



World's Largest Olympic Collectors Club
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This year promises to be a busy one for Olympin members. The Olympic Collectors Worlds Fair returns to Lausanne for the first time since 2007, May 23-25. It will be a fantastic event. This July, the Olympin Club Annual Show returns to Los Angeles for the first time in a decade. Also, there are tables available for Club members at a reduced rate for the National Sports Collectors Convention, the first week of August, in Cleveland.

Be sure to read Pete Wade's famous blog from Sochi. It has become a tradition for Pete to write his Olympic Blog for the Club Newsletter, and we're certain you'll enjoy it! Great job Pete!

And huge thanks to Steve Robie for an incredible job on the Sochi NOC pins research and unauthorized NOC pin project!

CLUB BUSINESS

2014 Olympin Show - Los Angeles, CA - July 25-27, 2014

The official 2014 Olympin Show will be held in Los Angeles at the Courtyard by Marriott Los Angeles Westside from Friday, July 25th through Sunday, July 27th. The Club has reserved over 3,500 square feet in three contiguous meeting rooms and this space will accommodate between 40 and 44 eight-foot and six-foot tables.

Since space is limited, table reservations are being handled on a "first-come, first-served" basis. You may reserve an eight-foot table for \$150 and/or a six-foot table for \$125, but no more than two tables in total until after May 15th in order to allow more members to participate as table holders. If you want to be assured of getting the size of table you want and the best location, make your reservations now!

If you are interested in being a table holder, you must pre-pay your entire table fee(s) by May 15th in one of two ways:

- 1. Via PayPal to Olympin at olympin@excite.com, or
- 2. By check made payable to Olympin Collectors Club sent to Don Bigsby at: P.O. Box 777, Guilderland, NY 12084.

Since Olympin has to pay processing fees to accept payments via PayPal, we would greatly prefer if you simply send Don your check.

A limited number of rooms have been made available to Club members at discounted rates. For room reservations, please use the contact information below and be sure to mention that you're a Club member attending the show:

Courtyard by Marriott Los Angeles Westside
6333 Bristol Parkway
Culver City, CA 90230
310.484.7000
www.courtyardlawestside.com

Visit our Website! www.olympinclub.com

2014 National Sports Collectors Convention - Cleveland, OH - July 30th thru August 3rd

Organizers of the 35th NSCC (National Sports Collectors Convention) are once again inviting Olympin members to participate as table holders at the largest sports collectibles show in the world which generally attracts about 600 dealers and 50,000 attendees during its 5-day run.

Olympin began its relationship with "The National" in 2011 when we hosted our 30th Olympin Show and the 17th IOC World Collectors Fair in conjunction with the 32nd NSCC in Chicago. Club members accounted for over 100 tables that year and over 40 tables last year when the Club held its 32nd Olympin Show in Chicago once again as a partner of the 34th NSCC.

Although organizers initially required the Club to guarantee a minimum purchase of 20 tables for this year's event at a discounted rate of \$200 per 8-foot table, an alternate and generous arrangement has recently been made. Under this new plan, organizers are waiving the 20-table minimum requirement, but are still allowing Club members to pay the \$200 reduced table rate. (FYI, the sports collectibles dealers at this show pay \$950 for the smallest and cheapest booths.) A separate area of the huge show floor is now being reserved for Club member tables near the Autograph Pavilion and with the heavy pedestrian traffic there, this is an excellent location. So, if you are interested in taking advantage of this great opportunity, please e-mail Craig Perlow at craigatl@mindspring.com or call him at 1.770.384.7550 to reserve your table(s).

as soon as possible! Club members have already reserved 6 tables and we're expecting more to follow.

The 35th NSCC will be held at the International Exposition (I-X) Center in Cleveland, OH, from July 30th thru August 3rd. For more detailed information about this one-of-a-kind event, log on to www.nscshow.com.

New Board Member Appointed

Due to the passing of longtime Olympin member, show organizer and good friend John Kinnaman, the Board has appointed Karen Rosen to serve the rest of his term. Karen has been an Olympin member since 1991 when she attended her first show in Los Angeles. She is a journalist who has covered 14 Olympic Games. "I am honored to fill John's seat on the board," Karen said. "Like John, I'm passionate about Olympic memorabilia and in helping collectors learn the history of objects while also keeping fakes out of the hobby. I believe the more information that is available, the better we will be able to attract new collectors."

NOC Pins for Sochi – Steve Robie

The Olympin Authenticity Project (see summary later in this newsletter) provided a great source of information on the pins used by the 88 NOCs attending the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia. Through a combination of pins received directly from the NOCs, sales on eBay and feedback primarily from Olympin members Pete Wade and Sid Marantz, we've been able to piece together this list of NOC pins produced for Sochi. From all accounts, there was virtually no pin trading by the general public, but that did make it easier for the NOC collectors. Getting pins through Russian customs turned out to be a big problem and many pins, particularly those produced by Kingdom Pins, did not appear until late in the Games. These have been noted as it is possible that they were authorized by the NOCs, but not used by the teams. In fact, new pins are still appearing on eBay a month after the end of the Games. Having the Authenticity Project website also means that you are not stuck with the 75 characters we have to describe all of the pins from a given NOC. Check out the pictures at http://www.olympinclub.com/nocpins_search.php.

