

**Established 1982 – Our 35th year – Issue No 140 – December 2016**

Holiday Greetings to our 536 Olympin members in 34 nations around the world. As you will read on this first page, **this is the annual renewal newsletter**. Please read carefully to see if your dues are already paid, or if it is time for you to renew.

Inside (pages 4 & 5) there is a report written by Steve Robie about his Committee's work on unauthorized pins at the Olympic Games. Reading it will give you some idea of the incredible effort Steve has given your club for many years.

## **C L U B**

### **2017 RENEWALS ARE NOW DUE**

This is the second December renewal newsletter since the Club instigated Electronic, as well as Written, memberships. This letter was sent to both groups, with instructions on renewing promptly.

**Written** (122) – Your newsletter was sent by postal mail and contains **your** personalized renewal form with **your** dues status. If your form is printed on **white** stock, you are pre-paid for 2017 or beyond. If you received a **pink** form, your membership expires at the end of this month! A detailed instruction sheet is enclosed with the written newsletter to help you renew as soon as possible.

**Electronic** (414) – Your newsletter was sent by Email and does not have a personalized renewal form. But there is a separate page that explains how to get on the “MEMBER” section of our website and find out if your membership is expiring at the end of this month. It also explains how to use the website to renew, with a cost comparison for various length memberships.

### **2017 MEMBER BADGE (AND 2018 BADGE)**

The 2017 Olympin member badge is currently awaiting approval, and will be mailed to paid members as soon as we get them. Those paid through 2018 and beyond should also get the 2018 badge in the same mailing.

## **B U S I N E S S**

### **2017 & 2018 SHOW PLANS**

The Olympin Club Board is pleased to announce that the 2018 World Olympic Collector's Fair will be in Los Angeles!

While we are waiting for formal, final approval from the IOC, we wanted to tell the Club members of its status. Dates have not been finalized yet, and as soon as we have more information, Club members will be notified.

The 2017 Olympin Club Fair location has been narrowed down to three potential host cities. The most likely candidate will be Chicago, at the 2017 National Sports Collectors Convention. Those of you who attended the Club's fair when it was in Chicago several years ago, will remember that it was a lot of fun, with huge numbers of collectors of all types of sports memorabilia participating. If we have the show in Chicago, the Fair would take place during the last week of July, at the Donald E. Stevens Convention Center, next to O'Hare Airport. We will keep Club members informed of both events, as new information becomes available.

### **ATLANTA 2016 SHOW PINS FOR SALE**

Leftover pins from our October Olympin Show in Atlanta are now available to order via mail! Please look for a picture and ordering instructions on page 2 of this newsletter.

**Visit our Website! [www.olympinclub.com](http://www.olympinclub.com)**



## 2016 ATLANTA SHOW REPORT

The 2016 Olympin Memorabilia Show was held shortly after the Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games, in early October in Atlanta. There were approximately 70 display tables, with table holders from several countries in Europe and Asia, as well as from all over North America. Public attendance was steady and lots of buying, selling and trading.

The general consensus was that the highlight of the event was the Friday night banquet in the open atrium of the Omni Hotel at CNN Center, with our special guest speaker, George Hirthler. George is an internationally recognized Olympic historian. He gave a great presentation about his newly released Olympic historical fiction novel, "The Idealist". He brought some books for attendees to purchase on site, which he autographed. They sold out quickly! Anyone who did not attend the show, but wants the book, can order it on Amazon.

The annual silent auction was also held Friday night before the dinner. Thanks to the generosity of many of our members, we had some excellent items to offer and the bidding was spirited. The auction raised almost \$4,000, which will be used to help subsidize the show as well as support future Olympin initiatives.

Even in today's world of E Bay and the internet in general, there is still nothing quite the same as trading and interacting in person with fellow pin enthusiasts. If you never attended an Olympin event, you should consider doing so in 2017! Information on the event will be provided soon.

## MORE ON 2017 & 2018 MEMBER BADGES

We traditionally try to produce and send out the annual Olympin Club pin at the beginning of the year. For those with multiple year memberships, it is most cost effective to send out pins for two years. This year the pin(s) will be sent out a little later than normal because we are trying to get permission from the PyeongChang Organizing Committee to use their logo on the 2017 and 2018 pins. We hope to get permission soon and will produce and send out the pins as soon as possible once that occurs. We think you will agree that the possibility of having the PyeongChang logo on our pins is worth the wait! In the meantime, thanks for your patience.

## ATLANTA SHOW PINS AVAILABLE



*2016 Atlanta Olympin Show Pin*

There were 150 Show pins produced for Atlanta, and we have less than 40 left. The pin is actually 1 – ¼" tall, about 40% as big as that pictured. Nicely made by Honav, with the USOC's approval.

You can order it for \$5 (or 3 for \$10) plus shipping\*\*\*.

\*\*\* - Shipping:

USA	\$3
Canada	\$10
Other	\$14

In addition, a generous member has sent in their member pins for the Club to offer other members, plus we have a few others in stock:

2016	\$4
2015	\$4
2014	\$1
2013	\$1 (1 left)
2012	\$10 (1 left)
2011	\$10 (1 left)
2009	\$5 (3 left)
1999	\$8 (1 left)

Pictures are online or in a past newsletter. Shipping price includes all pins, no matter the quantity. Order from Don at [don.bigsby@yahoo.com](mailto:don.bigsby@yahoo.com).



