

A Message from Joan Parsley at Great Lakes Paperweights

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GO JOHNNY, GO JOHNNY, GO JOHNNY GO!

Frankly, the past Covid-dominated year has been one where I have accomplished some pretty daunting projects and I thought I would be seeing an end, or at least, a slowdown afterward. 2021 was to be a time of transformation in my life; haven't we all imagined that!

Then the news came.

The Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass had just acquired fifteen John Parsley paperweights, to add to its permanent holdings, a gift from the collection of Marge and Gary McClanahan. Their largesse brings the Bergstrom holdings up to twenty Parsley jewels, paperweights that span his late-blooming career as a glass artist. Since John's passing in 2009, I think back on the memory of his celebrated achievements as a contemporary paperweight maker, one of the best of the best. He has earned his place in the hallow halls of the Bergstrom, as well as in other worthy glass museums and private collections worldwide.

John's love for glass was well established early in life. Before he could drive a car, he observed glass making through the bleak, open-door factories of West Virginia. He rode the rails from West Virginia to Chicago to see the "Bohemian glass blowers" and technological innovations at the 1933 Century of Progress International Exposition, in Chicago. With fire in his belly, John made small objets d'art, which were sold in New York City's department stores while he was also a scientific glass blower at the Metropolitan Life Co. During his career as a chemical engineer, John built a small studio as part of his humble abodes in Kentucky, Michigan and Pennsylvania. There was no doubt that his passion was wrapped around a pair of cross fires (as well as around his close-knit family).

John left us in 2009. His botanical paperweights, when sold at recent auctions, have been snatched up immediately. So it's wonderful to pay tribute to him once again as part of the Bergstrom-Mahler's New On View exhibition. The upcoming lecture is the fourth in a series of events which celebrate his life and give new meaning to the phrase, "self-made." Since his death, the PCA arranged for an exhibition

of his works at its Toledo, Ohio conference. The three Parsley children, with artists, friends and collectors watching melted his imperfect weights (and per the artist's wishes) at Wheaton Village in 2018. 2019 gave light to his work in Crieff, Scotland where I met Peter McDougall of the former Perthshire Paperweights. Johnne was the first American artist to work at this famed, high-quality glassworks. Their work led to a collection of outstanding piedouche paperweights. The weight showcased Warden Pears and blossoms laid atop white lace canes, encircled by millefiori and perched on a latticinio basket with double torsades — all encased in handsomely faceted optical crystal.

I am privileged to lecture on Johnne, the artist, the man and my father on July 8, 2021 at 6:00 PM CDT. Together, we'll look at his works acquired by the Bergstrom-Mahler and wander through the family images that paint a picture of this self-made man despite the odds of world wars, The Great Depression, and loss of family. Nothing stopped him. "Go Johnny!"

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Please join me on July 8 by logging into [bmmglass.com](http://bmmglass.com). The 6:00 PM CT lecture will be followed by a question and answer session.

More information on glass artist Johnne Parsley can be found at  
Great Lakes Paperweights: The Johnne Parsley Legacy Project  
[greatlakespaperweights.org](http://greatlakespaperweights.org).

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