

FOHBC

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



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Sometimes I wonder where and what younger people are doing these days as far as interests? What do they do with their time, how much does it cost and what is the experience? Younger people being defined as anybody younger than me. Best to just leave it at that for right now.

We hear stories that collecting and passion for doing extracurricular things is a dying tradition. We hear some say that costs are too high, folks are too busy, and people are just stuck on their computers and the internet. To some extent, there may be some truth here, but as most of us know, time, culture and society are constantly changing. Our definitions are always changing too. Try telling a bottle collector that their 1930 deco soda is not an antique, or another that their 1960s comic book is not a collectible. Good luck.

Elizabeth and I were in downtown Houston this past weekend (March 30 thru April 1) staying at the Marriott Marquis as we had Rockets basketball tickets on Friday night, Dynamo soccer tickets for Saturday night and Astros opening day baseball tickets for Monday night. Got to do something between epic floods, right? Just seemed easier to stay close and not drive back and forth to the house each day which is in deep renovation. Our studio is also close by, too, which helps. By the way, sports as we know them is big in America and globally too. A lot of people put their time, energy and funds into this area. This seems to be a constant.

While killing time Saturday afternoon, we stumbled onto a massive amount of people attending a convention at the George R. Brown Convention Center in our convention district. Not terribly unusual, but this was just bigger and many of the visitors were costumed. What is going on here, we thought?

Well, it turned out to be the 4-day 2018 Anime Matsuri convention. Each year it is held in Houston and uses five or so core host hotels. Some 25,000 hotel rooms are noted as being available. Just Google the 2019 convention and you can read all about it for past years and next year. Their web site blurb says "*Attendees from 22 countries participated in the 2017 convention, making Anime Matsuri a huge international affair. The diversity of the event is a key factor in attracting an international audience to Houston, which is currently the most diverse city in North America. Anime Matsuri is also the fastest growing convention in North America, reaching over 36,000 unique attendees in 11 years.*" Anime in its most simplified meaning, is a style of hand-drawn and computer animation originating in, and commonly associated with, Japan.

FOHBC board member Matt Lacy commented in a recent email when we were discussing this topic, "*We took Owen (his young bottle-collect-*

ing son) to the Comic-Con in downtown Cleveland last month. It was packed with thousands of people. It was in the largest hall at the Huntington Convention Center (something like 225,000 square feet). Could hardly move inside it was so packed. Comics and Anime are definitely the trendy thing right now for the younger generations!?"

What struck Elizabeth and myself, was the diversity and wide range of ages attending the Anime convention. I have to say I was quite amazed and impressed. From an operational standpoint, it was also something to behold. All those languages, age groups, and sheer size made for incredible wayfinding and placemaking opportunities, actually my field of expertise professionally. Some of the best people-watching ever. Boy, did we have fun, and this just as casual observers.

Quilt Festival Houston is also in our convention district each year and occurs this year from November 8 -11 with classes and previews beginning on November 5. The Houston Chronicle wrote that "*The convention, the largest of its type, drew more than 50,000 visitors from 35 countries from Thursday to Sunday for quilting classes, competitions and the hundreds of booths selling everything from needle minders to quilting machines.*" Elizabeth and I used to go with my mother from Baltimore each year. We all loved it. I especially was fond of the historic Baltimore Album Quilts. If you think this was just for sewing circle ladies, you would be wrong. I saw every generation, male and female from around the world. Quite spectacular.

Another similar convention for the younger generation each year is the San-Diego Comic-Con. They average around 175,000 guests each year. The multi-genre convention was founded as the Golden State Comic Book Convention in 1970 by a group of San Diegans. Massive in scale, this 4-day event occurs in July with regional events occurring around the country.

Of course, there are classic car, toy, computer, electronic, pets and just about every other type of convention out there so what I see is that there is a huge market for destination-driven events. If only we could get 1,000 attendees to one of our conventions!

I suppose my point is, our next generation is out there alive and kicking in so many ways. How do we connect with them and introduce them to our super hobby? We have a great convention this year in Cleveland which will be just spectacular. And our hotel rates we have negotiated are lower than Houston and San Diego, being the work of our show chairs Matt Lacy and Louis Fifer. With many events planned for our FOHBC 2018 Cleveland National, there will be something for every type of bottle collector.

So, stop saying and thinking we are too big, people don't have the money, people don't want to travel, gas is too expensive, the hotel costs too much and all that other stuff. Every convention has day passes or you can attend the entire convention. There is something for everyone. Cleveland will be no exception. Make your plans, make it a vacation as Cleveland is a city with lots to do. Just visit FOHBC.org for all the convention, hotel and attraction information.

Sure, our work is cut out for us, but we must try. If we don't, there will be no next generation and our collections and knowledge will be meaningless. Let's stay positive here and proactive. Growth and learning take time. Change is hard but usually good if well planned.