Sochi NOC Pins

Country	Dated Sochi	New Sochi	Old Gen	# on Team	Medals Won				Notes
					G	S	B	T	
Albania	•			2					1 dated; NOC shield with Sochi 2014 in blue/silver
Andorra	•			6					1 dated; white rectangle like LON
Argentina			•	7					1 generic; blue shield
Armenia			•	4					1 generic; blue oval shield
Australia	•		•	63	2	1	3		1 dated; gld crest; 3 generic; kangaroo w/ flag, sm flag, undated crest
Austria	•	•		132	4	8	5	17	1 dated; blue rectangle, 1 generic; new domed traditional blue oval
Azerbaijan	•	•		4					1 dated; shield, 1 generic; shield
Belarus		•		26	5		1	6	3 generic; cutout flag w/ rings, rect sports set & lg sport magnets
Belgium			•	7					1 generic; small white vertical rectangle
Bermuda	•			1					2 dated; Lg and sm snow flakes
Bosnia Herzegovina			•	5					1 generic; gold circle with NOC logo
Brazil	•		•	13					1 dated; Time Brazil [^] , 1 generic; Time Brazil [^]
British Virgin Islands	•			1					1 dated; blue circle with freestyle skier
Bulgaria	•			18					3 dated; delegation set; badge w/ ribbon, blue circle, blue/gld circle
Canada	•	•		222	10	10	5	25	4 dated; gld rnd, leaf, oval like LON, 2 emblem silver sq, many gen retail
Cayman Islands	•			1					1 dated; green turtle
Chile			•	6					2 generic; flag w/ rings on top, traditional generic shield
Chinese Taipei	•			3					1 dated; traditional white horizontal rectangle w/ Sochi and NOC logos
Croatia			•	11		1		1	1 generic; cutout logo w/ colored rings
Cyprus			•	2					1 generic; white shield
Czech Republic	•			88	2	4	2	8	5 dated; badge w/ ribbon, coat-of-arms, silver rnd, 2 silver Czech team
DFR Korea	•	•		0					No team, 1 dated and 1 generic; new flame logos [^]
Denmark	•	•		12					1 dated and 1 generic; new flame logos
Dominica				2					No pins seen
Estonia	•			25					1 dated; teal vertical rectangle, 1 generic; white vertical rectangle
Finland			•	104	1	3	1	5	1 generic; wavy flag w/ cutout rings
FYR Macedonia			•	3					1 generic; round gold w/ mountain logo
France			•	113	4	4	7	15	1 generic; gold France w/ cutout rings, dated coq is not authorized
Georgia	•	•		4					1 dated and 1 generic; silver rectangles with flags
Germany	•			154	8	6	5	19	1 dated; New rectangle design with flag colors and coat-of-arms
Great Britain	•			57	1	1	2	4	2 dated; gold cutout lion like LON, white shield Team GB
Greece			•	7					1 generic; white shield
Hong Kong			•	1					2 generic; gold circle, silver shield
Hungary	•			16					2 dated; delegation badge w/ ribbon, dated white horizontal rectangle
Iceland	•		•	5					1 dated; Traditional gold vertical rectangle, 2 gen; cutout flag & volcano

Abbreviations and notes: [^] - Pins produced by SydneyPinz, M&L & Kingdom Pins
 Gen - Generic Wht - White Lg - Large
 Gld - Gold Blk - Black Sm - Small
 LON - London Rnd - Round Rec - Rectangle
 w/ - with SOC - Sochi

Sochi NOC Pins

Country	Dated Sochi	New Sochi	Old Gen	# on Team	Medals Won				Notes
					G	S	B	T	
India		•		3					No NOC pins; 1 undated silver and white winter sports federation pin
Ireland			•	5					1 generic; sample cutout shamrock as used in London
Islamic Republic of Iran			•	5					1 generic; traditional green, white and red flame
Israel			•	5					1 generic; white horizontal rectangle flag
Italy			•	113		2	6	8	1 generic; silver oval
Jamaica		•		3					1 generic; round silver with flag
Japan	•	•		113	1	4	3	8	1 dated; white cutout like London, 4 generic; retail pins w/ NOC logo
Kazakhstan	•			51		1	1		1 dated; white vertical rectangle with flag
Korea	•			71	3	3	2	8	2 dated; silver horizontal rec with either mascot or sports teams
Kyrgyzstan	•	•		1					1 dated; vert rec w/ snowflake [^] , 1 generic; flag w/ cutout rings [^]
Latvia	•			57		2	2	4	1 dated; triangle, 2 generic; triangles, white shield is unauthorized
Lebanon			•	2					1 generic; cutout shield with tree logo and rings
Liechtenstein	•			4					1 dated; black and white shield w/ colored logo
Lithuania	•			9					2 dated; pewter Team, traditional white dated shield released late
Luxembourg			•	1					1 generic; small white rectangle w/ gold cutout rings
Malta			•	1					1 generic; traditional cutout maltese cross with rings
Mexico		•		1					1 generic; domed flag with rings
Monaco	•			5					6 dated; traditional crossed flags, 3 mascots, 1 shield
Mongolia			•	2					1 generic; traditional blue cutout logo
Montenegro		•		2					1 generic; white vertical rectangle with NOC logo
Morocco			•	2					1 generic; traditional red and gold cutout crown and colored rings
Nepal	•			1					1 dated; white and blue mountains [^]
Netherlands	•			41	8	7	9	24	2 dated; white horizontal rectangle w/ NOC logo, green holland house
New Zealand	•			15					1 dated; cutout silver fern w/ rings
Norway			•	118	11	5	10	26	1 generic; gold Norway w/ rings
Pakistan	•			1					2 dated; white button with flag, light blue circle arrived late [^]
Paraguay				1					No pins seen
People's Rep. of China	•	•		65	3	4	2	9	2 dated; mascots, white hor rec, 1 gen; gld rnd
Peru	•			3					1 dated; gold horizontal rectangle
Philippines				1					1 dated; yellow star arrived late [^]
Poland	•			60	4	1	1	6	4 dated; colorful, flag w/ rings, cutout V, blue rnd?, 1 gen; flag
Portugal	•			2					2 dated; cutout logo in gold or silver, delegation badge is questionable
Republic of Moldova			•	4					1 generic; gold circle with NOC logo
Romania	•	•		24					1 dated; gold horizontal rectangle, 1 generic; cutout flag
Russian Federation	•		•	222	13	11	9	33	2 dated; sm silver snowflake in English & Cyrillic, 1 gen; sm cutout logo
San Marino			•	2					2 generic; flag w/ gold cutout rings, white shield
Serbia			•	8					1 generic; shield with cutout rings on top
Slovakia	•			63	1				1 dated; 2 silver hor rec, 1 vert rec, delegation badges not authorized
Slovenia	•			65	2	2	4	8	1 generic; silver square
Spain			•	20					1 generic; small shield w/ cutout rings, all dated not authorized
Sweden	•			112	2	7	6	15	1 dated; traditional small blue circle
Switzerland	•			162	6	3	2	11	2 dated; traditional sm shield, traditional large delegation oval
Tadikistan	•	•		1					1 dated and 1 generic; cutout logos [^]
Thailand			•	2					1 generic; small gold elephant with rings
Timor-Leste	•	•		1					2 dated; white rnd w/ mascot [^] , white square w/ flag [^]
Togo	•			2					3 dated; lg and sm gld rnd may be unauthorized, cutout logo arrived late [^]
Tonga	•			1					5 dated; slider [^] , flag [^] , turtle [^] , luge/palm, flag/palm, gld rnd, 1 gen; turtle
Turkey	•			6					1 dated; red and silver shield
Ukraine	•			43	1		1	2	1 generic; small white & blue shield pictogram set
United States of America	•			229	9	7	12	28	1 dated; white trapezoid with sport, many dated and generic retail pins
Uzbekistan			•	3					1 gen; yellow vertical rect w/ NOC logo, 4 dated; seen after Games
Venezuela				1					No NOC pins, one undated white rect Ski Team federation pin
Virgin Islands	•			1					1 dated; stillwalker like London
Zimbabwe	•			1					2 dated; silver and blue cutout snowflakes arrived late [^]

