

LEGENDS OF THE JAR!

Dave Hinson

By Bruce W. Schank

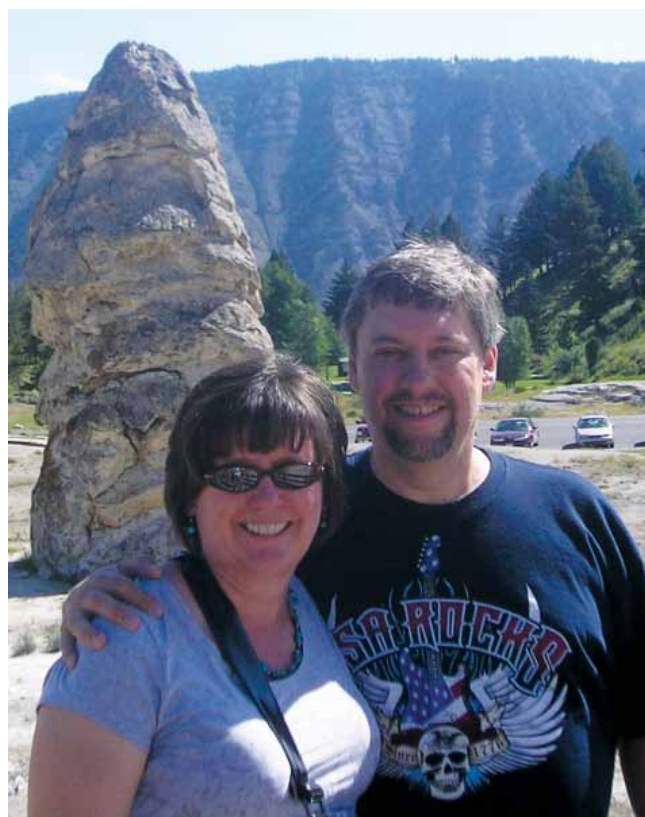
[Editor's Note: This article is a result of long-time collector and author, Bruce W. Schank, reaching out to long-time collector, Dave Hinson.]

Dave was born in September 1960 in Bakersfield, Calif., and also grew up there. He attended undergraduate college in Lubbock, Tex., where he met and married his lovely wife. He also went to graduate school at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif. Dave currently works for the county of Los Angeles supervising a court investigations unit. (That sounds interesting.)

In the 1990s, Dave was busy on 'listerves' on the Internet (basically Internet e-mailing lists) focusing on a couple of popular television shows at the time (X-Files and Millennium) and those were a lot of fun for him. He wrote episode reviews and garnered tidbits of information about the shows' respective story arcs. Back in the '90s when the Internet was still new, a fan not only got to correspond with other people that were interested in their show but sometimes even some of the writers would be on the list and thus, one had the honor of corresponding with them as well.

Because of those "e-mailing Lists" Dave thought it would be an interesting idea to bring collectors together on the Internet by starting a similar list. At that time eGroups (later purchased by Yahoo) was an up and coming site and it was easy to sign up. He e-mailed various Federation folks he knew and other collectors and the list took off quickly.

I've never met Dave in person, but I have known him since I joined the Fruit Jar Group on Yahoo back in Febru-



Dave and Esther Hinson

ary 2003. In 2004, Dave, who is the "Owner" of the Group queried for an assistant Moderator, and this humble author gladly accepted that responsibility. Dave and I are still Moderators of the Group to this day.



Extremely scarce Western Stoneware grouping..

Dave is also a former *Bottles & Extras* editor and writer of the “Western Region Report.” He is an eclectic collector and is partial to various green shaded jars including pint Atlas Strong Shoulder, Ball Perfect Mason and Improved Gem jars. Not surprisingly, he really likes most of his jars but the one favorite that stands out is his The Winslow Improved Valve Jar (half gallon) that has an almost perfectly preserved metal spring under the metal clamp and a label dated 1885. He’s also fond of two Southern California Packing Co. Los Angeles, Calif. Jars, the larger half gallon with an original label and both with original carrying handles. Finally, his collection of Los Angeles Olive Grower jars in various sizes (quart to one gallon.) Along with jars, he and his wife Esther also collect jelly glasses.

Dave first became interested in fruit jars during his adolescent years. Collecting was something he and his dad did and continued doing during his elementary, junior and senior high years and in which was a positive activity keeping him out of trouble. During the summer between his fourth and fifth grade years his father worked as a land salesman in Tehachapi, Calif. at a place called Enchanted Lakes. There were actually seven small lakes on the ranch which included genuine Indian petroglyphs and a couple of Indian grinding rocks; the property had a Tom Sawyer feel – like lost island at Disneyland – that naturally got his imagination going about finding treasure.

