement we make about Heisey needs an implied 'as far as we know' threaded through it."

Thanks to one correspondent, we now know of more than one set of the 1186 ash trays, undecorated. It's good to know you're paying attention. Now back to our regularly scheduled programming....



One of the things that attracted me to Heisey glass in the first place was the sheer massiveness of it. The heft of a thick pressed piece made me think of it as a muscular sort of glass. None of this dainty stuff for me, no sir! (Since then, my tastes have broadened. If you're a collector of delicately blown pieces, don't judge me too harshly, because now I appreciate those, too.)

Sturdiness notwithstanding, at first I drew the line at smoking gear. Not that I had any moral compunctions about it - not being a smoker myself, it was a convenient way to limit the collection to something like manageable bounds. Every now and then, however, an ash tray here, a cigarette box there, would creep in. When I saw 356 White Owl, there was no question I had to have that lovely piece of limpid glass, clear as spring water. Talk about muscular! The one I have in front of me right now weighs about 2 lbs., 2 oz., massive enough to figure in an Agatha Christie murder mystery. (Constable: "Monsieur Poirot, he appears to have suffered a blow from a heavy industrial object, perhaps a gear." M. Poirot: "A gear? Not likely in the den. Was it not the footman who cleared the ash trays? There are none in the room. And didn't the victim shop only at the better department stores? My little grey cells seem to recall that Heisey made a gear-shaped ash tray. The aroma of a fine maduro cigar still hangs in the air. There must be a missing ash tray. Find the ash tray and you'll find the murderer.") Yes, indeed, M. Poirot, another name for 356 White Owl was the less poetic Gear, for obvious reasons. (Neither name, by the way, was used by Heisey.) The ash tray is surrounded by five sprocket-like segments, four suitable for holding cigars, and the fifth mounted by a finely ribbed stand to hold a match box. This makes it a perfect accessory for entertaining in the smoker's den - so long as there is no resentful footman skulking around.

White Owl appears to have been made only in crystal. Catalog 76 (about 1915) is the first to depict it. It was left out of Catalog 102. Early editions of Catalog 109 show it on page 115, but later ones have the ash tray page replaced with one displaying 1404 Old Sandwich. As luck would have it, it is a later edition that has been reprinted, so you have to look elsewhere for those ash tray catalog pictures. The original page can be seen in Vogel 3 (pg. 26) or in Bredehoft's book covering the second color era (pg. 259).

White Owl made its last catalog appearance in Cat. 211, and was dropped from production about 1938. Despite the two-decade spread, it isn't as common as one might think, although it can be found without too much ado. Perhaps there wasn't as great a demand for four-way cigar holders as for more personal sizes. The example I am looking at is made of superb glass, fire-polished to bring out its radiance. The half-inch thick base has exceptional clarity, with only two tiny bubbles floating in the vast expanse to show the great care they took with the metal. The bottom edge is beveled to reduce chipping, and the star bottom (30 points in mine) is fully ground and polished. It would make a wonderful addition to your collection, whether it's smoking gear you want or

if you're simply transfixed by great glass. When you find one, would you tell Monsieur Poirot?

Vital Statistics

356 White Owl ash tray: Diameter (cigar rest to opposite incurve), 4 3/4"; height (omitting match stand), 1 1/2"; height (including match stand), 23/8"; depth of ash tray well, 1"; diameter of well, 33/8". Star bottom, ground and polished. Marked inside (large <H>).

I love a classy mystery. What mysteries hide in your Heisey collection? Let me know, at heisey@embarqmail.com.