

John "Digger" Odell Tribute

The antique bottle hobby lost another stalwart when John Arthur "Digger" Odell, 62, died Oct. 27 after a hard-fought battle with an aggressive form of lung cancer.

"Despite his dedication to healthy living, exercise, jogging and diet (I'd kid him about eating all those seeds, nuts and fruits on the way to shows together, an aggressive form of lung cancer caught up with him this year," said internationally known cure collector John Wolf, of Dayton, Ohio.

"John and I met through ads in the Old Bottle Magazine in 1974. He already had a thing for old patent medicine bottles then and was one of the first to visit this young cure collector in 1975. When we stayed in his home in Garrettsville, Ohio on our way to the Akron Bottle Show soon after, he was collecting information for his *Indian Bottles and Brands* (1977). After that, we stayed in touch and shared data and many bottles through the years, as well as lots of good stories. John seemed to know everyone in the bottle world.

"He was a consummate digger in southwestern Ohio, especially in the Cincinnati/Covington area, and sold his *Secrets of Privy Digging* for many years," said Wolf. "He also compiled a series of books covering by category all of the items from Jim Hagenbuch's *Antique Bottle & Glass Collector* auctions.

"John loved to do research and excelled at it, visiting major libraries around the country for weeks at a time, as well as the U.S. Patent Office in Washington, D.C. In more recent years, he became an accomplished online researcher."

Among books from "Digger Odell Publications" were *Barber Bottles* (2009), *Bitters Bottles* (2010), *Sodas, Porters & Ales* (2009), *Medicine Bottles* (2012), *Pontil Medicine Encyclopedia* (2007), *Saratoga & Mineral Water Bottles* (2010), *Fire Grenades & Target Balls* (2011) and *Indian Bottles and Brands* (1977).

He authored numerous bottle stories published in *Antique Bottle & Glass Collector* and other publications. "His AB&GC articles on various aspects of patent medicines were always amazingly thorough and enjoyable," Wolf added. "And his two volumes of the *Patent Medicine Encyclopedia* have become the 'bible' for collectors."

Another Odell friend and fan, Dana Charlton, "was so saddened to learn that my friend lost his valiant battle with

cancer. When this summer John wrote me that he had cancer and was frightened, I was frightened with him. He asked me for my prayers and gave me permission to post his note on Facebook. The bottle collecting community offered their prayers and best wishes, too. In August, John wrote to me:

"Today and yesterday are good days. . . day nine chemo round two. . . I am hanging in there. Enjoy the bottle thread, although I cannot keep up daily. Thank you for the thoughts and prayers. I am gonna win this one."

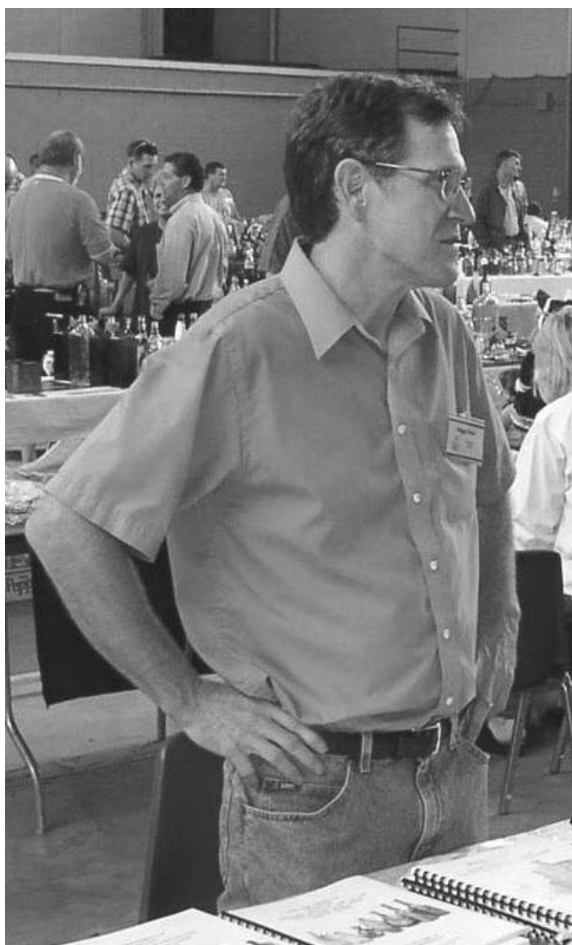
"My thanks go to you, dear John, for your friendship, your sense of humor, your brilliant smile. I will miss you and the bottle collecting community has lost a friend as well. Rest in peace, John, you've earned it," she writes.

