

# Memphis or Bust! FOHBC 2011 Memphis National Show and Sale

by Ferdinand Meyer V

One of the first things I did when I started collecting bottles in 2002 was to join the Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors (FOHBC). It was always important for me to be part of something much bigger in order to increase my exposure to all of the different levels and areas of our great hobby. A standard by-product of this membership is attending the annual FOHBC National Show and Sale. I suppose I picked this up from stamp collecting, as I was an American Philatelic Society (APS) member and attended local and national shows. Seemed like a 'no brainer' to me. Our hobby is much stronger with organization.

My first national show was the FOHBC Memphis Expo in 2004. I made this an event and took my mother from Baltimore, my wife Elizabeth and my granddaughter, Adriana. We set up as dealers and stayed at the Peabody Hotel so we could see the ducks. If you attended, you may remember that this particular weekend had the odd spring-like, Chamber of Commerce weather in August. While I focused on the show, the rest of the group hit the local tourist attractions, which was fine with me.

## Wednesday & Thursday - Memphis or Bust

Well, it's 2011 and Memphis is again on the radar. This time mother is not doing so well and Adriana is absorbed with her horses with cutting and barrel racing events. We decided to invite our good friends Jerry and Helen Forbes from Carmel, California to come visit us here at Peach Ridge in Houston. We will then drive the 10 or so hours to Memphis with our bottles, light table and video screen. Unfortunately, Jerry and Helen were arriving a day earlier than my return, as I had a business appointment on the east coast that I could not shake. Jerry knew I wanted to be there so I could be with him when he saw my bottle collection. He sent me a humorous picture of him blind-folded looking at bottles that Helen took at their house to allay my fears [Fig 1]. Anyway, we did hook up on Wednesday finally. We ate some good local Mexican food, toured our bottle rooms and set off for Memphis bright and early Thursday morning at 6 a.m. with wives in tow.

Our first stop was in the small town of Livingston, Texas for breakfast at the Courthouse Whistle Stop Café. This café is for locals and is full of antiques. What a neat way to start our trip. I even bought a Sherry Wine Bitters for \$30 that was under the register counter in a bottle display case.



[Fig 1] Jerry Forbes from Carmel, California sent me this humorous picture in advance of his visit to see our collection.

Now we're on the road again headed northeast and we make cell phone contact with collector Brad Francis outside of Fort Smith, Arkansas. We wanted to either meet him or visit his house and see his collection. Brad and I have been trying to meet on his turf for some time and we thought that this might be 'on the way'. After redirecting our GPS and detouring to Brad's, Helen did some quick math and determined that we would not get in to Memphis until midnight or so. This put a damper on the crew so we again reset the GPS for Memphis. We wanted to get there at a reasonable time to check in and unload at the hotel, freshen up and head to dinner. As it turns out, we did get there in 12 or so hours and had a wonderful dinner with Boulder City, Nevada collector Bob Ferraro at Texas de Brazil next to the Peabody Hotel [Fig 2].



[Fig 2] Dinner in Memphis at Texas de Brazil with the Forbes and Nevada collector Bob Ferraro on Thursday night.



[Fig 3] FOHBC Board President, Gene Bradberry runs a tight ship as he presides over the semi-annual Board Meeting bright and early Friday morning. A conference line was set up for Board Members who could not attend the meeting.

### Friday – Board Meetings and the Banquet

The semi-annual FOHBC Board Meeting occurred from 8 a.m. to noon [Fig 3]. As a board member, I wanted to be fresh for the long meeting so I awoke early, worked out and was prepared to give my reports on the FOHBC Web Site, Virtual Museum and other areas. This meeting was well led by our president, Gene Bradberry who runs a tight ship. I was very pleased with the meeting and we accomplished a lot. The board meeting notes are posted on the FOHBC Web Site. The board meeting was followed up with the FOHBC General Membership Meeting. This was also well attended and Gene did a fine job in filling the members in on all the recent developments with the organization. There were many questions and I believe we all left the meeting energized and dedicated to move forward on many initiatives related to making our hobby better and getting new members. The rest of the late afternoon was dedicated to informal get-togethers with all of our friends who were arriving in mass and gathering in the grand lobby areas of the wonderful host Marriott Hotel that is next to the Cook Convention Center where the show was going to occur.

