



David Lassman / The Post-Standard, 2004

**STAN SKOCZEN** holds a Puritan pattern chocolate pot in the collection room at the now closed Syracuse China. A leading private collector of Syracuse China, he died Dec. 26.

## WE'LL MISS THESE 3 — A FOND FAREWELL

**W**e said goodbye to some old friends this week. They will be missed.

**Stan (Stanislaus) Skoczen** died the day after Christmas. He was 92.

Stan's life was twined with Syracuse China, where he worked some 44 years. His friend, and collaborator, Cleota Reed, called him "a preeminent authority and the leading private collector of Syracuse China." Closing of the longtime Syracuse company, in March 2009, was a great blow to Stan.

Stan and Cleota co-authored the book "Syracuse China," published by Syracuse University Press in 1997.

Cleota recently described it as "a monument to Stan, his dream come true."

After his official retirement as manager of quality control, Stan volunteered his expertise to help Cleota and Ruth Hancock, organize the historic collection of ware and documents.

Most of it — including some 4,000 of Stan's own treasures — was moved to the Onondaga Association's museum when the company closed. Ruth Hancock's great-grandfather, Richard Pass, was an English potter who was an

early superintendent of Onondaga Pottery, the company's first name. Ruth's father and grandfather both were presidents of Syracuse China.

Stan went to work at Onondaga Pottery as a lad of 19, following in his father's footsteps. He never left — except for a year in the U.S. Army. Cleota explained that Stan loved the company — "it was his life. He had a photographic recall. He could identify any piece of ware."

I had a personal experience with Stan's recall in 2004 when my wife, Sandy, and I found some china shards from the Onondaga Pottery years while hiking near Inlet, in the Adirondack Park. When we got home, Stan knew immediately we were looking at fragments of the "Oak Leaf" and "Thebes" patterns. The company started making those in 1910 and 1912.

John Piston, Stan's nephew, had a unique tribute to his uncle. Asked when Stan retired from Syracuse China, John replied, "Four days ago." **Bob Atkinson** died Sunday. He was 82.

He'd retired as executive editor of The Post-Standard in 1993.

I didn't work for Bob. We were colleagues across the office. Actually, I got to know him a bit after he retired. We exchanged e-mails. His often were signed with the terse, but friendly "Atkinson."

I knew Bob to be a good writer, a craft he got to practice a little in columns he wrote for the Post late in his newspaper career. He wrote about Henderson Harbor, where he owned a camp perched on a bluff above the water, and Marcellus, where he lived

for many years west of the village on Gypsy Road.

I still recall the column he wrote about the death of his wife, Dee, in 1990. It was a profoundly moving piece of writing, wrenched from the heart. It ended with Dee's moment of passing: "This vital, vibrant woman had escaped the tortured shell, had at last fled the skin and bone remnant."

Bob and I shared common ancestors, spinning back to Colonial America. He was a much more accomplished family historian than I was.

We laughed over Bob's attempt to connect himself to me. In one column, about a walk he took in Highland Cemetery, where some of my kin are buried, he wrote "My Cases, scattered in cemeteries from Spafford to Otisco to Chittenango, are descendants of William Case of Newport, R.I., from the 1600s. If William and John (my ancestor) were related, it means that similar blood flows through the veins of colleague Dick Case and my own. . ."

We lost another colleague this week, **Joan Vadeboncoeur**. We had worked together more than 50 years. I met her years ago when both of us were employed by her father, E.R. Vadeboncoeur, president of WSYR. Joanie was a whirlwind in her field of entertainment, as writer, reporter and historian.

The best remark I've heard about her came from another colleague, Marie Morelli, who directs the Post-Standard editorial page: "She lived life on her own terms." Amen.

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