

FOHBC

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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Early this afternoon we arrived home from one astounding retreat. Elizabeth, Owen and I traveled to the beautiful state of Georgia to experience life through fun, friends, and festivities. This all began Wednesday morning after our flight landed in the Atlanta airport the night before. We rose early and piled on a shuttle to pick up our rental car. Soon we were off to the Georgia Aquarium which has been christened the largest aquarium in the Western hemisphere. We spent a number of hours visiting galleries, taking pictures, and watching shows. We made one regrettable mistake, however, or at least we thought it regrettable at the time. The dolphin performance had been saved for last. Upon entering the stadium, we quickly shuffled to the far-side to get as close as possible to be immersed in the experience and immersed we were. Who knew that 4 rows back in the splash zone equated to an experience much like that of a tsunami? The aquarium had a great cooling system, so we briskly made our way outside to bask in the Georgia sun. We walked to the Coca-Cola museum for pictures with a statue of John S Pemberton, the man credited with the invention of the sweet bubbly soft drink in 1886. Owen could not resist the urge to have a taste of the soda on the very ground that it had born.

Still a little soggy from the wave of salt water slung upon us, we decided it was time to head down to Augusta to meet up with friends and see what was in store. Upon arrival and check-in, we were lucky to meet Ferdinand and Elizabeth Meyer, along with their granddaughter Bella, at the main entrance. We learned that the first sites to see were the lock and the river walk along the scenic Savannah River. Signs and statues outlining the history and flood markers in the lock walls were incredible to observe. The beauty of the river, landscape, and architecture made it a very pleasant stroll. We walked the river many times with friends the duration of the stay.

The cuisine, culture and cleanliness of Augusta all stood out as makers of a great place to spend some time. There were also some amazing dining options all within steps of the venue. The first night in the city along with the Fifer family, we experienced what a real dessert looks like with slices of specialty cakes that could feed a small army. The staff at the hotel and convention center was some of the best we have ever worked with. What about the rest of the city? Friday night after the banquet, I got to experience the full culture and diversity of Augusta with a great

group of friends, both new and old. We had quite the crew and array of experiences. I will not soon forget the wonderful city and people that make Augusta a very special place. It was apparent that much pride was taken in the history and beauty of the city. It was very clean and well preserved. Augusta is a fascinating place to visit.

I realize that I have not even mentioned the FOHBC 50th anniversary celebration. This is deliberate as a full feature article will be in our upcoming next issue. The other motive for averting the topic is to help our readers understand that these FOHBC events are not simply a bottle show, but rather a life experience. I had the pleasure of meeting so many friends that I had previously gotten to know over the years through social media, email and have even talked with on the phone. I can't even begin to list the number of collectors that I met for the first time in person. The term "southern hospitality" is not a misnomer; we experienced what it means the entire duration of a stay from the incredibly successful Mike and Julie Newman open house, to the Augusta Museum of History, and through the many events at the convention center. The inclusion of television crews and press also made the experience, introducing the entire region to the collecting hobby. This in conjunction with the efforts of the consortium led to an outstanding turn out and constant flow of people the entire duration of the show.

The positively charged city and people led to an extremely successful event overall. One such example was our banquet speaker Justin Guy, assisted by his wife Tonya, who captivated the entire room with his class, knowledge, and passion for Edgefield Pottery. This was immediately followed by the opportunity to honor individuals, clubs, and contributors to the hobby. Mr. Sheldon Baugh was honored with a Lifetime Achievement award for his decades of contributions to the hobby. FOHBC Hall of Fame inductee and consortium chair Bill Baab was decorated with his third President's award for his contributions and the passion he poured into this convention. It was an honor to award all of those that have helped to improve and strengthen this great hobby. Congratulations to all those honored this year!

I only wish that everyone reading this could have attended and experienced the excitement in Augusta. Dealers and buyers alike had nothing but positive things to say. Some dealers reported the best sales in their collecting career. Commendation emails have already started pouring in, and we will likely see many more. We all owe a big thank you to the Augusta team: Ferdinand Meyer, Bill Baab, Mike Newman, Marty Vollmer, Eric Warren, and Walter Smith along with the FOHBC board of officers, volunteers and friends that made this amazing event so successful. Remember, this is more than a bottle show: it is memories, it is friendships, and it is truly unforgettable. We hope to see you at Reno in 2020!

As always, I look forward to serving you!