

FOHBC

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



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So after my last column in the November-December issue of *Bottles and Extras*, I was kind of hoping for a deluge of great suggestions from our fellow members, but sad to say I only received one single solitary email and one phone call. I know there are great ideas and volunteers out there, so don't be shy, please step forward and serve our bottle collecting nation. You may yet have something great to share but if you hold back, we won't prosper.

The email was from Michael Seeliger. Many of you know Michael as a longtime collector of Warner's Bottles and someone who has been in the hobby since at least 1971. Michael had a number of good suggestions, including pointing out that many of our members are somewhat computer challenged, and appreciate the value of the magazine as one of the primary benefits of being an FOHBC member. One important thing Michael pointed out is that with each passing day we are losing collectors that have built up not only their collections, but a vast knowledge base that unless we make sincere efforts to preserve will ultimately be lost to future generations of collectors. He has a great point. Case in point is the Ken Schwartz collection. Ken built what by anyone's standards would be a western whiskey bottle museum over probably 50 years. Ken had an open house once a year in late January on the same weekend as the Anderson Bottle Show. That weekend became a pilgrimage for collectors to the Anderson Show and I remember the first time I laid eyes on the collection it was overwhelming. I knew I would return every year for years to come. When Ken passed away in 2013, no one knew what would happen to the collection. It took almost seven years before the collection came to the market. If not for the efforts by Ralph Hollibaugh and Mike Rouse to sell the collection to what seemed like an endless stream of collectors, who knows what would have happened to it. They did a fantastic job and I think everyone got something from Ken's collection from one dollar on up to many thousands of dollars. But had Steve Abbott not written several articles about Ken and his collection, with photographs, that intact collection would have been lost to the generations to follow. I commend Michael for pointing this out, and Steve for taking the time to write those articles. What many people don't know is that Ken kept binders of information on every single bottle and mold variant through rubbings or drawings for his collection and bottles he did not have. What happened to that information? Was it saved or relinquished to the trash collector? I hope

that valuable resource may still be out there, as this is something that could be preserved via the FOHBC Library with all of Ken's original notes and comments.

The personal phone call came from Jeff Wichmann. Jeff is known to most collectors with his establishment of American Bottle Auctions in Sacramento, California, as well as being voted into the FOHBC Hall of Fame in 2016. With a background in marketing, Jeff Wichmann wanted to reach out and talk about some ideas on marketing the FOHBC and had a myriad of ideas on how to increase the membership base. I invited both Jeff and Michael to consider joining the board of directors of FOHBC and putting some of those ideas to work and both gratuitously stepped up to the plate and accepted the positions of first and second vice presidents, and I personally want to thank them for their efforts and I look forward to working with them both. I think the more involvement we can solicit from our membership the better the future will be for the organization. Anyone interested in providing assistance please reach out to me or any other board member directly. We still have open the conventions director position and the public relations director. Anyone with experience in these areas would be welcomed with open arms. For a description of the duties of each of these open positions, please see the FOHBC website, at fohbc.org and select the FOHBC dropdown and land on federation by-laws for a complete outline.

One of the issues which has been compounded by the Covid-19 era is the diminishing membership of both clubs and individuals due to lack of shows, and club meetings. This has impacted the financial position of the FOHBC in that we have less revenue coming in but a consistent monthly amount of expenses going out. The magazine while being one of our most important assets has a bi-monthly cost to produce of around \$4,800 per issue. The most recent financial report shows that between July and late November we had income from clubs and membership renewals of \$10,000 and expenses which largely consist of the magazine and insurance of \$22,000. Without the return of shows, both local and national, we will continue to have a quarterly deficit to our financial situation. One bright spot has been our investments which have largely performed very well in the capital markets and continue to provide us with the ability to handle these shortfalls on a short term basis. I believe the time has come to look at new ways of doing things and as part of that perhaps a new tiered membership structure should be considered. We could have three tiers of membership. Maybe something like a very basic membership tier, a middle tier that provides a digital subscription, and a Cadillac plan that provides an option of digital magazine or hard copy magazine subscription, full access to the virtual museum as well as annual membership privilege's. For those on a budget they can purchase a membership based on their means and not worry about the cost, especially in the time of Covid. I will direct the board to take up a review of the merits of a tiered membership platform and report back on their findings in a future issue. In closing I hope everyone has a safe, healthy and happy holiday season and a very happy New Year.