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We get letters



Its not just a one way street you know

Responses from the great Joel Baechle, lead chemist for MP associates, Ione, CA regarding the spollette business. Apparently there is good reason for not obsessing about "the crown" mentioned in the previous article about spollettes

Hi Mark; I take all of that good info with open eyes, but sometimes these things seem a little too fastidious. Mike and I both worked with Jerry Taylor and he was meticulous but also very production oriented. He rammed all the spolettes the same and backdrilled them for time. He scratched the external end across to break any glaze that formed. Maybe Jerry didn't worry about symmetrical breaks (surprisingly I saw very few of his displays) but I don't remember much about a a good crown. We spun 'em down as fast as possible. He did use a bigger, longer tube for 5-inch shells, but had a flash bag inside for the spider breaks, and he weighed the flash - 5/8 ounce, I think. In Vietnam, and probably as shown by the Japanese, they attached a little trapezoidal (angle-rolled) bag of 5FA over the end of the ¼ inch fuse, but these were ball shells. These seminars are good for the newbies and

certainly more detailed than in years past, but as one who has been forced to devise the most efficient and rapid techniques possible, often by market forces unrelated to style, I do have a greater interest in the cake than the frosting. I have had thoughts of late about making Meal Powder which is difficult to obtain by perhaps running grain powder in mineral spirits in a blender and then filtering off the excess and letting it dry out, particularly when only a small amount is needed. I have thought long and hard about some way to safely melt the sulfur and make black powder without ball milling it. There's a Russian method where they press the mixed powder under heavy pressure and turn on strap heaters for 24 hours, but that has problems of its own as is self-evident. It seems like you have been very busy - cool that you can keep it up! Joel Hi Joel; Great response, mind if I send it out to the club? I obviously have to interview you about your career in pyro, so when you have some free time to talk about the good old days. Mark *Sure Mark, you may do that. Please make sure I didn't make any disparaging-sounding slight towards anyone. I don't want to speak on "the late" Jerry's behalf or one-up Mike because he and I have had some good conversations in recent years, and I want to maintain that. I would only add that making competition shells without having to support a business is a little different than making hundreds of what Jerry called a "premium shell" for sale beyond his own displays. He knew his business well, but the way things are now is so much different - it was too bad that he decided to call it quits because of Ohio financial nonsense. I can't identify every bad actor in the Ohio panoply of obstruction, but the climate there became very bad compared to what it had been. I like your idea about presenting the spolette (my sp.) technique. My P.O.V. is that it's a miracle that any of us could buy time fuse at all, the way things are. I'd love to deliver a sermon on art as free speech vs. the misapplication of generalizing all fireworks as "explosives", and I think the classification of container loads of Chinese imports has had a lot to do with that. I can't say that the internet killed American pyro like it did the newspapers and brick and mortar retail, but the effect has been much the same. The Chinese undercut Japan's prices until they drove them from the market, and like a pusher, raised them after that. You know - what happened to Temple of Heaven product? It was great to add a few of those once in a while. I'll have to stop or this will turn into a book. Thanks for writing back. Joel*

This is good stuff and only the tip of the iceberg. Clearly there is a story waiting to be told of this mans' life in pyrotechnics and it will only take a reporter with the right mix of cynicism and savoir-faire. Anyway, we have bigger fish to fry at the moment - like how to explain the ^&*$%# new registration procedures - but I will be back in another episode.

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