

# Notes regarding the world of antiques and oddness.

*Serious observations by the not-so-serious (but somewhat snoopy) Ralph Finch*

What's new, nuts, nice and interesting? OK, after another morning of scanning the often odd world of collecting, I share this with you...and with my apologies.

So, this morning on my computer Live Auctioneers said I have "60 new auctions" to follow. (Note: That's a low number since it was Christmas week when I started writing this.) And, two days after Christmas, a note from "Jasper52" warned me that "6,700 + lots" were ending that day on the Internet. Also, eBay alerted me that 71 NEW ketchup items were listed that day. I will never catch up.

J.R.R. Tolkien once wrote: "*Not all those who wander are lost*" this does not exclude those of us who spend too much time on the Internet. I glanced through a few of the auction items—as usual, perusing the world in my bathrobe—and passed on most of them, including:

Paintings of "Ukrainian Winter Landscapes!" Sorry, we have no wall space left, and being from Michigan, and it's January, we have our own winter landscapes.

And, since I collect toilet ephemera—primarily hundred-year-old rolls of toilet paper—odd things pop up on my computer. Today there is a chance to buy an "*original toilet seat from the Grand Trunk (R.R.) car ferry, the S.S. Madison (Manitowoc)*." Since I love doing research (and I have a patient wife), I JUST spent a few minutes to find out more on what floats my interest: The S.S. *Madison* was one of six ships built to the same design by the Manitowoc Shipbuilding Co. In 1927, she entered service for the Grand Trunk just before the start of the Great Depression. She was built to replace a ship lost in 1929 in a storm with all hands.

And, the *Madison* has the distinction of "having been christened with a bottle of Wisconsin milk, instead of the traditional champagne." In 1976, the ship was taken out of commission, and in 1989 was scrapped. (And what strange butt-head decided that, of all the parts of a ship available, he'd save the toilet seat?)

Back to toilet items: An auction in Berlin offers an attractive oil painting of a circa 1910 "*female supine nude at morning toilet*." The opening bid was €200 (\$210). I don't know about the naked woman at her morning toilet, but...I passed.

And, sailing on more finch, fluff, foolishness, flotsam, and:

As I have said (too) many times, the collecting work is getting easier, and if I remain out of control, I will be able to push us into the poorhouse without ever getting out of my bathrobe...which I rarely do.

I just got a note from Blackwell Auctions of Clearwater, Florida, which says I can "bid with us in person, through five different on-line venues, absentee or by phone." And despite Blackwell's ease,

there are a few auction houses that still make spending money a challenge!

And shipping? Yep, there are always sad stories. I have a few. We did just get three nice etched Scottish bottles shipped from England with no problem. And...

On "Pinterest," on the Internet, you can obtain instructions on how to learn FIFTY crafts to do with old Mason jars! Oh, wow... now I know what I'm giving friends for next Christmas. (But if I do that, they probably won't be friends.)

Picture this: On Christmas Day, I got this gift from Brad Funk, sent on the Internet. "*For those of you who are relaxing this holiday season and want to re-live last year's bottle show while looking forward to the 2023 show, here's a link to a great video put together by Kraig Moody. This video is 26 minutes long and jam-packed with great footage! Enjoy The 51st Annual Columbus Bottle Show.*" I replied, "*A very smart idea—more clubs should consider doing this. Inexpensive, easy...*"

And almost talking about Christmas day, I've always wondered why an auction house would hold a sale on January 1; aren't people sleeping in (I do...of course at 82 I try to sleep in every day). This year, there was an auction held in New Braunfels, Texas, with some nice signs, old guns, etc., and a model train show right here in my own town, Farmington Hills, Mich., but the show opened at 10 a.m., and on New Year's Day, I can't get my caboose moving that early.

However, I remember...45(?) years ago bidding on a Jan. 1 auction in New England. Seven target balls for a most modest price. Six common ambers and one quilted amber with one word on its center band: \*"*SAGOR*." I had never heard of that ball, and in the 45 years that followed, I never heard of another. \*What would top that? Finding a target ball embossed "*ROSEBUD*?" At least we'd know who made it: Citizen Kane.

In late 2022, the movie prop hourglass used in 1939's *The Wizard of Oz* sold for \$495,000. All I can say is, "*it's about time*."

A 1915 newspaper article—from one of my favorite sites, NewspaperArchive, on how to make old German pfeffernusse cookies. (Just what you leave for Herr Santa?)

Now, if you don't find this stuff(?)...interesting—or odd, get over it because I'm not done:

A chance to bid on an oil painting of "*Possibly Henrietta Pelham-Holes, Duchess of Newcastle*." Sorry. If it's not the genuine babe, I ain't bidding. (And what was the estimate? If you have to ask, you probably can't afford it; I did find that the minimum bid was \$11,754, although I found another painting of the duchess for \$18,639.)

FYI: Henrietta Pelham-Holles was identified as “*Henrietta “Harriet” Pelham-Holles, Duchess of Newcastle upon Tyne and Duchess of Newcastle-under-Lyne, was the wife of British statesman and prime minister Thomas Pelham-Holles, 1st Duke of Newcastle. She was the daughter of Francis Godolphin, 2nd Earl of Godolphin, and Henrietta Churchill, 2nd Duchess of Marlborough.*”

Impressed? When I die, my obit may claim: “*Ralph Finch, short, over-weight, and a bit strange.*” What will yours say?