Abbreviations and notes: [^] - Pins produced by Kingdom Pins
 Gen - Generic Wht - White Lg - Large
 Gld - Gold Blk - Black Sm - Small
 LON - London Rnd - Round Rec - Rectangle
 w/ - with SOC - Sochi

Peto Wado's Blog, Sochi 2014

Day 1 – Feb 7

You may think that we have gone to Russia to get better weather but actually it's Olympic time again in Sochi. We arrived late January and last night's Opening ceremonies kicked off the XXIInd Olympic Winter Games, my 17th Olympics.

Like in past blogs, our remarks are designed to give those who couldn't come to Sochi a chance to get a 'feel' for the Games, focusing on contrasts, funny experiences, whatever might be interesting to you. It is not an attempt to be critical, although some remarks may sound that way. I love Russia, this being my seventh time here. Russia is like an irresistible woman, beautiful with some superb traits, but fraught with foibles and rough edges . . . she can make you crazy.

The Opening Ceremonies set the mood for the rest of the Games. President Putin opened the Games and that led to a colorful night of homage to Russian history. And, does Russia have history! The RUS tribes (Scandinavians actually) settled today's Western Russia, Belarus and the Ukraine in the Sixth Century CE (AD), while North America was not really Europeanized until the 1600s. Peter the Great (no relation) was stampeding around trying to push Russia into a culture competitive with Europe while America was still a patchwork of ragged colonies. Russia encompasses one sixth of the World's land mass, consists of NINE time zones, and has 180 defined cultural groups . . . the very epitome of diversity. Words that quickly come to mind include 'complex', 'complicated', 'different' and 'wary'. Being invaded dozens, hundreds of time from everywhere including Genghis Khan, Napoleon and Hitler could make you a little wary of foreigners. And, they are. But, deep down, Russians are warm, friendly and devoted to family, mostly just like you and me.

We left the Stadium (monstrous) warm with an Olympic mood . . . until we couldn't get out of the

park due to a huge queue stalled by police and soldiers examining credentials. Credentials to GET OUT! Please! But, so far, our experiences have been warm and friendly, police and volunteers helpful, no problems.

Day 2 – Feb 8

What's the biggest frustration today's travelers can have? Money? Nope, rubles are 34-to-one . . . take the amount, drop the last digit, divide the rest by three . . . easy. Cyrillic characters instead of Roman? Nope, you just have to learn the 34 Cyrillic characters phonetically and suddenly it's not nearly as much of a conundrum. Hey, "ТЭЛЭФОН" in the phonetic written language is "TELEPHONE" and "РЕСТОРАН" becomes "RESTAURANT". Now, of course, there are lots of words translate into words in Roman characters that are unintelligible to English speakers (i.e., "ЛЮК" transforms to "LOOK" which means "ONION"), but that makes it more fun. Hey, "БИР" is "PIBO", and "ТОИЛЕТ" is "TYAJET" . . . what else do you need to know? Well, better get the "M" and "И" or you will be peeing in the wrong pot. No, the biggest frustration that travelers can have is Wi-Fi that doesn't work right, and that is what we have. Rats!

As you get accustomed to Russia, one thing starts to stand out. Things just don't seem to work right. Example. I tried to get a coffee out of a machine in a rail station. It's 70 rubles. Put in a 100 ruble bill (~\$3.00), and you get 30 rubles change. OK. So I did. Then, I get 20 rubles in change and no coffee. S**t! OK, try another machine. Now, I get coffee and 40 rubles change. Now, I feel triumphant, even though I am out three bucks.

Any time you have a conversation with an English-speaking Russian, somewhere in the conversation your companion will say, "I have an uncle in New York", "or "Yes, but you know it's Russia". "You know it's Russia" is sort of an all-encompassing phrase that covers all the issues that annoy. So, "but you know it's Russia". Covers it all, the toilet

that won't flush, the sewer on the sidewalk that has no manhole cover and the Wi-Fi that isn't working. And, the lights that just went out. And someone stole the windshield wipers off my rental car. And . . . OK, "but you know it's Russia" so you move on.

Day 3 – Feb 9

Yesterday's first event was Women's Hockey. Canada beat the Swiss 5 – 0 and it could have easily been 10 – 0. The Swiss looked like a high school team and the Canadians were giants, very big ladies. Albeit sexist, there is something unappealing about watching girls beating the stuffing out of each other, big time fights just like the men.

The new infrastructure all over the Olympic area is quite impressive, dazzling new airport and rail stations, state-of-the-art trains that run on time and, most unbelievable of all, clean toilets! The official total of expenditures by the Olympic Organizing Committee was \$6 billion. The admitted unofficial expenditure is \$51 billion, but several Western experts put the number at \$90 billion. This is quite a bit more than any other Olympic Games in history, including Summer Games (which are 4 – 5 times bigger than the Winter Games). Now, there's an overrun that you can really be proud of, matched only by the Cincinnati streetcar project. Imagine going into McDonalds for a Big Mac where the printed price is \$4.99 and when the check comes, it's \$75?

Our "landlady" is a very attractive late-20's-ish school teacher, with a Masters in languages. Speaks English and French fluently and has some Mandarin (Chinese). She invited me to come over and talk to her class, probably to demonstrate that all Americans are not thugs . . . just some. I was surprised by the fluency of 14 – 15 year-olds, embarrassing actually since all I can say fluently in Russian is "vino byelo botilka". The most common question? "How can I come to America and study English?". My answer? "F*** if I know.". I hope they haven't gotten to the "F's" in their vocabulary lessons.