The next big event for the day was the FOHBC banquet that was scheduled for 7:00 that evening [Fig 4]. A cocktail hour preceded the banquet, which was well attended. Elizabeth and I have always enjoyed the banquet, as it is a

nice way to meet and talk with people you may not know like Chuck Bukin (Addison, Texas) and Joyce Kingsley [Fig 5]. It is fun watching the presentations and awards.

The big award for the evening was the induction of Bill Baab in to the FOHBC Hall of Fame. Mike Newman from Augusta, Georgia gave a detailed talk about Bill who has been a collector of antique bottles since 1969. Bill joined the Federation in 1996 and a few years later volunteered to become Southern Region editor when Mary Jane Ferguson was forced to resign because of illness. His goal was to improve the quality of FOHBC club newsletters by urging more historical research. His regional reports were designed to contain news of interest to all bottle collectors, leaving out items of interest only to member clubs. He updated the FOHBC Hall of Fame and Honor Roll lists. He also collected information to be used in sketches of the FOHBC presidents. His suggestion that errors of fact in stories published in *Bottles and Extras* be corrected in the following issue, thus raising the Federation's credibility with members, was adopted. He also designed a stylebook for regional editors, following guidelines in The Associated Press Stylebook. Bill proof-reads all stories and President's Messages carried in *Bottles and Extras*. He proof-reads copy in *Antique Bottle & Glass Collector*, the *National Fishing Lure Collectors Club Gazette*, and Ralph Finch's target ball newsletter *On Target!* In 2009, he inau-



[Fig 4] The FOHBC Banquet occurred Friday evening. Bill Baab was inducted into the FOHBC Hall of Fame, Dick Watson gave a nice presentation on the Charlie Gardner collection and awards were announced for newsletters, articles and other areas.

gured a series of state-by-state bottle collecting histories, which continue today. He resigned as Southern Region editor in mid 2011. Bill was given President's Awards from Ralph Van Brocklin (2004) and John Pastor (2006). Bill and his wife, Bea, self-published three books on Augusta bottles. He retired as outdoor editor and sports writer from The Augusta (Ga.) Chronicle in 2000 after 36 years. He still edits the newspaper's Friday fishing page each week.

Other awards were for club newsletters. Awards were given to the Ohio Bottle Club, First Place, 2011 Newsletter Contest, *The Ohio Swirl*, Phyllis Koch, Editor. The Oklahoma Territory Bottle & Relic Club won Second Place with their *Oklahoma Territory News*, Johnnie Fletcher, Editor. The San Diego Antique Bottle & Collectibles Club won Third Place with *The Bottleneck*, Mike Bryant, Editor.

Montana Bottle Collectors Association won First Place for the 2011 Show Flyer Contest, Eric Weber and Bill Hennes, Designers. Horse Creek Bottle Club of Warrenville, South Carolina won Second Place, Kelly Lynn, Designer. M-T Bottle Collectors Club of De Land, Florida won Third Place, Dwight Pettit Jr, Designer.

Boyd Beccue, Author, won First Place for his 2011 Best True Story '*Digging Germany*', published in *Bottles And Extras*, Nov-Dec 2010, official publication of the FOHBC. Dwight A. Pettit, Jr. won Second Place with 2011 Best True Story, '*History Of The Sebring, Florida Glassworks*' published in the M-T Bottle Club Website Newsletter, April 2010. Johnnie Fletcher won Third Place 2010 Best True Story, '*A Couple of Good Digging Days, or Thanks, Todd, For Leaving*' published in the *Oklahoma Territory News*, October 2010.

