

Our Anniversary Bottle

It's not champagne, but still sparkles, has fireworks and is more romantic than giving Janet a fruitcake

By Ralph Finch

For some, it may not be the usual way to celebrate one's wedding date, but loving Janet is anything but usual. Each day is special, and unique, so why not celebrate by buying, at an auction in England, a bottle to remind us of our rather unique relationship. (And remember, we first met at a meeting of the Detroit bottle club some fifty years ago.)

Like the scene painted on the bottle — yet unlike the scene — our relationship has fireworks, but no battles, just smooth sailing. And wacky fun. Instead of the bottle, we could have purchased a glass bottle in the shape of a fruitcake!

The green glass bottle, has the following auction description: "AN 18TH CENTURY GREEN GLASS BOTTLE WITH PAINTED NAVAL SCENE AND ARMORIAL depicting a naval scene with French gunships below a painted portrait, armorial on reverse 47 cm high including stopper." (Our Danish friend, Femia Alberts, says the ships hoist Dutch flags.)

The wooden "stopper" is perhaps junk and the bottle without it is 18.5 inches tall. And, obviously, it isn't an 18th-century bottle; but the scene is, perhaps.

To purchase this from Hutchinson Scott Auctioneers in Skipton, England,

RIGHT: Janet took a great photo of our "anniversary bottle." She says "The phone deserves all the credit." I disagree.





LEFT: What's on the reverse of the bottle? Don't know. We asked our friend Willy Van Den Bossche, the man we think knows more about European glass than anyone, and he couldn't help. Then we asked Alan Blakeman, one of England's royalty when it comes to glass, but he admitted, "Afraid the Blakemans were never that high to have a family crest; we had some chickens and ducks, though."

ABOVE: In our display case, the new bottle is third shelf from the bottom and second bottle for the left.

Janet had to get up at 4:30 a.m. to go on the computer and connect with "live-auctioneers" and tap a few more keys. The computer screen replied, "Your bid is entered." Then, "You have been outbid." That went on for a few more keystrokes.

By the time I found my slippers and blue fluffy bathrobe and got to Janet, she told me that it was smooth sailing. "We've got it; go back to bed." Following the captain's order, two minutes later her second mate was asleep in his bunk.

The classy Hutchinson Scott Auctioneers estimated the bottle at £400-600. With the hammer price of £480, the buyer's

premium (24 percent), plus *shipping of £195 (\$266), plus the liveauctioneers fee, plus the credit card fee is ... um, oh, my, journalists make bad mathematicians.

*You want to ship a large piece of glass from England? First, you find a local shipper, then hope you've got one familiar with antiques. Ours did a great job, and the bottle arrived on our porch in a huge box, with the bottle double-boxed. Great job "Pack and Send" of Salford Quays.

Avast, matey: Who is shown in the vignette? I'm still researching. It certainly doesn't represent the person who was the captain at our wedding in Vegas:

an Elvis impersonator. And, appropriate for the bidding, I had proposed to Janet in London.

FYI: *AB&GC* subscriber Eric McGuire commented, "That is about the best painted bottle I have seen. If that painting were on a canvas, with a little scribbled signature, it could go for a million."

And I replied: "I hope that when the story appears, someone will recognize a painting somewhere that was copied by some starving artist on that bottle." I have been searching "European museum painting ship battles."