One surprising observation. There is remarkably little graffiti in Southern Russia, less than the US and far, far less than in the rest of Europe. Their answer? "Big fines, the parents pay, black marks

on education records for university entry". Who says that we have nothing to learn from the Russians?

The population of Greater Sochi is about the same as Cincinnati, and that of adjacent Adler (where most of the Olympic stuff resides) is about the same as Mason. Think we could host the World for an Olympics? Maybe if Putin was the mayor.

Learning the Cyrillic letters has challenges. The letter "Ж", for example, is pronounced "shzh". And the number four is "cheh-tir-ee". Wrap your tongue around those, you cocky Yankee. One advantage to finding your chicken shaslik a bit tough? You can just say "shzh". Linguists say that Russian is one of the easiest languages to learn (as opposed to American English which is fraught with clichés that make no sense, like "raining cats and dogs", and widely varying sounds for each letter). Think about this. A simple English word like "garage" has two "G's", the first "G" is a "guh" sound, and the second "G" has a "zsh" sound. In Russian, each character/letter has only a single sound, no matter where or when it is used.

Day 4 – Feb 10

Excellent weather continues. Yesterday was partly cloudy and 16C (62F) on the sea and 6C (44F) up in the mountains. While this is officially the "Sochi Olympics", most of the activities, the airport and the main train links are in a smaller city called Adler directly on the Black Sea (which, by the way, is the same color as any other sea). Adler is the southernmost significant city in Russia and only 5 miles from the border with Abkhazia (an autonomous province of the Republic of Georgia). Sochi is about 16 miles northwest. Adler is unique because serious mountains are only 25 miles away. You can have breakfast in Adler and easily be skiing in late morning. As a skier, I have never seen a metro-to-mountains situation better than this, even better than Salt Lake, and an easy, almost free train ride up.

Prices for a traveler are about the same here as in similar places in the US, actually more expensive than I expected, with Adler cheaper than Sochi (pronounced "soh – tchee"). We are staying in an upscale, one-bedroom flat with a lot of amenities,

washer, big fridge, nicely furnished, no waste baskets and a big dog, a Rottweiler named Hector. No, make that a BIG dog. He could eat you if he chose to. He hasn't chosen to. Yet.

This area of Russia is very close to the Caucasus countries (i.e., Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan) and there is a lot of Turkic/Persian influence here, but only a tiny Muslim contingent. Georgia and Armenia are two of the oldest Christian countries in the World, converting in the 4th century CE. Lots of diversity here. Lots of funny little hats. Lots of bullet-headed, swarthy guys with shaved haircuts and black jackets that look like the kind of bad guys in James Bond movies. As you walk home from a dinner and encounter clusters of these guys, there is some Neolithic signal that courses from somewhere deep in your cerebellum that says, "Give these guys anything they want . . . take my rubles . . . take my donkey". But, they turn out to be "just guys".

Day 5 – Feb 11

You know the old Brit saying, "Keep Calm and Carry On"? It's good counsel in Mother Russia. Encountering a Russian cop, if someone told him NOT to let you do something, he will NOT let you do it. No compromising. No wheedling. No whimpering. Just "NYET!", maybe given nicely, but still "NYET!". Actually our washing machine is the same way. Once it starts, you cannot stop it or open its door. Yank and kick if you will but it says, "Damn it, I am not going to stop. Go away and I will not talk to you again until I'm done!".

In life you sometimes get little reminders, wake-up calls. Like when I got my AARP card in the mail, I got a similar one yesterday when I got on a full bus, and a young guy about 25 got up and offered me his seat. Jeez.

Saw a Rolls Royce for sale. A Rolls Royce? Where you couldn't find a parking space that big in the entire country of Russia? In a culture of mega-conspicuous consumption, you could probably put it on your roof, I guess.

This is a culture of planning from the bottom up. Someone tells you what to do and you will do one of three things: a) have a smoke; b) have another smoke, and/or c) you will do your task without

argument regardless of its sensibility. Example? Roads and sewers. If the sewer guy shows up first, he will put in his sewer wherever he thinks it belongs. Then the pavement guy comes along and lays his asphalt, ignoring the sewers. Sometimes the sewer will be 8 inches above the road surface, thereby eliminating any chance of drainage (perhaps this paver has an uncle in the transmission repair business). Or, sometimes the sewer's top (manhole cover) will be 8 inches below the road surface, making for a nasty bump when driving. And, of course, sometimes the asphalt guy will just pave right over the sewer, eliminating all of the problems noted above.

Speaking of road bumps, there are speed bumps all over the place in Adler, some planned that way, others not. There ought to be an Olympic event for how far you can make your Mercedes fly over a speed bump. That's a Gold Medal, for sure, for some Russian.

Day 6 – Feb 12

The security for the Winter Games has been superb, a Russian specialty. Russia has traditionally been known as one of the safest countries in the World. And they have upped their game for these Olympics. There are police every 50 meters everywhere. They are also really trying to do it without interfering with the spirit of the Games. Gold Medal Russia!

The Games organizers have drafted lots of Cossacks to augment the security force. Yup, black woolen hats, gray greatcoats, shiny black boots, the whole bit . . . just like on the postcards. And, of course, they are spending much more time posing for photos with visitors than chasing bad guys.

I love the big sign in the Olympic Village which shouts: "ATTENTION! YOU NEED TO READ THIS!" in English, but the text of the sign is in Russian.

The Russians are not really into wine yet, and the fledgling Russian wine industry has some growing pains. We have tried some Russian white wines and they come in four varieties: a) sweet; b) warm; c) sweet and warm, and d) sweet, warm and expensive. Imported wines, of course, are pretty

expensive, and neighbor Georgia has some pretty nice red wines, but they are surprisingly expensive, probably due to the Russians looking for ways to annoy their troublesome ex-Soviet republic through punitive taxation.

Over the years, the US has lost its dominance in many areas of Olympic sport, with figure skating, tennis and basketball among those. Why? Partly due to stronger development programs in other countries, especially in China and the former Soviet Bloc nations, and partly due to a waning work ethic in America. But, the Americans have a neat strategy. Invent new sports and dominate them until other countries figure them out. Examples – snowboarding and freestyle skiing a dozen years ago and this year a flurry of new boarding and skiing events that I never heard of. Team skiing?? In reality, the newer winter sports, which evolved out of the X-sports, are the most popular tickets at today's Games.

