

# MANSFIELD AND THE HUNT FOR THE GREATEST BOTTLE EVER

by **Martin Van Zant**

**I**t was a week before the Mansfield show and I wasn't for sure if I was even going. My good buddy Balsam Bill and I had talked several times about going, but just wasn't for sure. The Saturday before the show, Bill had picked up a bottle for me. I went to pick it up and talked to Bill about the show. We decided that I would call Bill Koster right then and there and get us a table. All because you never know what you're going to find, and it very well could be that "greatest bottle ever."

It was early Friday morning and we were off to find some bottles. We decided to take a route where the possibilities of garage sales were available. Then when the time was right we would switch to visit some antique stores, all the while knowing we needed to be at the show by 2 p.m. or close thereafter.

Bill picked up a few items, but no bottles. I also picked up a few items, but again no bottles. We finally made it to Markel, Indiana and found an antique store that opened at 9. We searched for many items and we are not limited to bottles. If you limit yourself you will never find anything. I found a small pharmacy medicine bottle from the northern part of the state. The bottle had four towns on it, and I know the northern collectors will like this bottle. Bill bought an 1849 Almanac for a Fahnstock's Cough Balsam and off we went. We plowed through a few more garage sales and one more antique store before

deciding we gotta go.

Wow, what a long drive! However, it wasn't as long as it was for some of the other people who I ran into. There were people from New York, Tennessee, Florida and even Iowa. I guess my drive was short, comparatively speaking. We pulled up to the gate, received our contracts and name badges and off we went. I was so excited I couldn't wait to get out of the car. I could already see people I knew and wanted to say hello to. The bottle community is a wonderful group of people. If you do the local shows, you run into the same hard core bottle people time and time again. The people at these shows make you want to come back, again and again.

This has to be one of the greatest shows in the Midwest. There are 350 tables and over 200 dealers all looking to buy something good. There are people looking for their collections and people looking for a deal. I tend to look for both. The Friday afternoon set-up went smooth as butter. I found a few goodies but nothing to brag about. I looked for the entire three hours before putting out any of my own bottles. I sold well on Friday. I didn't find anything for my collection, but still had a blast. The Ohio Bottle Club always provides dinner for those attending on Friday night. I love fried chicken, and there was plenty of it. The camaraderie that goes on during the dinner is always superb. If you love talking bottles, these





### An assortment of treasures to find

guys are bottle nuts.

After the dinner, off to the hotel. We ended up at Motel 6, a very nice and small place loaded with bottle collectors. We stayed next to Keith Felemlee and his crew, who have an assortment of great pontiled medicines and Ohio blob beers. These guys were from Zanesville and boy, do they know their bottles. On the other side of us was Marty Troxell who runs the double-head saloon antique store in Cambridge city. He specializes in fruit jars and is well versed in other bottles and general antiques. Between the two we talked bottles all night.

All night I dreamed of finding the ultimate bottle, the one sleeper that nobody noticed. What could it be? Let's first define what the greatest bottle is. Is it the most expensive bottle out there? Is it the cream of the crop for your collection? Is it that one of a kind bottle that you've been hunting for years? How about a bottle you've never even heard of? What is the greatest bottle that you would like to find? There are a number of things this could be.

Saturday morning came bright and early. Off to the races we went, scouring for that ultimate find. Early on the day before a gentleman approached me and said I have a bottle you need to see. I saw the gentleman again on Saturday and he said he would see me later.

I finally found a few keepers and a few sale items and then back to my table. I sold fairly well, but it's



### Labeled Medicines and plenty of go-withs







**M. Van Zant bottle**



**Seems every table had something good to look at**



**Lots of familiar faces to see**

hard to stay at the table when there are so many people to see and talk to.

Finally the man with the bottle I must see approached me. Wrapped up in paper and a plastic bag, I unwrapped this bottle. The bottle looked like a whiskey, deep amber in color. Double banded lip with a beautiful finish. Now here's the kicker, the embossing which went around the shoulder part of the bottle read, "M. VANZANT." (see pictures) WOW, what a bottle! Where did this bottle come from, and where can I get one? How awesome was it to find a bottle with not only my name, but my first initial as well. If anyone out there has one of these bottles please contact me. I was not able to purchase the bottle, yet. The bottle is in his personal collection and I can understand that. So what is the ultimate bottle?

To me the ultimate bottle is the one with my name on it! Happy Hunting, Martin Van Zant