## ANNUAL MEMBER MEETING MINUTES

Member Meeting in Atlanta 10/ 9/16:

The Annual Meeting of the Olympin Collectors Club was held in Atlanta, Georgia on October 9 at the Omni Hotel. President Don Bigsby called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM. When the meeting began, there were about 15 people present. In total, about 25 attended all or parts of the meeting.

Don reported that there have been about 17 new renewals since the roster was printed and our membership stands at about 530. Any new members will be credited for paying dues in 2017, even if they join or pay this year.

Oakley Hammond, who created the design of our pin for 2015 with approved Rio logo has also designed our 2017-18 pins with the Pyeong Chang Winter Games logo. The USOC has approved the designs and will submit them to the correct person in Korea when that position is filled.

Extra 2016 Atlanta Show pins, which were given to all table holders, are available at the Olympin table for \$5 each or \$8 by mail domestically.

Currently, two locations are under consideration to host the Show in 2017. They are Orlando and Chicago.

Olympin will enter a bid to host the 2018 IOC Fair in conjunction with our annual show in Los Angeles.

Scott Reed reported that the Friday night dinner auction took in about \$4000. This money is important because the Show normally does not need any general Club funds to break even and helps keep the registration fees more affordable. This is important to the Board as most of the members do not attend a particular Show and should not have to have any of their dues fund this event.

Scott reported that approximately 50 table holders reserved 70 tables.

Don reported that as of October 1, the Club had slightly larger expenses than revenues but that there are timing differences as we have accumulated a surplus in addition to having a large amount of

prepaid dues. This is money we are careful not to budget to spend until the year it is intended for as that is when the expenses are actually incurred.

Important items that the membership should be aware of include: We have members in over 30 countries and mail about 150 pins overseas. Foreign postage is expensive but we charge these members no more to belong to the Club than US members. The web site has become more and more important and is a real asset to members with computer access. Everyone should visit it regularly. Our Club membership in the International Association of Olympic Collectors (AICO) is evolving as is the organization. It is officially recognized by the IOC and our Club is the member with the most individual members of all the Clubs.

Don made special mention of our Authentication Project and particularly Steve Robie for the outstanding job he has done. It takes enormous work on Steve's part and although he has some help, most of the work falls to him. Doug Todd handles the media section of the site which gives the hobby access to additional great information. The IOC is always trying to protect their brand and these projects are right in line with that mission.

In the open forum, Nick Wolaver opened a discussion on personal pins such as have been produced by Kim Rodie (sp) and Kerry Walsh Jennings.

Brian Carberry said we should try to increase our efforts to attract and retain our international members.

Don reported that we have about 350 members from the USA, about 20 from Canada and about 150 in other countries..

The meeting adjourned at 9:52 AM EDT.

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### **Please renew asap!**

The **2017 Member Directory** will be prepared for the membership in **March** 2017! Please help me out by renewing as soon as possible! If you do not intend to renew, please let me know by email or phone now, so I do not waste my time and the Club's money asking you. Thanks! Don



On the recommendation of Don Bigsby, the Olympin Board has awarded **Steve Robie** a lifetime membership in the Olympin Collectors Club for his dedication and hard work on the Club's behalf. Steve has provided a most valuable service for Club members by compiling detailed lists of all the NOC pins available during given Games. Since 2012, he has served as chair of the Olympin Committee on Unauthorized NOC Pins, attempting to determine the authenticity of each and every NOC pin used in the Sochi and Rio Games.

An edited version of his report on this committee's efforts during the Rio Games follows. It is the Club's hope that Steve will continue in some capacity his work that benefits so many.

## Rio 2016 Final Report – Olympin Committee on Unauthorized NOC pins (edited) Steve Robie – Chair

### Executive Summary

In some ways, the committee's activities during, and immediately after, the Rio Olympic Games were a big success. Here are the highlights:

- Images of 480 NOC pins were live on the Olympin website prior to the Opening Ceremonies.
- 716 NOC pins currently appear on the website as of late November, 2016.
- Feedback was received from 11 NOCs prior to the start of the Games and by 35 after the Games.
- Based on information from our committee, the US Olympic Committee was able to issue eBay takedown notices on EVERY illegitimate USA NOC pin that came up for auction.
- Excellent support was received from the major NOC pin producers: Kingdom Pins, Laurie Artiss-The Pin People, Honav USA and Trofe-Australia.
- Coverage was extended to Olympic Media pins for the first time.

Unfortunately, these successes do not compensate for the things that went wrong:

- Only 3400 hits were recorded during the Rio Olympics on the Authenticity Project NOC

website. This was less than 50% of the number during the Sochi Olympics in 2014.

- Only 900 hits were recorded by the Authenticity Project Media website during the same time period.
- Less feedback was received from NOCs during this Olympics than during the Sochi Olympics despite the presence of nearly twice as many NOCs.
- The presence of illegitimate pins on the website did little to limit the activities of people who deal in these pins.

