

Collecting regrets? It's not too late.

Then again, my friend, I'll say it clear: For some of us, it is.

Confessions by Ralph Finch



*"And now the end is near
And so I face the final curtain
My friend, I'll say it clear...
I've lived a life that's full
Regrets, I've had a few..."*

I'm no Frank Sinatra; in fact, I even refuse to sing in the shower, a place, I once read, makes everyone sound good. (It's a lie.)

Decades ago, I even stopped humming along in church, fearing that if there is a god, I might suddenly be struck dead by lightning. (It didn't happen, so—A: there is no god, or, B: if so, indeed, she is very forgiving.)

Does anyone know if Sinatra collected (other than women and money)?

I collect a ton of stuff. The Finch Funhouse is bursting at the seams. (We often paraphrase that famous movie line, we're "gonna need a bigger boat," changing it to: We're gonna need a bigger condo.)

But I'm sure that all of us, collectors or not, as the end is near, we can think back and...OK, after decades of collecting, seeing tens of thousands of items, and even having acquired a lot of it, is there something you'd like to change?

I have many experiences and won't confess to all of them if the statute of limitations has not run out on some. But collecting regrets? I've had a few. Fifty-plus years of collecting and I remember the regrets so well.

There was a time when I was a novice at my first bottle show (at the old armory in Jackson, Michigan, maybe 55 years ago). There were two matching, pontiled and embossed medicines for \$400, more than I could imagine spending (then). I've never seen another like it since. If I ever do, at that price—or ten times more—I'd drop my cane and jump over the table to grab it.

Then there was the time I was at the two-day weekend antiques market on London's Bermondsey Street. You had to take a bus across Tower Bridge and then walk a mile to get to it. One Friday I saw a porcelain image of a young child, and on the reverse an old piece of pasted paper revealing the child's history. Back in my hotel room, I remained captivated; it was an image of the most beautiful child I had ever seen. But I don't collect porcelain, images of children, whatever...Still, I took the bus the next day and walked the mile, but it had been sold.

And ketchup? I'm labeled (lampooned?) as the ketchup king, and in my collection of a ton of ketchup stuff, I have about 25 labeled/embossed ketchup crocks and jugs, and I firmly state that if you spend an unlimited amount of time and money, you'd have a hard time coming even close to matching mine. Yet, when I pass the shelves groaning under all those jugs, I, too, groan and think, "Why, oh why, didn't I raise my bid one more time and get what would have become the best of all my ketchup jugs?"

Dear reader: If you ever stop by and look around, you'll understand that there are few things I really liked that I didn't glom on to. Still, regrets? I've had a few. And if I get another life to live, things will be different. And we will get a bigger condo.