If one is not familiar with this area



Rare Mexican jar

of California, farmers grow an abundance of Apples and other fruit in the mountain community. The development company had converted an old circa 1910s farm house into the land office. Dave was quick to note that an old fruit cellar was still intact looking pretty much as it had since the time the ranch ceased operations in the 1950s. Convinced he could find treasure, he spent many days staring through the slats of the old door covering the cellar observing partitioned boxes containing blue cylinders capped with grey metal tops (in his mind they were filled with coins or other valuables.) Despite warnings of possible rattlesnake encounters (snakes are common residents in California mountain communities) his curiosity finally got the best of him and one day he cautiously ventured into that cellar to find what treasure might await him.

There were perhaps three dozen,

and to his disappointment, empty blue jars but also to his amazement each of the jars had names embossed upon them. With the exception of one of the blue pints, each said either Ball Perfect Mason or Atlas Strong Shoulder Mason. That one exception was a blue pint with the inscription White Crown Mason. After examination, he returned each jar to its rightful place in the partitioned box leaving these treasures as he found them. Asking around he was told that the family who worked the ranch probably left the jars after the ranch shut down and he was allowed to keep one. He chose the odd-ball White Crown Mason. Intrigued by the idea that jars might have different names and possibly might be of historical significance, he purchased a small price guide entitled “The Kitchen Cupboard” at a local antiques store. To his amazement, the White Crown booked at \$7 to \$10 ... Quite a haul at the time! That one find inspired his curiosity and started a relentless pursuit through junk stores, newspaper ads, jar lists advertised in the *Antique Trader*, and the cellars of his father’s Midwest relatives.

Dave and his dad thus went all over the place looking for jars. They used to buy wax sealers from a collector in Randsberg, Calif., and at that time that person was apparently a reasonably well known wax sealer collector and took trips back east to buy jars and antiques. Randsberg is still an old washed up desert mining town near Death Valley and Dave is clueless as to what that guy was doing



Very appealing assortment of green jars.



Trio of jars, including one with rare label.



Front of a rare labeled jar

there with his antique shop and family in the middle of nowhere.

Dave and his dad also met and visited with Ron Burris in Visalia, Calif. Ron was a career educator and worked with developmentally disabled children at a hospital in Porterville. Years later Alex Kerr told him Ron sold out his collection sometime perhaps in the 1980s. (Collectors or those familiar with eBay might recall Ron's name as he published an early series of books on antique fruit jars.) According to Dave, Ron's house was crazy ... It was literally a huge fruit jar collection. His garage was chock full too, Ron had all of his jars on display and none of them packed in boxes. By sheer numbers he

probably had the largest collection of anyone at the time. Dave believes he had well over 2,000 unique fruit jars at his house. As far as he knew Ron had the only complete original AE Bray amber example. He has no idea to whom that jar went.

During the Hinson family journeys they met the Settle family at the Tropico Gold Mine in Rosamond, Calif. and were charter members of the now defunct Golden State Treasure Hounds, a treasure, bottle and relic club in Bakersfield, Calif. He swapped jars with the Settles and to this day he still has an SCA pint QG (monogram) he got from them. After some time off for college, he took jars back up in the 80s when his

kids were little plus it was a good excuse for various family vacations. (He never made it to one of the famous west coast get-togethers, however, because they didn't allow children.)

The FOHBC Expo in 1988 in Las Vegas was when Dave talked to Granny Kath face to face. She was flattered and surprised to learn he read her column as a teen. His older son was two years of age at the time and there is a photo of him (Stephen) and Dave in Granny's show report column on the '88 expo.

As Dave and Esther dragged their children through antique malls/stores, flea markets and bottle shows when they were growing up (the boys are 20 and 23 now), they met Alex and



Nice colored Atlas pint line-up.

Carolyn Kerr. Alex helped him with magazine articles in the 1990s. As any long time jar collector knows, Alex had “The” fruit jar collection in his heyday and Dave and his wife were blessed to spend some time at their house as part of the Los Angeles Historical Bottle Club.

Dave and Esther were at the Expo in Las Vegas searching up and down the aisles when they came upon a table with a trove of jars. They struck up a conversation with a woman there who had a beautiful smile, a bright and patient disposition and the gift of conversation. He remembers asking if she could reduce the sales price of a jar. He believed truly she would have loved to knock off a few bucks but without hesitation she told him she could not without first getting her husband’s approval. She confessed, she had once sold a jar for a price lower than listed on the sticker and it did not go over very well with her husband. Eventually her husband appeared at the table, our offer was denied but a friendship had begun. That was their introduction to Alex and Caroline Kerr.

According to Dave, until you really got to know him, (Alex) at first he seemed maybe a little rough on the edges; Caroline was like fine lace. They truly complemented each other. Alex took a shine to Dave and appreciated his love for and knowledge of fruit jars. Caroline embraced their children and always included them in bottle club gatherings at the Kerr home. Ever gracious, warm, and loving, Alex and Caroline became a part of Dave’s family!