Based on these results, it is unlikely that in its current form this committee will achieve success in reducing the number of illegitimate NOC or media pins.

### Background

Two strategies were employed to discover as many legitimate NOC pins prior to the Rio Games as possible. The first was to contact the major producers of NOC pins to see whether they would be willing to share images of either the initial design work or the finished pins prior to the start of the Games. This was somewhat successful.

The second approach was to email or to write to all the NOCs asking for either pins or images of their pins. 19 NOCs responded prior to the start of the Games adding about 25 images of legitimate NOC pins to the website.

Combined, these two strategies were quite successful. At the time that the website went live on July 29, we had images for more than 300 NOC pins (including the retail pins available from the US, Canadian, British and Japanese NOCs). This is approximately the same number of pins discovered during the entire Sochi Olympics. By the Opening Ceremonies, the website had more than 440 NOC pin images. We also had approximately 100 Media pins.

### During the Olympics

Before the start of the Olympics, nearly all the committee work was being done by two people. New committee member Tanya Ollick was contacting the NOCs in place of Mohan Banerji (who had done this during the Sochi Olympics) and the committee chair was doing everything else. Everything else consisted of monitoring eBay for new pins, collecting and editing images of new pins in Photoshop, uploading the images to the Olympic Authenticity Project website, and updating the Authenticity Project database with information



about where the pin first appeared, who supplied the image, and any feedback we received from the NOC.

Once the Olympics began, Tanya found that it was not possible to attend events and keep up with the rapidly growing number of previously unknown NOC pins. So, we were down to a one-man committee. Nevertheless, more than 100 “new” NOC images and nearly 100 Media images were added to the website during the Olympics.

While we kept up reasonably well with the newly appearing pins, there was no time to get them authenticated. Therefore, the majority of these pins went onto the website with a status of “Not Yet Rated.” This was beneficial for the collectors who just wanted to see what pins were available but was completely unhelpful for those who wanted to avoid purchasing or trading for an illegitimate pin.

The one exception was with the USOC. An email to Laura Sokol at the USOC with the image of a likely illegitimate NOC pin was sufficient to have a takedown order issued to eBay, usually within 24 hours, to delist the auction of the pin. Once Laura identified a pin as illegitimate, we could contact a USOC lawyer directly with any other auction of the same pin and get it removed almost immediately.

Meanwhile, the number of hits to the Olympin Authenticity Project website was trending far below the rate seen in Sochi. During the month of February, 2014, 11,417 hits were registered by the Authenticity Project website. During the month of August, 2016, however, the website registered only 5,746 hits. It is not clear what caused this drop. Web connectivity in the Olympic venues was awful unless one was using a Brazilian internet provider. But it may have also been true that a larger fraction of American NOC collectors were in Rio than were in Sochi so they didn’t need the website to find out what was available.

What is clear is that unless people frequent the Authenticity Project website prior to making a trade or purchase, there is no way to keep them from ending up with an illegitimate pin. The 900 or so hits to the Olympin media pin website were very disappointing and clearly not worth the effort to display nearly 200 media pins.

### **After the Games**

Activity on eBay really picked up once collectors returned from Rio and began selling off their extra

pins. Another 200+ NOC pins have been added to the database since the end of the Games bringing the total number of images to 716 as of late November. Tanya started a new job and was not able to resume her task of contacting NOCs, so this job fell to the committee chair. Over a three-week period in September, every NOC was contacted by email, usually in their native language using Google Translate. Each NOC was shown images for all their known pins and asked if they were all legitimate. 35 of the NOCs responded. Based on this feedback, 43 pins are currently rated “Not Legitimate,” 6 are rated “Likely Not Legitimate,” 4 are rated “Questionable,” 136 are rated “Likely Legitimate,” and 253 are rated “Legitimate.” The remaining 274 are still listed as “Not Yet Rated.”

Our experience has been that NOCs are more likely to respond if one of the pins is illegitimate than if they are all legitimate. While it was rewarding to get replies from the NOCs, the bottom line is that too little feedback was obtained and what was received occurred much too late to prevent anyone from avoiding trades or purchases of illegitimate NOC pins.

### **Conclusions**

The last two Olympic Games have clearly demonstrated that the current structure of the Olympin Committee on Unauthorized NOC Pins is insufficient to have any impact on the production of questionable pins or on totally unauthorized NOC pins. While the decision of the committee to have the NOCs be the ultimate authority on whether a particular pin is authorized was probably correct, it also doomed the committee’s ability to achieve its goal. The NOCs simply do not respond fast enough to prevent a dealer from unloading unauthorized pins on unwary collectors. Except for the larger NOCs, which are quite aggressive about trademark infringement, most NOCs are either understaffed or simply don’t see any reason to spend time on something as trivial as pins. Further, dealers have also responded to the efforts of our committee by minimizing the number of unauthorized pins that ever show up on eBay. If we don’t see a pin, there is no way to authenticate or repudiate it. Finally, unless even casual Olympic collectors begin looking at the Olympic Authenticity Project website prior to making a trade or purchase, there is no way for us to protect collectors from these kinds of pins.