Day 7 – Feb 13

The slogan? "Sochi is smoke-free". The reality? No one told the smokers. There is a law, but there are ashtrays in the restaurants, so no one gives the law much credence. There is a plus. Since everyone wears black coats here, and they like to walk in the middle of the street a lot, lit cigarettes act like a safety device. Alcoholism is a chronic problem in Russia and it has been seen all the time on my previous trips to Russia. But, not a single incident noticed here on this trip.

The cell phone craze that is ubiquitous in the US is identical here among Russia's young people. There is a cell phone store literally on every corner here, dozens and dozens of them all over the place. The cheaper ones seem to all have one of three or four ring tones and when one rings, ten passers-by do the "pocket quick draw" at the same time. Funny to watch.

There was a tie in the final run for the womens downhill ski competition, the first time that ever happened in Olympic history. Since the electric timing is down to the hundredth of a second, the odds have to be astronomic to see this happen. As it turns out the two girls (a Slovene and a Swiss) are longtime pals and they walked around all afternoon

yesterday holding hands for the press. A nice Olympic moment.

Many young Russians spend a lot of time learning English, and love to try out their new English on foreigners. Sometimes a "learned language" creates some funny translations. My favorite here is the common phrase that pops up when trading pins and some Russian beauty walks up and says, "I have a proposal for you". Hmm, I'll bet it's not the same proposal I have for you, my little zsnatchki.

Day 8 – Feb 14

Two firsts today. Number One – the worst value on a glass of wine ever. \$12 for a 100 ml glass of thin wine. A shocking rip-off! We complained and got a "we just work here" shrug. Number Two (really last night) was a massive gridlock at an intersection in Adler City. 10 – 15 cars got scrambled up with no one able to move, red lights or green. Took 20 minutes to unwind, all with a bemused cop watching it all, but not making a single move to assist. Obviously, he wanted to make sure there were no murders, terrorists or stolen windshield wipers. But traffic snafus? Ain't my job, mon.

Freestyle skiing tonight, aerials! Great talent, all having trouble landing their jumps. Lots of falls. Probably due to soft snow as a result of another 60+F day in the mountains.

Nice dinner tonight in a small local restaurant. Veal stroganoff. Good! Highlight? Also, in the restaurant, a nice young Russian couple from Siberia with a 4-year-old daughter who was full of energy. Linda gave her a couple of pins. Big hit. Her parents coached her for a few minutes, and she eventually came over and said, "thaaank yoo very much", with a big smile. She ran back, hid her head in her mother's lap, all to laughter from all sides. This is what the Olympic Games are all about, not who wins the most medals or wears the most Gay Pride stickers on their backpacks.

A wonderful sign in the rail station. "Know the Guidelines. Help Preserve Russian Efficiency!" What's the Russian word for oxymoron??

Extraordinary weather here, up to 63F yesterday, and warmer today. Palm trees and sunshine. Talk about contrasts. Even on the mountain, the skiers

are dealing with spring-like conditions and spectators are in t-shirts. The workers are scrambling to preserve the snow conditions. News releases indicate they are adding water and salt to stabilize the snow, an odd response to me. I do the opposite to rid my driveway of snow and ice. Maybe Russian snow and ice are different than Ohio snow and ice.

Traditional Russian food can generally be described as "hearty". Wonderful, thick soups and stews. A nice solyanka and a glass of beer makes you want to crawl into a corner and take a nap. Fresh vegetables in salads? Wonder where they come from? Maybe from here if the weather stays above 60F all winter.

National anthems. No country on earth has a richer musical history than Russia. Centuries of iconic music, composers and performers. The traditional national anthem of the Soviet Union was a wonderful melody of passion and perseverance. You can almost picture a peasant struggling through snow drifts pulling an ox. It can even move KGB officers to tears. When the USSR collapsed, the government changed the anthem to some soulless dirge. The people complained bitterly and, lo and behold, they brought the old anthem back, and just changed a few words (i.e., "glorious quest" to "keep calm and carry on", or something like that). Smart move.

You might not know that there are actually companies who compose national anthems. Your dictator is deposed, and a new one takes over. You just go to some small company in Andorra, give them a few catch phrases like "glorious quest" and they email back a new national anthem with Brittany Spears singing a few bars in Swahili. Just like that. Really!

Day 9 – Feb 15

Incredible hockey game this afternoon. Russia/USA. First period – 0 - 0. Second period – 0 - 0. Third period – 0 - 0. Tie breaker – USA wins 10 - 9. It just doesn't get any closer than this. Sweden is playing Latvia now (2300 local time).

Nice dinner tonight with friends in a traditional upscale Russian restaurant with live music. Lots of noise and one of our group ended up dancing with a local lady (girl, really) before we left. Reminds me

of the place that my son, Corey, and I sang the Costa Rican national anthem in Calgary (Winter Games 1988). How did we know the Costa Rican national anthem? We didn't. Neither did anyone else. Didn't matter.

Incredible weather continues. Thermometer said 21C at the bottom of the mountain this afternoon . . . that's 72F. Wow!

40% of the athletes here in Sochi are female. Most ever, and to the IOC's credit, they are leaning on the established guidelines to squeeze more events in for females. In the midst of all of the gay rights hoop-de-doo there was an article yesterday about sex amongst the athletes during the Games. Bottom line? You get a few thousand young males and females together for three weeks, in sort of an insulated environment, with lots of testosterone and estrogen churning, and, guess what? Mother Nature is likely to take over. So what? What does all of this have to do with the Olympics? I think the media needs to take a cold shower and focus on what the Games are all about.

Day 10 – Feb 16

With the Games' hectic, maybe frantic, pace, historically the "middle Sunday" is looked at as sort of a slow day, time to relax a bit, wash your underwear and call that Czech girl you met in the pub last night, Sochi was true to the plot. Athletes Villages placid, relaxed. And, the cool drizzly day accentuated the mood.

