

# More Will Be Revealed

**J. C. Randell** says it's all in the details

BY NANCY OLSON

**M**aster engraver J. C. Randell is perhaps best known for his amazing watch engravings: He has been the authorized custom engraver in the U. S. for Jaeger-Le Coultre for the past 17 years and has worked primarily on the famed Reverso. Perhaps less known is his broader talent in engraving just about anything that lends itself to—and is worthy of—his finely detailed work. Randell, who prefers to be called simply, J.C., was recently commissioned to embellish a pen for a private client. His canvas was an S. T. Dupont ballpoint pen in sterling silver. Its owner bestowed free reign with the design, giving guidance only in his preference for a nautical theme.

“As I was inspecting the pen, I took note that one side of the barrel was ‘up’ when the pen was at ‘rest’ (nib retracted), and that the other ‘side’ of the barrel would then be presented for viewing when the nib was out and in the client’s hand,” says the self-taught Randell, who is a watchmaker by formal training. “This then challenged me not only in the theme I wanted to pursue for this piece, but also how best to fill the areas in a manner that told a bit of a story while the pen would be in use or at rest.”

He started with the cap, which is embellished with a sailing ship on one side and stylized dolphins on the other. For the barrel of the pen J. C. designed a pair of hippocampi (mythological sea creatures with the head and forelegs of a horse and the tail of a fish), more dolphins, and a not-so-shy mermaid. The opposite view of the barrel was then decorated with the owner’s initials. “There were areas on both the cap and the barrel that did not lend themselves to much in the nautical theme, so I decided to add some decorative foliage, thus tying the piece together,” he says. According to J. C., the hours invested in the pen are too numerous to count, and sterling silver is not the easiest material to work with—not to mention the inherent difficulties in engraving a cylindrical shape. But the end result is another J. C. Randell masterpiece.

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