

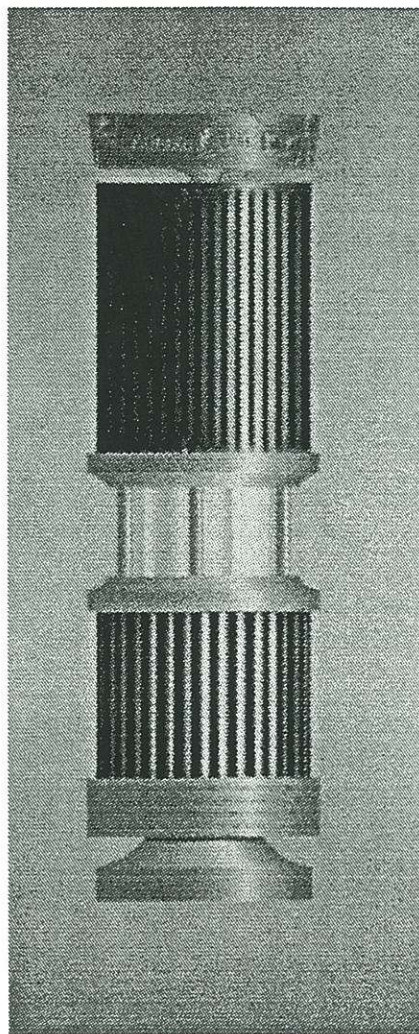
The Olympic Flame Safety Lamp

by J. Roger Mitchell

One morning while reading the local paper, I couldn't help but notice a picture of a man holding up a safety lamp. The caption stated it was a Georgia State Trooper holding a "mother flame" and that the lamp was used to store the Olympic flame when the torch was not in use. It also stated that the lamp spent the night in a Holiday Inn with two guards keeping watch! The lamp was an all-brass Koehler. I decided then I had to know more about this lamp and why it was used. Some diligent surfing on the Internet revealed how our hobby played an important role in this year's Olympics in Atlanta. The following information was provided by Joel Grear, Executive Vice-President of Malcolm Grear Designers, the company chosen to provide all of the Olympic designs.

Malcolm Grear Designers was chosen, with four other firms, from 500 design firms nationwide to work with the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games on the look of the 1996 Centennial Games (Quilt of Leaves). Once the look of the games was established, MGD was contracted to design the hand-held torch, the traveling cauldron and the safety lantern for the international torch relay, as well as the gold, silver and bronze commemorative medals, a poster, and 31 sports pictograms.

Through research, it was found that Koehler lamps had been used for previous Olympic games such as Lillehammer. A safety lamp was chosen for its compact size, because they are hard to extinguish and would remain lit for many hours. MGD was the only firm contracted to design the new safety lamp and only four lamps were built to the new design. Two lamps traveled with

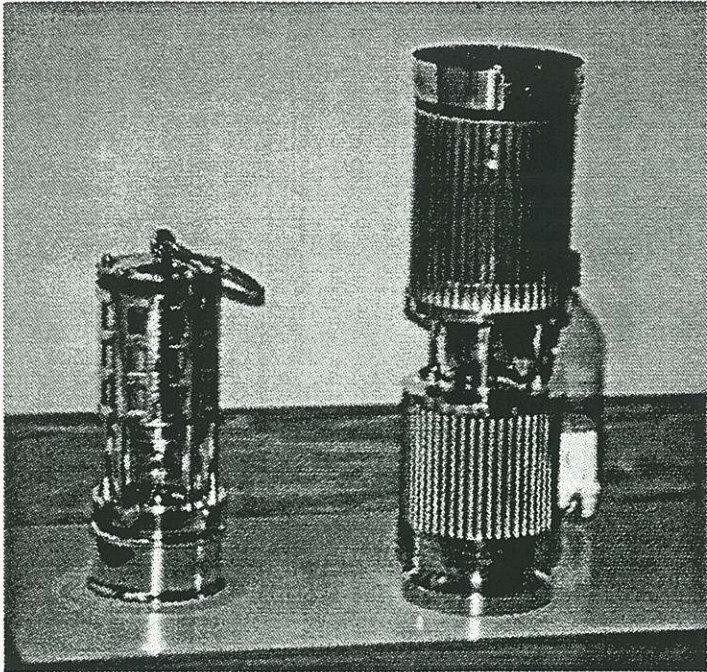


the torch relay around the country and two remained in the Olympic offices in Atlanta. The two modified safety lamps which traveled with the torch were only used during ceremonies, while basic Koehlers were used to keep the flame during the rest of the relay. It is not known how many basic Koehlers were purchased by the Olympic Committee for use throughout the Games. MGD were only given four of them to be modified as stated earlier.

