

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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What a whirlwind the last couple of months have been! The FOHBC Houston 2024 National Antique Bottle and Glass Exposition was beyond fantastic and so much more than anyone expected. This issue includes many highlights of the Expo so I know you will enjoy seeing Gina Pellegrini-Ott's wonderful photos, Ferd's articles, and attendees' feedback. It was truly an experience of a lifetime and Ferd and

his Expo team are to be congratulated for a successful event.

Putting our after-Expo tasks (there are many) on hold, Alice and I took a long-anticipated trip to Alaska at the end of August. Our train trip from Wisconsin to Portland, Oregon and up to Vancouver BC gave us a chance to unwind. We marveled at the varied landscapes, and all the abandoned houses. A train does not take you through the best parts of towns, so we got to see some of the older places. I could not help but think there were lots of bottles to be found in abandoned privies and dumps, and wondered if Tom Askjem was inclined to dig them all.

After two and one-half days on the train, we were ready to board the cruise ship that would take us through the inside passage in Alaska. We remembered the high prices the Alaska pharmacy bottles brought at the Houston 24 Bayou City Sunset Auction and vowed to keep our eyes open for more of them. Nice thought, but we were unsuccessful in finding any. We were constantly reminded of ghost towns that once had 50 or 60 hotels and saloons, just as many brothels and other buildings, and now there was nothing. Privies? Dumps? We never ran across anyone who looked remotely like a bottle collector, so our questions went unanswered. What a treasure awaits an ambitious digger.

Returning to Wisconsin, I made my way to our nearest small town—Evansville, Wisconsin. The main street has about six blocks of 1860-1870 mansions built for barons of the tobacco trade. These sit on very large city blocks with big backyards. Side streets boasted the same. In all, I estimated there are 100-150 houses with privies just waiting to be explored. Oh, to be younger and bolder!

At 75, digging for me would consist of running the backhoe while someone else picked through the dirt. I encourage you younger collectors to pick up your shovels and go for it! Fellow board member, Tom Lines, agrees that there are still more bottles to be found underground than what we now have in our collections.

I must take exception to a comment Jim Hagenbuch made in the

feature article in the September-October AB&GC. Jim sadly declared our hobby "dying." I agree, our members are getting older, and our collections are getting more mature, but there are still some young, enthusiastic people coming to shows. I have talked to many of them in the last few months and their enthusiasm for the hobby is encouraging and contagious.

Although many are interested in Mountain Dew bottles or some bottles from the "Federal Law Forbids the Reuse of this Container" era, it's a small step to viewing ACL bottles with admiration and then getting into older bottles when given the opportunity to dig and find these things for free.

Unfortunately, where I live in Wisconsin, most potential dig sites are fenced off and diggers are not allowed to enter. Contractors are required to take anything they unearth to the local landfill to be used for daily cover, sending historical items back into the earth not to be recovered for a very long time.

And then there are what we call the "smart people." The archaeologists who know how to dig up artifacts and document their findings, often using dental picks and brushes to uncover items rather than backhoes and shovels. The end result is multiple pictures with comments and arrows showing how a piece of a Fletcher's Castoria bottle was found. As we all realize, usually privies and dumps were not laid down in any order and the positions of artifacts is not really of any value. The artifact tells the story.

I often wonder if diggers could join local historical preservation committees to encourage contractors and homeowners to allow them to dig certain sites before the contents are moved to a landfill. This could mean a day's delay in excavation/construction, but it would allow the preservation of historical items. I will leave this to the younger collectors who represent the backbone of our hobby's future.

Now we look toward the Reno 2025 Convention. Richard Siri and Craig Cassetta have laid all the groundwork and, of course, there are lots of details to deal with before August 1, 2025. But mark your calendars now and watch for more information in this issue and on FOHBC.org.

After our well-attended General Membership meeting at Houston 24 where updated bylaws were approved, and a new organization chart unveiled, board members have begun to set up various committees. I encourage you to take a step forward and contribute in whatever way you are able. FOHBC has a lot to offer, but it takes many hands to keep it running smoothly. We have an active, dedicated board but they will need your help to carry out their duties. The Virtual Museum has also started a new fundraising campaign titled "25 from 25 in 25" meaning \$25 (a month) from 25 members in 2025. Ante up and climb on board!

