

The 2008 York, PA FOHBC National Bottle Expo



In the thirty years I have been collecting antique jars, I've never been to any National Expo. Mine was an experience of local Shows around the Tri-State area of New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. All good in their own right mind you but the kind of show that has at most 100 tables or so and usually the same dealers and people you see at all of the other local shows. Some possibly have a different mix depending on location.

So I was excited to say the least that I was finally going to my first National Expo and I didn't know at the time nor could I be sure what to expect either. I felt like a young collector all over again excited and full of anticipation for something beyond the pale. I didn't sleep hardly a wink either the night before the first day's early opening just thinking about all the sights, sounds and possible goodies I was going to experience.

As a matter of fact, I pretty much was one of the first non-dealers to show up at the Toyota Center at the York fairgrounds and actually the first non-dealer to walk through the doors on Friday. Something I had a habit of doing back in the good old days when there actually was a York Show but at that time it was out in the open fields. Yep, I remember fondly how York was my favorite of all the shows I went to. I would arrive when it was still dark and walk around as people were just getting up or half asleep and scour whatever tables and boxes I was able to. I always came away with something decent from that show so my expectations were high about this one and this time it was No different either.

I can say this much that The York National Expo was IMO Fantastic and "The Best Show" I have ever been to in my entire life. And that's saying something because as I already mentioned, I've been to many local shows over the years. Besides, I had gone to the January 2008 Muncie Show and at the time I thought that show was the Best after being there. Boy was I pleasantly surprised by this Expo.



The York Expo had so many incredible display's of wonderful glass it was simply mind-boggling. Collectors such as Wayne & June Lowry, Phil Alvarez, Randy Hoffman, Jim Sears, Joe Merkel and others displayed the Crème de le crème of Fruit Jars. And I was completely transfixed by the amount and

quality of stuff that was all over the place for sale at over 400 tables. To say the place was huge is an understatement.



And if there is one thing I learned at York after digesting the wonderful displays of jars is that my collection was tantamount to that of a Novice and I am not kidding. After seeing what the Best actually have in their collections all I can say is my collection is full of plain old ordinary run of the mill jars. I guess I'll just have to survive bottom feeding but oh what a pleasure it was to see the Best of the Best up close and personal. Yet I did have some luck going for me while I was there because I didn't walk away empty handed. Nope, not by a long shot. I managed to pick up some really good stuff and some good enough to impress even the Big Boys. What's the saying, "being in the right place at the right time?"

On Friday afternoon just after walking through the doors as we were allowed to enter during early entry, I made a bee-line right and saw Don Burkett putting out jars. My buddy Michael was right behind me as usual. Now, for those who didn't go or don't understand how it works, the first day when you are let in, the tables are not even populated with items yet. Dealers are frantically putting out stuff while you're walking or shall I say running around looking and trying to make the best judgment call as far as what and where relates to you.



Anyway, I asked Don Burkett as he was bent over pulling jars out of boxes if he had something that a Ball Collector such as me would be interested in. Now mind you, Michael and others are already holding jars in their hands that I lost out on and other collectors are all over the place too. So he took a quick look over at me and said "yes Bruce I believe I do, come back in ten minutes and we'll discuss it." So I went around looking for other items all the while my mind was running wild with ball jar fever wondering what in the world he could possibly have. Those ten minutes seemed like an eternity but low and behold, when I saw what he in fact did have I was shocked to say the least. It was a beautiful solid pour 3L Ball MASON pint and a find of a life time for me and any other collector for that matter.



There were so many people crowding around looking over my shoulder it wasn't funny. I held on to that solid piece of glass (which felt like 5 lbs.) for dear life because all of them were just waiting for me to put it down. It's amazing how people can sniff this stuff out but if I had let go of it then it would now be in someone else's collection for sure. I was told by many long time serious collectors including Ron Ashby, Russ Crupe, Jon Vanderschouw and others that they would have bought it in a heartbeat. Why pray tell? Because it is Rare and I can't emphasize that word any stronger!

It's a good thing I went to York with lots cash because the bottom line here is "money talks and nobody walks." We all love to find things at bargain prices but the truth is if you want something really good then most of the time you have to Anti-up or walk away. I'd like to believe that somehow I had Ball Karma working for me while I was there at the Expo but the simple fact that there were so many tables from so many good dealers from all over the country with so much good stuff, it would have been hard for anyone to go away empty handed.

I won't soon forget my short time there. The personal talk I had with Doug Leybourne over breakfast at the hotel, the long conversation I had with Greg Spurgeon, the many friends and long time acquaintances I met and hung out with, the wonderful one-of-a-kind jars I had the privilege to see for the first time and photograph and the very special items I managed to bring home. To me, the York Expo was like the opening night of the summer Olympics. It was simply a grand time beyond my expectations and one experience I won't soon forget.



Bruce Wayne Schank

