

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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As we enter a new year I look back on last year and note some real positives. The Reno Convention was a success, the magazine merger was completed, the Virtual Museum was added to almost daily, and the Auction Price Report went live, free to all FOHBC members as part of their membership benefits. Take advantage of all these membership benefits!

This Fall I had some interesting things happen to me. I'm sure you can relate and perhaps had some of the same experiences. My bottle collection is large and occupies a substantial portion of our house, much to Alice's chagrin at times. Many of our friends visiting our home marvel (shudder!) at the number of things to dust and quickly move on to playing with our dogs and talking about the birds outside our large windows. Seldom are there any questions or comments about the bottles displayed in lighted cases around them. Basically, they show little interest in old bottles beyond the cursory acknowledgment of my interest and the necessity of dusting so many things.

Well, this Fall was different. Alice and I ventured out to Colorado to purchase a Warner collection of a long-time bottle collector who had recently passed away. His heirs had little interest in keeping the collection other than a few items to remember him by. I got to experience the enthusiasm he had for collecting bottles through listening to memories of their father. With a new group of bottles for sale, I welcomed visits from several bottle-collecting friends. Dick Boosted, one of my original bottle-digging buddies, stopped by and we joyfully discussed several bottles in my cases that we had dug together. What a trip down memory lane! And he also enjoyed our lively discussion about several of my bottles he had never seen.

Shortly after, Bill and Kathy Mitchell from Stevens Point and Bill and Kathy Taylor from Wausau joined us at the house. It was a real treat to entertain two of my closest friends who had a keen interest in every bottle on display. Bill Mitchell has been part of my life almost daily for the last 50 years but usually over the phone or in the car traveling together to bottle shows. He was right there with me when I purchased most of these bottles. He remembered them all and carefully took each bottle down and held it while we discussed the story behind each one. We laughed over funny events that happened during the acquisitions...many involving his brother, Jim, who we chided constantly. Once he asked what we had acquired on our drive to Mansfield, and we stated we found an amber Hutch in a garage sale. He begged to see it and we

procrastinated for two days. Finally, he could wait no longer. We showed him an anniversary amber Hutch with gold lettering. His frustration at missing out on this one was palpable.

Bill Taylor has been a friend for just as long but our meetings were interrupted for many years as he moved around for work. About 20 years ago we visited Bill and his wife in Oregon and have since met them at several bottle shows...and Bill is another collector I talk bottles with on the phone almost weekly. Bill and Kathy, with their spectacular bottle collection, recently moved back to Wausau, Wisconsin. This was his first trip to our house and having the two Bills ask questions and discuss my bottles was this bottle collector's dream come true.

Also, this year, an original South Central Wisconsin Bottle Club member from the 70s showed up to renew our friendship. Henry Hecker and his wife, Diane, visited and, again, I was thrilled to discuss and comment about bottles for several hours. Henry is now the FOHBC Midwest Region Director and is jumping into Federation operations with both feet. Henry's main interest is Wisconsin pottery but he has a strong knowledge base of pottery from around the nation. His website, madefromclay.org, is fantastic and well worth visiting; there's a link to it on the FOHBC website.

These recent visits rekindled my desire to collect bottles—not only for their beauty but for the history behind each one. I hope you will take time to visit friends and enjoy seeing and talking about their collections. Every visit is a learning experience and adds to the fun of collecting.

As the weather is turning colder here in the Midwest, I'm spending more time transferring old films to digital format. Seeing myself and bottle friends from 20, 30, 40, and 50 years ago reminds me that we must enjoy every day to the fullest. The digging stories you will read in this issue took me back to my own digging adventures...I was once that young explorer pictured on the front cover!

I hope the holiday season and ringing in the new year brought many good memories to mind. Though we won't be meeting in 2023 for a national show, we will be setting up a board and membership meeting around August 1st to address numerous changes that are in the works, including bylaw revisions, and also taking a look at the progress with the Houston 2024 FOHBC National Convention.

I plan to visit many members of FOHBC in 2023 to renew friendships and learn more about how they are participating in this fascinating hobby.

May 2023 be a great year for you, me, and FOHBC!