"John published his first book, *Indian Bottles and Brands*, in 1977," Charlton said. "I was collecting Indian medicines for one year and was totally ecstatic to have a book to refer to. I obtained a copy and corresponded with John by mail and phone – there were no computers or e-mail then. In 1978, we met in person at the York, Pennsylvania bottle show at the old fairgrounds. What a thrill it was for me! John told me something surprising: when he wrote the book, he wasn't collecting Indian bottles, but by now he was an avid collector and we became

fast friends. He signed my book: 'Dana, who puts an arrow through my heart each time she shows me a new Indian!'

"When John wrote his follow-up book, *More Indian Bottles and Brands*, I gladly contributed information. At one point, John offered to sell me his entire collection of Indian bottles, but would not sell single items. I turned down the offer, but it didn't hurt our friendship. I remember John telling me he'd dug a Hamilton's Indian Liniment, a very scarce, open pontiled bottle, in a privy in downtown St. Louis. Another time, John called to alert me of a rare Dr. Keeler's Indian Sarsaparilla in a mail bid auction to see if we'd be bidding against one another and suggested that we try to win the bottle and 'time-share' possession of it. We didn't win it, but it showed our trust for one another.

"John lived in Ohio and me in New York, so we saw each other infrequently. But we stayed in touch over the years and always remained friends. Last time I saw John was at the Baltimore show



Thanks to Marianne Dow, and the Findlay Ohio Newsletter for use of the Photo.

in 2010. By then, he was the famous 'Digger' Odell, finding his niche in preparing bottle books in all the categories."

In real life, John was a member of the Mason City Schools Board. A beloved educator, he had an extensive career as an innovative Mason teacher and curriculum leader from 1985 until he retired in 2006. He won a seat on the school board in 2009 and brought the same passion for learning to that body as he did in the classroom.

Survivors include his widow, Susan M. Odell; his children, David Holyoke Odell and Katherine Holyoke Odell; stepchildren, Kristina Baker Lamb, Danielle Renee Baker and Paul Eric Baker; and a sister, Becky Clough.

A memorial service was held Nov. 1 and as it ended, by his request a Dixieland band played "When the Saints Go Marching In!"

Donations in the memory of John may be sent to The Mason Schools Foundation, P.O. Box 183, Mason, OH 45040.

John Arthur Odell

October 30, 1948 -
October 27, 2011



May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon your fields,
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.

May God be with you and bless you:
May you see your children's children,
May you be poor in misfortune,
Rich in blessings.
May you know nothing but happiness
From this day forward.

May the road rise up to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the warm rays of sun fall upon your home,
And may the hand of a friend always be near.

May green be the grass you walk on,
May blue be the skies above you,
May pure be the joys that surround you,
May true be the hearts that love you.

-"Irish Blessings"

Courtesy of John Wolf

Bottle Cleaning

By
Jennrog Collectables

- Professional cleaning with a personal touch.
- Nearly 10 years in the industry.
- References available.
- Pricing – Single bottle - \$17.00
Ponited - \$18.00
Discounts available for lots of 6 or more items
- Turnaround time is typically 5-6 weeks.
- See our Bottle Cleaning Page on website, below.

We are happy to announce that we are now the Northeast Distributor for:



Jar Doctor™

in New England, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Eastern Canada. We have machines, parts and supplies in stock, and will be happy to deliver your machine or supplies to a show near you.

Current Show Schedule

South Attleboro, Massachusetts - January 8, 2012
South River, NJ - February 5, 2012
Baltimore, MD - March 4, 2012

Jennrog Collectables
99 Lawrence St.
Pepperell, MA 01463
978-433-8274
jennrog@charter.net
<http://www.jennrog-collectables.com>

42nd Annual

Antique Bottle & Jar Show

**St. Louis
Antique Bottle
Collectors
Association**

**Sunday
March 18
2012**



**Two Hearts
Banquet Center
4532 S. Lindbergh
at Gravois, St. Louis**

105 Sales tables plus displays
Admission \$3.00 Kids free
9 a.m.—2 p.m.
No early admission
Food & drink available
\$1.00 off with flyer

Antique
Bottles
Fruit Jars
Pottery
Breweriana
Insulators
Related
Advertising

Show Chair
Pat Jett
71 Outlook Drive
Hillsboro, MO 63050
Phone: 314-570-6917
Email: patsy_jett@yahoo.com