Mark Wiseman, Donald Roussin and Kevin Kious won First Place, 2011 Best Researched Story, '*The Breweries of Clinton, Iowa*' published in *Bottles and Extras*, May-June 2011. Mike Bryant won Second Place, 2010 Best Researched Story, '*San Diego's First Coke Dealer*', published in *The Bottleneck* newsletter of The San Diego Antique Bottle Collectors.

Doug Shilson won First Place, Best Fiction Story '*Down On The Farm*' published in *Bottles and Extras*, Nov-Dec 2010. Bobby Vaughn won Second Place, Best Fiction Story '*The Drool Factor*', published in *Bottles and Extras*, Nov-Dec 2010. All in all, these work horses keep our hobby interesting and moving forward. Kudos!

And finally, Gene Bradberry passed out Presidents Awards to Tom Phillips and Ron Pevahouse for their fine work organizing the FOHBC Memphis Bottle Auction and to Ferdinand Meyer V for work relating to the new FOHBC web site.

The highlight of the evening was the lecture and presentation. This year it was really great for us as Dick Watson did a special talk and presentation on the great Charles Gardner and his collection. Charlie Gardner is known as the "Father of Modern Day Bottle Collecting". He was the link between past greats in the hobby such as Stephen Van Rensselaer and George and Helen McKearin. He was a master collector for 45 years, stimulating the hobby's growth to what it has become today - a vibrant collecting field filled with camaraderie and adventures. Dick did a great job reminiscing and telling us stories. Dick is a legend himself, so this was a real treat to hear these stories and look at projected pictures of the Gardner Collection.

#### Saturday - Seminars, The Show Opens and the Auction

Saturday started bright and early with seminars in the second floor hotel meeting rooms. This year's seminars included an ink symposium conducted by John Hinkel, a 2-hour bitters seminar conducted by Ferdinand Meyer V and Sheldon Baugh, odd-closed fruit jars by Dick Watson, German colognes by Carl Sturm and ACL (applied color label) sodas by Randee Kaiser. I spent my two hours in the bitters seminar. We had a great turnout. The first hour highlight was the development of the new FOHBC web site. The second hour was local bitters and Shaker bitters. Sheldon also engaged the audience to introduce themselves and to announce what they collect and why. This is really fun to see people open up. Major collector Don Keating gave a great talk and had the audience on the edge of their seats. Don is a legend and when he opens up, people listen [Fig 6].

Well, finally, noon rolls around and all of the dealers and guests congregate in the show hall for registration and dealer packets [Fig 7]. All morning you are able to take your boxes of bottles and sale items into the hall but you cannot set up. One p.m. is the show start and this is really a wild time because everyone is really anxious to set up and to see other tables first. This year was no exception. Within the first few minutes, it seemed like many bottles changed hands rapidly. I know my table mate Jerry Forbes, picked up a blue unembossed barrel that is a killer. I found a Clarks ONT (Our New Thread) Spool Cotton cabinet that is really neat. I sat it on my table throughout the show as a prop, and it seemed like this cabinet got just as much attention as my bottles. The afternoon was brisk. It seemed like there were a lot of people with the 90 or so early admissions and of course all of the dealers shaking out the hall for bottles [Figs 8 & 9]. We really had fun.



[Fig 5] Chuck Bukin from Addison Texas and Joyce Kingsley strike a pose at the Banquet.



[Fig 6] Don Keating at the Bitters Seminar discussing his collecting history and current interests.



[Fig 7] Show gatekeepers Leanne Peace, Lisa Phillips and Patsy Bradberry greet and track all of the show attendees.



[Fig 8] Wheeling and Dealing at the Forbes, Ferraro and Meyer Tables.



**[Fig 9]** Typical action at a table. Many buyers lined up to look at all of the great bottles and go with that typically show up. You have to move fast because when you go back a second time the item is gone like the Loaf of Bread demijohn bottle I missed!