Talking cars. The only car brand to survive the dreadful Soviet period was the Lada, a stodgy, sturdy workhorse of a car that had a dominant market share until imports started to trickle into Russia back in the 90s. The Toyotas and Hyundais stunned Russians because they started instantly, the doors didn't fall off and you could not hear and smell them coming. Their only problem is that you could steal their windshield wipers too. Today's Lada looks like a 15 year-old Fiat. And, it is exactly that, because they took worn out dies and designs from Fiat and used them as "today's Lada". Even though anyone who can afford a better car today has an import, the Russians are endeared to Ladas, sort of like they are to their next door neighbor's ancient aunt. The word "Lada" has

evolved in the Russian language to something like the English word "turd". Like, "Oh, that Dmitri. He's a nice guy, but he is really a Lada, and I really hope that Tatyana can do better". A decade ago Lada launched a new model called the Rocket. You can imagine what fun jokesters had with the new line of "Turd Rockets".

More cars. Since not everyone can afford a Mercedes E series, lots of people still buy Ladas, of course. Actually, it has really done a lot to the garage industry since the wife says to the husband, "we just have to have a garage, so we can hide that turd from the neighbors". A new Lada just looks like it is 15 years old, so buying one is analogous to poor Vasily marrying Olga, and the day after the marriage, Olga looks like she is 35. A five year-old Lada has so many dents, dings and boo-boos that it looks like a car with cellulite.

President Putin is very evident so far during the Games. The local media knows that to photograph Putin, it is a process that needs planning and authorization. Why? Because he is a short guy with a Napoleonisk complex. He has to be surrounded by shorter people, but, oops, most of them have already been hired by the Russian Circus. Western media people are oblivious to that stuff and just shoot what they see, and he is one short dude, shoe lifts and all.

Day 11- Feb 17

There has been quite a media flurry over the Jamaican Bobsled Team, a group that has reappeared here in Sochi after their previous Games at Calgary (Cool Runnings movie) and Salt Lake. The concept? We have a bunch of guys that can run really fast, so we should be great. The reality? Someone has to steer. If there's an event for finishing upside down, there's hope.

There are now 84 nations competing here at the Winter Games. This will be an inaugural Winter event for several countries who would lift most people's eyebrows as winter competitors, like Togo, East Timor, Zimbabwe, Tonga. Togo? Tonga? Really? Um, not really. They finished 80th and 214th in their respective preliminary rounds. Yup, I could've done better. In short, someone was born in Zimbabwe, and his well-heeled family

moved to London when he was a chick, and he learned how to ski in the French Alps. Now, he gets to represent his country in the Olympics. Does this make sense? When never has a snowflake has ever fluttered down in Zimbabwe in our lifetime? You judge.

Curling. Shuffleboard on ice with better-looking women. Hard to imagine curling made the cut on represented sports when baseball, softball and even legendary Olympic sport WRESTLING have been bounced. Why not ballroom dancing, even billiards or chess? Who knows? Needlepoint?

Women's name dazzle. In a half hour you can meet three Tatyanas, four Alexandrias, a Katarina or two and even an Ananastasia. Almost makes one want to take one of these poor Third World orphans home, even if just for a night (only if she goes to sleep before 9P).

Day 12 – Feb 18

Americans Davis and White won our first ice dancing Gold Medal ever last night, surprising the Russians who traditionally dominate this sport. The Americans' only previous ice dancing Medal was earned in 1964, the inaugural of this event. The most Medals won so far has been by the Netherlands who dominate Speedskating, a sport that has many events, maybe over 20. Seems a little odd that a Team could win 12 – 15 medals in Speedskating and yet only one Gold/Silver/Bronze each is awarded in Ice Hockey.

Most Russian restaurants are called "cafes". Not sure why, unless they think that the word "café" has a sexy" Western overtone to it. The Russian "café" can range from a nasty greasy spoon, to a coffee house, to a really nice full service restaurant. Many, even most, have TV screens and LOUD music, not exactly where to go for a romantic candlelight dinner. Pitbull at 100 decibells while you are eating your \$30 stroganoff?

Many foreigners are puzzled by having two columns of numbers on restaurant menus, one being a 'minimal' portion weight (i.e., 100 grams), the other being cost per that specific portion. OK. BUT, in some cases if you order, say, chicken Kiev, you need to specify if you want a small/medium/big

portion. And, if you don't specify what size you want, the server will give you what the restaurant thinks a "normal" portion should be. So what? If you get a medium portion, it will cost double the amount (say, 200 grams) shown on the menu. For expensive stuff, like nice seafood, this could mean a big surprise for a foreign diner counting pennies.

Big sign at a gas station: "Before driving, assure yourself of the absence of a pistol in your tank!". Not something I would think about each time I fill up.

Day 13 – Feb 19

Just when you think you couldn't stand any more excitement, we had a fire. Yup, a real fire. The propane connection for our stove top popped and there was an explosion. Did some nasty cosmetic damage but fortunately, no one was hurt. No smoke alarms here, of course, and if Linda had not been there the whole building would've been in jeopardy. Scary!

After a lot of good weather, we have had two days of cloudy, rainy. Puts a real damper on things as everyone runs for cover. The weather messed up a lot of mountain events but the US won its first two-man bobsled medal since 1952 with a bronze.

Part of the Olympic experience is pin trading. The Olympic concept was originated back in the late-19th Century in an attempt to bring the world together through sport. The thought here was that the connections and mutual understanding received during the Games might make some people think twice about declaring war on each other a generation later. But, how can you get people from different cultures with different languages to get together? Thus, the idea of "friendship pins". Trading sports pins had been around for decades in Europe, where sportsmen from Shooting Club A swapped various tokens with their counterparts from Club B. The craze grew and by the 1930s it was broadspread among the athletes. Spectators were gradually drawn in and other groups, like the media and sponsors, joined in. It's a little hard to imagine until you see it in action. And, it works beautifully, as everyone (almost) is inclined to go up to total strangers and say, "Want to trade?". We have traded pins with the darndest people including sports stars, kings/ queens/presidents and, of course,

the media stars. Czech President Klaus? "Of course, I would like to trade . . . what've you got?". Prince Albert of Monaco? "What do you have for me today?". Katie Couric? "I will give you one of my bobble-heads!". And who wouldn't like to bobble heads with Katie Couric?