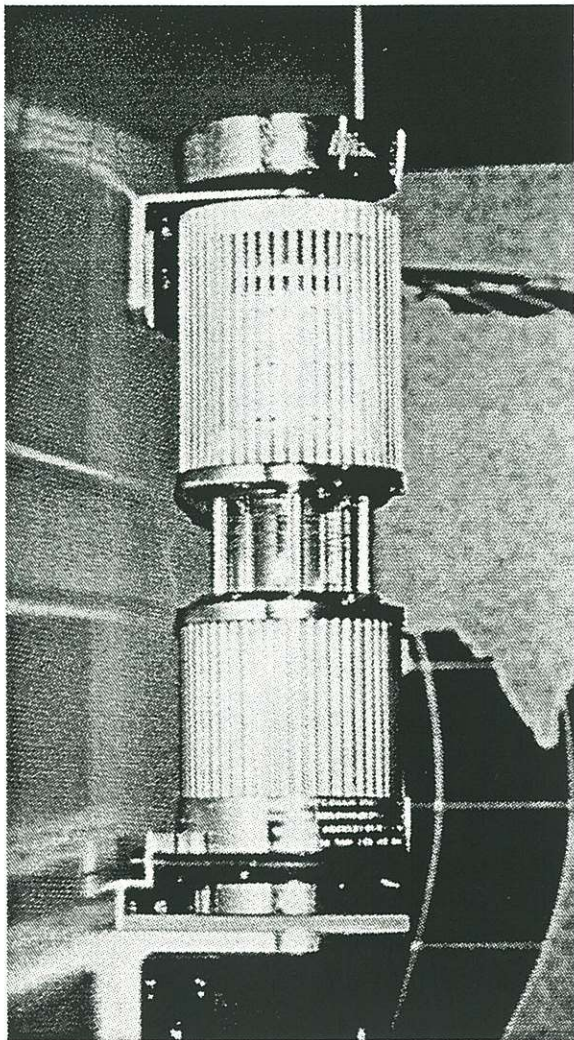
Once the concepts were approved by the Olympic Committee, the basic Koehler lamps were dismantled, measured, and redesigned to new specifications. These new designs were sent to Dr. Sam Shelton and a team of engineers at Georgia Institute of Technology, where detailed drawings were made of each new piece and then sent to the machine shops for manufacturing of the new parts. The new parts were acid etched brass and then gold-plated. The torch, the cauldron and the safety lamp all have the same elements.

Each bears the names of the 22 cities that have hosted the modern Olympic Games, the Quilt of Leaves design, and the Atlanta torch logo. The theme of Greek architecture was also incorporated into each new design. Each safety lamp remains intact inside the newly designed outer shell. The new standards were made to look like Greek columns. The new outer bonnet was made to look like the reeds that were bound together to be used as a torch in the ancient Games.

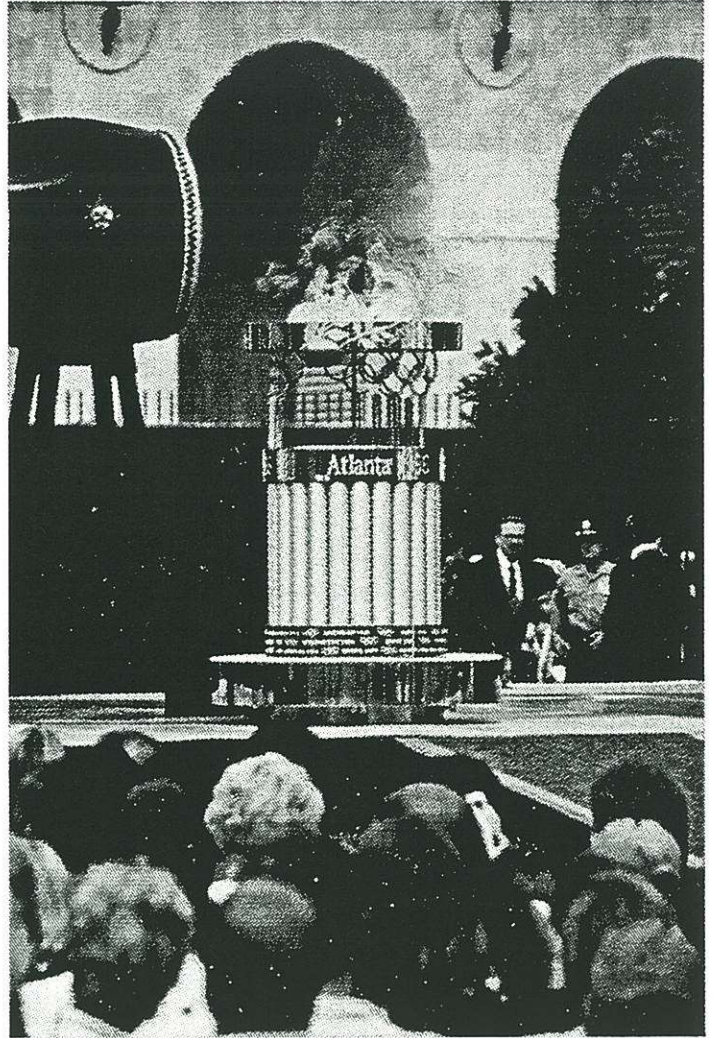
Once the new lamps were made, one was sent to Greece where the newly lit flame was transferred to the new lamp and sent back to the United States. Specially made



Stock Koehler used next to "modified" Koehler. (You can see the bonnet inside)



Lamp on board Delta flight from Greece.



Olympic flame cauldron - similar to safety.

brackets held the lamp onboard a Delta Airlines plane when it was flown overseas.

It is not known what will become of these Olympic safety lamps after the games are over. More than likely they will end up in the Olympic museums around the world. Perhaps someday, one will end up in some lucky collectors own private collection. Anyone seeking further information, feel free to contact Malcolm Gear Designers, Inc. in Providence, Rhode Island, or contact them at mgdesigners@ids.net The information contact for the Georgia Tech engineering team is PhD candidate student Andy Delano (404)894-2264.

Reference:

Hendley, Vicky. "Bringing the Flame to the Games." ASEE Prism. September 1996, p.21