

Julius Squeezer

By Peter Maas

One of the many joys of collecting is that some bottles in a collection have memories attached to them, like a photo album. This beer bottle reminds me of a story from my early days of collecting. It happened many years ago during my summer break from college. I was living in an apartment on a lake in Wisconsin and was obsessed with scuba diving for bottles.

My collection was proudly displayed on an eight-foot two-by-four supported by two vertical posts. It consisted mostly of blob beers and Hutch soda bottles that I'd found. Standing head and shoulders above the rest was the crown jewel of my collection—a Jacob Obermann quart beer with a “J O B Co” monogram in the slug plate. This was made more appealing by the “WIS G CO MILW” embossed on the bottom. That's Wisconsin Glass Company (1881 to 1886). This attic-mint gem was my first big bottle show purchase.



Julius Squeezer, my pet Boa Constrictor, lived in an aquarium with a screen lid weighted down by books. He'd grown stronger over time and, one day, he decided to have a look around the apartment. It was a new behavior for him. He muscled up the lid, made his escape and found his way into the bottle room. Then he went up a post. What followed was a slow-motion train wreck. He somehow got

onto the shelf and inched his way along, nosing bottles out of his way. Most bounced harmlessly off the carpet. Others were not so lucky. Unfortunately, the prized Obermann sat mid-shelf, directly above the radiator. It was completely shattered.

Julius must have been startled by the sound because he apparently fell off the shelf, saving the rest of the collection. As if remorseful for the atrocity he had committed, Julius went into hiding. When I got home and pieced together what had happened, I was not happy. I searched for him, but he was just gone and didn't turn up for several days. That was probably a good thing. It took years, but I eventually managed to find a replacement for the Obermann in a similar condition.

It's now almost fifty years later and, these days, my collection no longer fits on a two-by-four. As a Wisconsin bottle omnivore, I have many categories of bottles, and the Obermann doesn't even make the top ten in the “quart beers” category. But it's still one of my favorites because that empty bottle is full of memories—of summers at the lake apartment, bottle diving, building a collection, and Julius.