**[Fig 10]** As usual, my table mate Jerry Forbes, cleans up show after show with great bottle purchases!

The 2011 FOHBC National Auction was held Saturday evening in the hotel ballroom. A cocktail hour preceded the event. Ninety-one lots were offered. Eighty-three lots were offered online prior to the live auction, with eight lots added to the live sale. Lots from a variety of glass categories were represented, including bitters, flasks, medicines, beers, ales, sodas, inks, utilities, jars, mineral waters, poisons, colored drug stores, barbers, candy containers and perfumes. A total of 88 out of the 91 lots were sold, with 67 lots going to successful floor bidders. Two lots did not meet the minimum bid. The Blackwater, Ky., was the only bottle with a reserve, which was not met.

The Morning Call Bitters (Lot #73), the highlight of the sale, brought \$5,460.00 (\$1,460.00 over the high estimate). This bottle was a unique variant dug out of a privy in Memphis just a few months before the show! This example has deep indented panels and arched columned corners, with "Mills Bros. & Co." embossed on one panel. No embossed town name, but this company is listed in the 1866-68 Cincinnati, Ohio directory. It is light amber with a hint of olive in color. Many bottles are found in Memphis from towns upstream along the Mississippi River.

Other highlights from the sale included Lot #61: R.L. Egerton's Stomach Bitters - Louisville, Ky. - square amber: \$1,207.50, Lot #12: F.W. Cook & Co. - Memphis, Tenn. - black glass ale: \$971.25, Lot #2: Brown's Celebrated Indian Herb Bitters (Indian Queen) - amber: \$787.50 and Lot #91: Artesian Mineral Water - Louisville, Ky. - mug base iron pontil olive amber: \$498.75. Prices realized include the 5% buyer's premium. There were over 40 registered bidders, with several spectators. Auction catalogs were available at the show for \$10. Don Ellis provided the auctioneer services. Thank you, Tom Phillips, Ron Pevahouse, June Lowry and Bill Meier for doing such a great job!

### Sunday - The Show and Displays

Sunday came fast as the core day of the show, which seemed well attended. I understand it is tough in the South to get people to do things on Sunday, but it seemed like we had a lot of traffic at our table. Jerry Forbes did phenomenal as usual and picked up a dozen or so great bottles **[Fig 10]**. I also managed to snag the Morning Call Bitters and Egerton's Bitters in the auction along with two great



**[Fig 11]** The Base Embossed Cylinder Whiskeys display by Steve Schingler won the Most Educational award. This was tough this year to pick winners with all of the great displays.

new Bourbon Whiskey Bitters barrels in colors that I do not have.

Later Sunday I finally reviewed and voted on the wonderful displays which included *Tenn-Cola Bottles/Trays/Misc.* by Mike Elling, labeled inks, 'Old Bottles - Nice Labels' by John and Sue Hinkel, *Jelly Jars* by Bob & Phyllis Pahlmann, *Memphis Bottles* by Ed Provine, *Base Embossed Cylinder Whiskeys* by Steve Schingler, *My-Cola Soft Drink* by Dennis Smith and *Patent Labeled Medicines* by Henry Tankersley. After the votes were tallied, the *Base Embossed Cylinder Whiskeys* won Most Educational **[Fig 11]** and the *Patented Labeled Medicines* won Peoples Choice awards.

Sunday evening was wind down for us and a number of us went out for seafood and margaritas. What a great way to end the long weekend. I think we all need to thank many people for this show but in particular, Gene Bradberry and Wayne Lowry. Thanks guys!

Well, now my mind is on the Expo in Reno, Nevada next year. This is simply going to be wild. The Reno club is

hosting the show and Marty Hall and Richard Siri are spearheading the effort. If this is anything like the last Reno National, it is going to be a great show as it was the best show I have ever attended, folks, and this includes the great Baltimore monsters. Stay tuned. Support the FOHBC. See you in Reno!

