

# The Turk Comes Home and Brings a Comrade

By Gary Beatty

This is a short story about a very special bottle. What makes a bottle special to someone? Well, there are probably several factors.

For example: the shape, color, history, or perhaps in the way it was obtained, or all the aforementioned. To many it would be their favorite bottle in their collection. Such is the case with my wife, Betty, and our collection. Let me just tell you about it.

My story begins at the Federation of Historical Bottle Clubs Expo hosted by the Southern Region FOHBC members. The Expo was held at Montgomery, Alabama, in 1984. At the time I was serving as the FOHBC treasurer. My wife, Betty, and I took a week's vacation and traveled from Ohio to the show. In fact, there were quite a few Ohio Bottle Club members that attended. To say it was brutally hot would be an understatement. We were not use to that kind of heat and humidity and so we stayed in the hotel or showroom.

The host club put on a great show in a good venue and really put out their Southern Hospitality. I personally thought it was a great show. I got to see quite a few of my southern friends, Bill Baab, Tom Lines and Howard Crowe. All three are true gentlemen and always a joy to talk with and be around.

The very first morning of the show, right at 9 a.m., Betty and I were about third in line and very excited. As we strolled down one of the aisles the usual happened: I knew so many of the dealers that

I stopped for a while and talked. Betty would get tired of standing patiently, give up and strike out on her own. It wasn't very long when she came back looking for me. "Come on, I found something special," she said. I said to her, "Give me a couple minutes." She said to me, "If we lose this bottle I'm going to go to the room!" Well, I had just received my marching orders.

I could hardly keep up with her as we raced down at least two aisles. When I finally got to the table where she was standing, her face was aglow with excitement. Lo and behold it was at the table of a friend.

Tom Lines flashed me a smile and said, "Hi, Gary." Tom had a nice spread on his table and at one end the neatest small display cabinet. Betty is frantically pointing at a beautiful figural bottle inside the case. Tom pulled it out carefully and handed it to me. It was a deep sapphire blue, in the shape of a Turkish gentleman sitting on a large drum.

Betty immediately said, "Isn't it beautiful?" She then said, "Let's get it." I pulled her aside and said, "Let's look around for a while." That went over like a lead balloon. She looked me dead in the eye and firmly, let me repeat, firmly, and said, "Gary, that bottle is going back to Ohio with us, so get your money out." Now, I would never confess to being intimidated by her, but — awe shucks, here goes; I was! And I am so glad I listened to her.

Tom gave us a very fair price and said he was somewhat reluctant to sell it. I asked Tom how he came by the bottle. Tom said he knew this flask and miscellaneous bottle collector from Huntsville, Alabama. He showed Tom a flask that was for sale. Tom noticed the blue Turk on a shelf and asked him, "Hey, what's that?" He ended up purchasing it and brought it along to the Expo.

Let me tell you a little about the Turk. You will see in the photos, he wore a very high turban. He is also wearing Arabian-type balloon pants, with an open vest. You can be sure his outfit was very colorful and very beautiful. His hands are placed on his knees as he gazes straight ahead. He sits on a big sturdy drum.

I believe he is a Turkish soldier. There were many nations whose armies had drummers marching out in front. For example, the Scottish Army even as late as the World War II, the American Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, and the War of 1812, as well as the Union Army during the Civil War. I'm quite sure there were others.

This bottle is truly one of the most beautiful figural you will ever see. So, to my wife, Betty, he is very special and more handsome than any of my bitters.

The bottle is not embossed, but for sure it must have held a special liquor. I say that because one evening Betty and I were watching Turner Classic Movies. The movie was black and white, made in

1934. It was a mystery as I recall. In one scene a couple was standing in the front room of a sumptuous mansion. Just to the side of that room, standing in the shadows, was the killer. Behind him was a bar full of liquor decanters, when I suddenly cried out, "Look, Betty, there's the Turk!"

On the middle shelf was the Turk on the drum and to the left side of him appeared to be a Louisville Ribbed Double Eagle. There were other figures. We got only two glimpses of it and only for a couple of seconds. I wrote the name of the movie down and, sad to say, I misplaced it. I have since had several senior moments trying to recall the name. Maybe someday when I least expect it the note will show up. Hope springs eternal!

In 1988 or so, I had a need to raise some money. (I'm sure that has happened to some of you.) I had to sell some of my best bottles to raise some cash. Two of those bottles have haunted me ever since. The Henry C. Weavers / Mexican Bitters 1866 / Lancaster Ohio, and Betty's Blue Turk.

On March the 11, 2019 the greatest cobalt collection ever assembled came up for auction by Norman C. Heckler & Company. This fabulous collection by Dr. Charles and Jane Aprill was renowned for its depth and beauty. Every specimen was magnificent to say the least. Dr. Charles and his beloved wife Jane displayed at many antique bottle shows over the years. I received the catalog and while perusing it, I came to page 10, and there was the Turk, Item No. 56, and my heart skipped a beat.

I'm not sure who the dealer sold it to, or how it ended up in the Aprill's collection, but there it was. I couldn't wait to bid on him and bring him back to my beloved Betty. I was determined to have the Turk if it meant mortgaging my house, but thank goodness that wasn't necessary.

Now, as for the title of this story, here are the facts. In March of 2019, in John



Pastor's American Glass Gallery Auction No. 22, Item 136 was a Blue Turk on the Drum; however, it had a different applied top. Betty and I not only got our Turk back, but a fellow comrade joined him. I guess you can say we have bookends.

We don't know the provenance on the Turk from John's auction but here is the provenance from the other: Unknown Huntsville, Alabama, flask collector, Tom Lines, Gary Beatty, Dr. Charles and Jane Aprill, and back to Betty and Gary Beatty.

A very special thank you to Dr. Charles and Jane Aprill for taking such good care of the Turk for all those years, and to you, John Pastor, for printing the story of Betty Beatty's favorite bottle.

I close with this favorite saying I coined in the early '70s: "Bottles Are Glass with Class." Now, if only that famous Bitters collector in Ohio would sell me the Weavers back.

Best regards to you all, Gary