Day 14 – Feb 20

We usually talk a bit about foods we don't often see in the US. Easy fun in China but more difficult here in Russia since the Russian cuisine is not that different from the standard fare in America. There are some things we rarely see, like pigs ears and a lot of lard, but the key differences are the outstanding Russian soups and (what we call) casseroles. Chicken or pork, mixed with some veggies in a "pot", uniformly delicious . . . almost anywhere. "Shashlik" = shish-ka-bab. Just fine.

Wait people here would rather have pins than a nice tip. Our monster resident dog would rather have leftover beef or lamb than a human hand or foot (barely).

Had a chance to participate in a short clip on pin trading on NBC's Today Show. Fun to schmooze with some of the TV stars and the result was a 90-second introduction to pin trading at the Winter Games. Linda and I didn't get any air time but it was good for our hobby, and we edged in on a little dance with Jenna Bush.

The disastrous riots in the Ukraine, not that far from Sochi, added very somber note to the Games. There is a very close relationship between Russians and Ukrainians and even though the two countries squabble a lot, they care deeply about each other. Lots of Russians in the Ukraine and vice versa. The only bigger crisis was the legendary Russian Hockey Team losing to Finland. Finland!! There is not a close relationship between the Russians and the Finns (who have been periodically conquered/annexed by Russia over centuries), and that victory was surely relished in Helsinki. BIG letdown in Russia!

Day 15 – Feb 21

It really seems peculiar to hear the constant news about the historic rugged weather in the US when we are in Russia in February languishing in the sunshine at 60+ degrees Fahrenheit.

The Canadians edged our ladies in ice hockey last night, a shame since the US was ahead and clanged a long shot off the post of an empty net in regulation. The Canadians then tied the game and won in overtime. A real disappointment because it seemed that the game was locked up. Tonight is the big game with the mens hockey team going for the gold against, again, the Canadians. Nobody in Russia wants to talk about hockey and rumors have it that the KGB is hunting down the Russian coach.

One of the highlights of this trip is going down to one of the beachside restaurants on the Black Sea and watching the sun go down with a glass of white Abkhazian wine in hand. There are definitely worse places to be in Russia in the winter. There is a little *frisson* about sitting in a Russian café, eating Georgian food served by Circassian waiters looking over the water, knowing that over the horizon is Turkey. One of the pin traders here was pleased to get a Turkish pin yesterday, and amused onlookers by shouting "I got my Turkey! I got my Turkey!", and someone remarked, "Then, you must be all set for Thanksgiving."

Went into a men's toilet at the Olympic Park in the afternoon, a small cubicle big enough for maybe three, but holding four or five. Two young Russian guys with beers in hand were using adjacent urinals. One had a rather impressive explosive passing of gas. And at the absolutely same moment all the lights went out which pleased his buddy immensely, and although my Russian is shallow, I could understand his buddy's shout. "Wow, that was really a good one!"

Day 16 – Feb 22

Well, I got the hockey stuff all wrong. The US Men lost to Canada in the semis and Canada will now face off versus Sweden for the Gold Medal. It's tough trying to stay abreast of the many events while running around between events and trying to fit in eating and sleeping.

There have been many, many articles and commentaries about the treatment of foreigners/visitors here. For us, the Russian people

have, despite being a bit wary, been very kind and accepting. Lots of little acts of kindness and shared laughs. Great fun with the little kids. Their Russians reaction has been about what one would expect a foreign visitor would receive when coming to the US. A little more slow to warm up, maybe. A bit less pushy and 'in your face', perhaps. But, all in all, more human than different. Security was rigid, and even obtrusive at times, but considering today's concerns, understandable, I think.

The Olympics are becoming less user-friendly for visitors. I think that the IOC and the Organizing Committees would just as soon that visitors stayed home. Put up a bunch of cardboard heads out there to make the stands look full for TV, and forget all the hassles. It's pretty clear to anyone who has been to more than one Games, that the Olympics are first and foremost about money, big TV ratings, ever increasing IOC coffers. A little bit of political correctness, "green", gay rights and fair play . . . just for show. But, if anything gets in the way of the money, watch out! These are my 17th Games and many of the folks I know who are Olympics veterans, just plain decided not to come to Sochi. "Bring the world together through sport"? Sounds great until you try to trade a pin with an athlete. Then you are treated like a criminal.

Day 17 – Feb 23

Closing Ceremonies were a hit, some saying much better than the Opening ceremonies. Highlight? Some Russians say it's the first time they'd ever seen Putin smile. The new IOC President, Thomas Bach of Germany, is even shorter than Putin. Lowlight? Some seasoned Olympics observers wondered why there was no traditional "March of the Athletes" in the Ceremonies. Why was that? Simple. NBC wanted it deleted because it brought the lowest audience ratings numbers in past Ceremonies.

Canada beat Sweden for the Gold in Ice Hockey. Since the Canadian Team is really an NHL All Star team, that isn't really a surprise. They were invincible and deserve it.

Some think that Short Track Speedskating is the most exciting event in the Winter Games. It is similar to Professional Roller Skating, sort of an

athletic demolition derby, very popular in the US in the 40s and 50s. It is often mentioned as another sport that evolved from X-Sports. In reality, it dates back to the late 19th Century in Holland. Quick and dirty, with the emphasis on the dirty.

The first separate Olympic Winter Games were held in Chamonix in 1924, at which there were only 258 participants, a drop in the bucket compared to the over 2900 in Sochi.

Committee on Unauthorized NOC pins – Steve Robie

After more than a year of planning, the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics was our first chance to see whether our website was useful to Olympic collectors, either by letting them know what NOC pins were available or warning them about unauthorized NOC pins. The available data indicates that we were at least partially successful.

To date, 231 images have been uploaded to the Olympin Authenticity Project website. Most of these pins are NOC pins although some house pins (i.e. Holland House, Swiss House, etc.) and sports federation pins were included as well. These images came from a variety of sources. Most of the images are from sales on eBay, but other images were acquired from NOC retail sites, provided by Kingdom Pins, sent directly to the committee from the NOCs or are of pins sent to us from the NOCs. Communications from Sochi were difficult and as a result, we only got 3 images from collectors on the ground in Sochi. This was a drawback as the dealers in unauthorized pins were generally selling off the authentic pins that they traded for, not the unauthorized ones that they brought with them. This resulted in a lag before we started to identify these unauthorized pins and were able to warn collectors about their existence.

