

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

JOHN O'NEIL

President Federation of
Historical Bottle Collectors

1805 Ralston Avenue,
Belmont, California 94002
650.619.8209
Joneill@risk-strategies.com



I hope all our existing and new members enjoyed our inaugural issue of *Antique Bottle & Glass Collector*. I can tell you that a lot of work went into combining both magazines. You know what they say about sausage making, you don't want to see what goes into it, just the finished product, but believe me when I say it's a monumental feat, and I hope you found it enjoyable. For those of

you who are not aware, this would not happen without the extreme dedication of Ferdinand Meyer, who makes the magazine come to life.

On the news front, I have informed the board of directors that I will not seek re-election due to some new work commitments I have agreed to take on. When I stepped up to take on this role two years ago, little did I realize that I would be steering this ship through some uncharted waters to deal with a once-in-a-generation, life-changing pandemic. Many of us have lost family, friends, and some of our members due to the virus. We lost our ability to conduct our bottle club meetings and our bottle shows both locally and nationally. Candidly, the organization was facing some rocky financial challenges, despite having an experienced treasurer in Jim Berry and a wonderful business manager in Elizabeth Meyer.

I want to take the time to review our combined accomplishments and what I deem to be some of the crucial successes we achieved over the last couple of years. In my mind, the first thing we have done is to address the severe lack of willing participants to volunteer their time in serving on the board. I express my gratitude to those members who have served in the past and those who continue to serve as well as those who have recently joined us. We have the cream of the crop in our current board members, yet we still lack the necessary numbers to fill out the board (more to come on this later).

I think the most important aspect that probably saved our organization from imploding on itself is the merger of the *Antique Bottle & Glass Collector* with *Bottles and Extras*, thanks to the generosity of John Pastor and the willingness of the board to see this through. I was convinced that this merger was necessary, and it gave us a single voice for the hobby. We now have the most excellent stable of writers from both magazines like DeCarlo, Finch, McGuire, Sullivan, and Weiner, to name a few.

With the merger now completed and moving forward, our membership has more than tripled, and for the first time, we surpassed 2,000 members overall with the expectation that more will come

on board as we promote our publication. We are receiving great feedback on many levels. The few negative comments we have received, we addressed and rationally explained our situation and have found that most people are very supportive and thankful for our efforts.

Our financial situation is improving, and while the start-up costs on the increased publication and distribution costs were higher than anticipated, we sold out our magazine advertising space for the first time in many years. The board is also looking at increasing our rates for advertising which have not changed in years. We are placing FOHBC advertising in other journals and periodicals to spread the word about who we are and what we offer. These are nothing short of investments in our organization and our future success.

We have been working on our Auction Price Report for some time now, which compiles all relevant and current auction data from the major antique bottle and glass auction houses. This project is nearing completion under the stewardship of Jeff Wichmann and Ferdinand Meyer, with most of the bottle auction houses providing their data. This project is a real game-changer, and I think our members will be impressed with the final product. I have seen the beta test information, and it is terrific.

The Virtual Museum was an ambitious undertaking from its inception, and it has been nothing short of a stellar success as we add more and more bottles to it every day. Alan DeMaison and Gina (Pellegrini) Ott are wonderful photographers. We recently added Eric McGuire to the imaging team, who will also be photographing collections made available to us for additions to the museum.

Recently, during one of our board calls, we discussed restructuring the FOHBC Board to formulate a smaller board. What's the point of having open board positions that are unlikely ever to be filled? It's time to consider a much smaller board that can be more agile and able to react to the necessary changes in a timely manner. This would require a change to our current by-laws and would need to be approved by our membership at Reno 2022. And, speaking of our national events, I think it is time to return to the "once every four years" format that we had years ago. These are significant events, with a considerable number of logistical issues, requiring years of planning. For sure, there will be no national convention in 2023.

As past FOHBC president Matt Lacy told me several years back when I stepped up to the role of President, "just try and keep the train on the rails." Luckily, I think we not only kept the train on the rails, but we laid some new track, put a whole load of coal in reserve, and are arriving at the station with a potential for great destinations ahead. Thank you for the honor it has been to serve the membership and my fellow board members.