Also offered today: A framed painted-on-glass ad for “*Toilet Articles / Quality Candy.*” What company thought that those two were a perfect pair? How about a candy named “*Bit-O-Honey Dipper,*” except that term is often used to describe people who drain outhouses.

In case you had planned to bid too late: On Dec. 7, London’s Bonham’s sold a pair of “Meissen red-ground vases from circa 1735 for £831,900 (\*\$1,001,312), setting a new world record for a pair of Meissen vases. The vases more than quadrupled their estimate of £120,000-£180,000. The 219-lot sale made a total of £1,625,280.” (\*For that price, you could buy several U.S. Senators, and I won’t name them—but you know who they are.)

Bonham’s director of U.K. decorative arts said: “*This is an exceptional result for an important and hitherto unrecorded pair of vases. Bottle vases of this kind were made by the Meissen factory exclusively for the Dresden court, and these are the largest size and only known examples with this rare ground color. These qualities, and the fact that these vases were fresh to the market, led to fierce competition in the sale room. The price achieved is also a testament to the taste of one of the greatest collectors of the 20th century, Catalina von Pannwitz (1876-1959), to whom they once belonged.*”

“*Another top lot was a pair of Nymphenburg large circular dishes from the Hofservice, dating to circa 1735-1760, which sold for £164,000, soaring past an estimate of £20,000-£30,000.*” And if you don’t know what a “Nymphenburg” is, you shouldn’t have been bidding.

Alright, since you asked—you did, didn’t you? Wikipedia explains: “*The Nymphenburg Palace is a Baroque palace situated in Munich’s Neuhausen-Nymphenburg district in Bavaria, southern Germany. Combined with the adjacent Nymphenburg Palace Park it constitutes one of the premier royal palaces of Europe. Its frontal width of 632 m even surpasses Versailles Palace.*” (2073 feet.)

And, the Finches passed on the red vases since that shade of red would clash with our walls.

A lot cheaper, selling Dec. 21, was a stupid-looking Roy Lichtenstein image of a gun aimed at the viewer. It sold for \$3,200. I think somebody was robbed (of \$3,200).

Boy, this always burns me! When a glass ball embossed “1880-1893” is offered as a target ball. The eBay seller required an opening bid of \$99.99! I have tried to ignore the lazy (uned-

ucated?) eBayers, but weakened and said to one: “Do simple research!! Check those patent dates on Google. THAT IS NOT A TARGET BALL...it’s part of a Purdy lamp...and very common. And without the wick, the base, the snuffer, etc., cripes! These heavy orbs are often found in dumps, but without the attached parts, have NO VALUE.” Sigh...there goes my blood pressure.

eBay lists every day what it considers my “*interests,*” and today alerted me that there are “*eight Sunoco Oil Bottles, Carrier, Spouts, Caps.*” Hmmm. I don’t recall putting oil bottles on my list, but I’ll check the garage to see if there is room for something new.

And yesterday, listed was a “*collection of 37 antique curtain tie-backs, to include sets and pairs, sulphide, molded glass flowers, wood and metal, some gilt, floral motifs throughout.*” Opening bid: \$10. If you wanted these, it’s curtains for you. The sale is over.

On Jan. 17, there was a “*Peanuts & Snoopy Timed Auction*” in Newark, Ohio. I wonder what Snoopy would think about this. I missed the auction, and I doubt Snoopy would attend if it meant missing lunch. And, it’s a small world, a small doghouse. I’ve been to Newark many times in search of old glass.

How is the antique auction biz in general? Here are a few reports:

In early January, in New York City, Christie’s reported that its global sales reached \$8.4 billion in 2022, which marks the highest annual sales total in art market history. (I painted a picture of a zebra—at least it looks like one I painted 71 years ago when I was 10. I wonder what Christie’s could get for it?)

The massive Leland Little Auctions firm of Hillsborough, N.C., from its 41,000 square foot building, just reported: “In 2022, we held 54 auctions and achieved \$19M.” It claims to have held 357 auctions, selling “Fine Jewelry, Furniture, Silver, Asian Art, Fine Art, Coins, Fine Wine and Modernism.” But, apparently, no Pez dispensers.

Crocker Farm of Sparks, Maryland, noted: “Our 2022 auctions realized over \$4 million in gross sales, including the following important new world auction records: New York City Stoneware - \$264,000; Pennsylvania stoneware - \$144,000; Norton Stoneware / Vermont Stoneware - \$96,000; American Flowerpot - \$78,000; Georgia Stoneware - \$36,000.

And, finally: Even though we are a bit snow-bound—despite that, I always write people that we are “*From the always warm and balmy Detroit area (no humidity today) where all the women are strong, all the men are \*good-looking, and all the children are above average. (\*And some are short),*” the holidays have meant cards and notes from old hobby friends, many of whom we haven’t seen in decades. Yep, the collecting world has created a real family for us.

Have a good every day. Janet got a new knee for Christmas, but she’s always been hard to buy for.