Another long time collector Tom-



Teenage finds.

my Bruhn corresponded once having noticed their jars wanted ad in the bottle magazine. Tommy was retiring from the hobby and he and his adult son were preparing to sell his collection. Although Tommy was the collector in the family he mentioned how he and his family spent grand times scouring the countryside looking for rare finds. Tommy and his family spent fond summers at a resort in Dave’s area called American Adventure – a camping country club in Leona Valley, Calif., on a local lake. Tommy was honest to a fault and Dave purchased several jars from his list. Tommy called him once saying that he had overlooked a microscopic nick on the lip of a Hemingray jar he’d purchased from his list. Dave has a milk glass Flaccus by which to remember a short but memorable friendship with Tommy.

Dave has a clear Kerr Self Sealing quart jar in the collection that has an interesting provenance. Alex produced it for a local collector after they had a serious discussion about ‘whittle marks.’ While Dave’s club was on a field trip to the old El Monte plant, Alex dem-

onstrated the production of a jar on one of the manufacturing machines to show a club member what a jar might look like when blown in a cold metal mold. The glass came out distorted, swirled and riddled with imperfection. Despite the term whittle mark, Alex was fond of chuckling when people would try and tell him that fruit jars were blown in wooden molds.

Dave and Ester missed the national show this year because they went to see their son in Oklahoma for his birthday. He and his brother both live in Oklahoma, he’s in college and their older son is in the military. It was important because everyone will be moving to the DC area early next year so we felt we needed to go. Otherwise they still go to antiques swap meets on occasion and sometimes find a bargain or two on eBay. Unfortunately they haven’t been to a bottle club meeting in quite some time but do see club members at shows and local swap meets.

Dave has found that occasionally folks on eBay will overlook significant jars either because they are in a hurry, don’t think the jars are all that significant or they’re listed in the wrong category. That’s how he found a pint sized Everlasting Jar (Jar in banner) with a ZINC SCREW TOP, rather than the traditional metal clamp and glass lid for a relative steal and a Bamberger’s Newark for a just a few bucks. He also found a pint Fruit Keeper on “Buy it Now” for \$15. About 15 years ago as early birds to the Las Vegas show they saw a green streaked Kerr Self Sealing mason with a bird swing (arc of glass inside the jar) that the gentleman had



Appealing grouping of SCA jars.

on his table un-priced. He thinks he offered him \$20 and the dealer took it – just pure blind luck but the kind we enjoy hearing about. The best jar Dave ever received from a relative was a half gallon Stone Mason Fruit Jar from his Aunt Lee's cellar that she gave him absolutely for free. He considers that jar a family heirloom. Interestingly enough, Dave is one of the few collectors to tell me he has never broken a jar.

Dave and Esther are still actively collecting today and have more things than their house can hold. What's been fun about the hobby for them, however, is being able to share their things with other collectors, making new friends and being able to visit other homes where jars and other antiques are put on display. He thinks it's amazing the things a person can learn and the people you can meet in this hobby. For instance, getting to know and viewing the collection of Alex and Carolyn Kerr was wonderful for him. Although Dave claims he probably won't be fortunate enough to obtain any of the big ticket items Alex had, he's been fortunate enough to pick up a few good jars over the years and to meet so many interesting and wonderful people.

Dave offers the following practical advice: "Educate yourself ... Information is key as well as talking to other seasoned collectors, borrow their expertise and learn from them. Get a copy of the new *Red Book* (if you don't already have the current one.) There are also fruit jar pages on the Web where you can post wanted and for sale ads



Dave and his dad.



A young glassman.



or search for jars (although belonging to a bottle club would likely be more informative.) If the new collector is near Indiana he/she should also check out the show of the Midwest Antique

Fruit Jar and Bottle Club in Muncie, Indiana. Fruit Jar collectors from all over the country belong to the Indiana club. Usually attendees visit each other's rooms between show hours and a lot of jar talk and swapping goes on there."

"The new collector could also become a member of the Federation. See the Website at www.fohbc.org The Federation also maintains a list of bottle shows the new collector might be able to attend and club meetings he/she might be able to attend. Many jar people attend local shows and are members of local bottle clubs. Join the Fruit Jar Collectors Internet Group <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fruitjars/> (Selling is not allowed on the list itself but there is a section to list jars for sale and your wants.) Steer away from damaged jars and beware of irradiated jars. You can check out *A Primer on Fruit Jars* by Dave Hinson. Internet: www.av.qnet.com/~glassman/info/b&e/primer.htm"

Dave's final thoughts: "Things have changed a lot over the years. While eBay hasn't killed the bottle show it's certainly made an impact and the old time fruit jar list may have gone the way of the dodo bird. Fruit jars are also becoming more scarce at flea markets and bottle shows as items once referred to as 'vintage' or 'collectible' become more of the everyday. Even the ubiquitous Ball Perfect Mason, while still common, is noticeably less present than in days past. Experienced collectors might also do well for the hobby by getting involved in local organizations that promote local history and would benefit from the sharing of knowledge about the hobby. Perhaps returning to the old fashioned county fair with display entries would help promote jars and awareness about their significant role in American history. I would encourage collectors to share the beauty of old jars and their historical importance with those in your local community and thereby encourage younger folks to join the hobby."



Very nice line-up of tough California jars.