Once we obtained the pictures, they were edited for size, cleaned up in Photoshop and then uploaded to the website, usually within an hour or two of receiving the image. If the image was of a pin mailed to us, or emailed to us or taken from a NOC retail site, the pin was rated Legitimate. 56 of the

So, as the fireworks wink out, the bands get into their busses and the cheerleaders launder their padded bras, we will enter the Olympic post-partem blues period. The Sochi Chapter now closes and as we will head to the local bank to trade our Rubles in for Brazilian Real, Cruzados, Cruzeiros or New Cruzados, or whatever the Brazilians call their currency these days. Thanks for reading about our visit to Sochi and we will now go dark until Rio in 2016. Nasdrovia and das vdanias!

images came from US, Canadian and Japanese retail sites. 37 came from photographs taken of pins mailed to us and 8 images were sent directly from the NOCs. Thanks also for the 18 images supplied by committee member Daniel Beniston of Kingdom Pins. 4 pins were authenticated based on previous designs and 21 were authenticated based on their use at previous Olympic Games. If the image came from eBay and had not been seen previously, we tried to authenticate the pin by contacting the NOC in question. Much thanks go to committee member Mohan Banerji in England for all of his hard work in contacting the NOCs, often in their native languages using Google Translate. Because of his work, 40 of the pins on our site were either authenticated or repudiated by NOCs, an unprecedented level of cooperation with these NOCs. Another 36 pins, mostly common ones, were authenticated based on feedback from collectors in Sochi including Pete Wade, Sid Marantz and Bud Kling from our committee. This leaves only 11 pins that still have not been rated.

While it is important to get pictures of as many NOC pins as possible, the ultimate goal was to use the pictures of the legitimate pins to identify the unauthorized pins more rapidly. 22 pins were found to be at least questionable:

USA (5): gold, silver and bronze rectangles from Aminco, dated cutout USA rings and a round pin with mountains

Russia (4): dated flag, dated NOC logo cutout, a white rectangle with NOC logo and a wavy flag with cutout rings

Spain (3): dated emblem, red and yellow dated dolls
 Slovakia (3): red, blue and white delegation badges with ribbons
 Canada (2): generic and dated maple leaves
 Portugal (1): dated pin with ribbon
 Poland (1): dated blue circle
 France (1): dated coq
 Latvia (1): white shield
 Tonga (1): gold circle – note that this pin was authorized by the NOC, but believed to have been overproduced

Was this information useful to collectors? We hope that you will take the survey at the end of this story and let us know. But another way of measuring usefulness is by website traffic. Here are the weekly totals:

<u># Of Visitors</u>	<u>Week Of</u>
490	January 12
450	January 19
1066	January 26
1563	February 2
3632	February 9
3696	February 16
3039	February 23
1205	March 2
1318	March 9
1369	March 16
771	March 23
1839	March 30

A unique visitor means that a visitor is only counted once per day no matter how many times per day they visited the website. So, there were over 10,000 visitors during the Olympics with a high of 766 visitors on February 14th. Even if every Olympin member visited the site each day, this total means

that roughly half of the visitors were non-Olympin members!

Did the information provided on our website decrease sales of questionable NOC pins? Again, we hope that you will take part in our survey and tell us what you think. However, we've also been monitoring eBay sales since January 1st. Total revenue from the 5,636 auctions of either generic NOCs or Sochi-dated NOCs was \$67,492. 3.60% of the auctions contained at least one pin that was questionable. Those auctions accounted for 3.75% of the total revenue so the amount people were making from sales of illegitimate NOC pins was similar to what people were making selling legitimate ones! Another way of looking at this is by looking at the success rate of the auctions. Overall, 63.33% of the NOC auctions were successful. If we include sales of the Russian wavy flag pin which was sold in the US and illegally used the NOC rings, but was not listed as a NOC pin, the auctions of illegitimate pins were successful 80.79% of the time. If we don't include this Russian pin, the illegitimate pins still sold 74.17% of the time. So, the conclusion has to be that posting information on NOC pins did not detract from eBay sales of these pins. This is not surprising as the number of people visiting our website is a very small fraction of the number of people worldwide who visit eBay.

The 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil will be an even larger challenge for our committee. There are approximately 5 times more athletes and staff and perhaps 4 times as many pins. We would like to hear some of your feedback on whether this project was useful and how we can improve it before proceeding. However, one area that we have already targeted for improvement is a way to see what has changed recently on the website rather than having to go through every country and every image.

We hope that you have found our work useful and encourage you to send your email feedback to IllegalPinComm@comcast.net. You can also leave a message on my message machine at (408) 257-2489.

Olympin Authenticity Program Survey

1. Did you visit the Authenticity Program website prior to the Sochi Olympics?
2. Did you visit the Authenticity Program website during the Sochi Olympics?
3. Did you visit the Authenticity Program website after the Sochi Olympics?
4. If you visited the website, how many times per week did you visit?
5. Did the information on the website influence any trades or purchases you made?
6. Did you tell any other collectors about the Authenticity Program website?
7. Do you trust the information provided by the Authenticity Program website?
8. Do you want this project to continue for the Rio Summer Olympic Games?
9. Would you be willing to help with this project for the Rio Summer Olympic Games?
10. What could we do to make this project more useful to you?

L.A. 2014 Olympin Show Order Form for Tables and Banquet Meals

Please fill out the form completely and send your payment with the signed form.

If you want to pay via PayPal, please remit to Olympin at olympin@excite.com.

Registration cannot be accepted without payment!!!

Mail to: Olympin Collectors Club, c/o Don Bigsby, P.O. Box 777, Guilderland, NY 12084

Name: (Print) _____

Address: (Street No. & Name) _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip (Postal Code) _____ Country _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail (Print) _____

Tables (8-Ft.) Wanted @ \$150 ea. - () x \$150 = _____

Tables (6-Ft.) Wanted @ \$125 ea. - () x \$125 = _____

Banquet Meals Wanted @ \$55 ea. - () x \$55 = _____

TOTAL COST: (Please include payment with form.) = _____

**Final deadline to register and make payment is July 15, 2014 if tables haven't
already been sold out. So, act now!**

Your Registration will NOT be complete without your payment and signed form!

Registration Forms will be returned if your payment is not included!

Office Use Only: Date Received: _____ Time: _____

