



In this issue, Random Shots will take an in-depth look at a shot glass collector and his extensive collection of Louisville and other Kentucky glasses.

Paul Van Vactor gives some insights about the origin and growth of his collection. A long time collector and antique dealer, he's a native of, and still resides in, Louisville. He and I both would like to thank Robin Preston for the painstaking photography of the glasses shown here. This issue contains only a

sampling of Paul's collection.

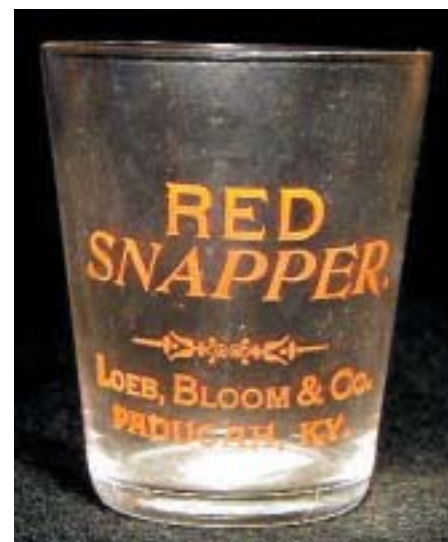
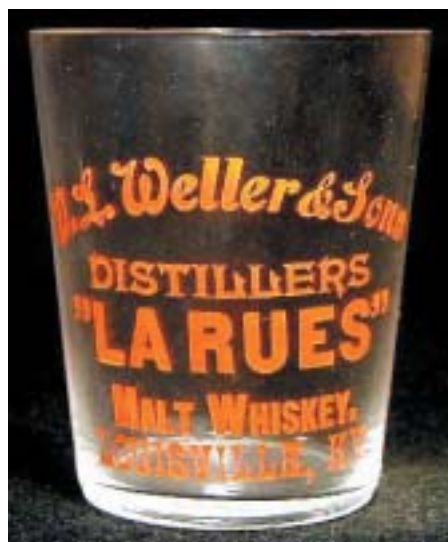
The entire collection can be viewed in the database at pre-pro.com. By the way, Paul is one of the few dealers left who still do periodical sales lists of their glasses and bottles. It's a nice, leisurely way to augment a collection.

Q: Paul, what first got you interested in collecting pre-pro shot glasses?

A: Over thirty years ago, I subscribed to a magazine called WESTERN COLLEC-

TOR. I remember the issue arrived on Saturday and I read this story about shot glasses written by Bill Gaylord.

Immediately, I drove to downtown Louisville to hit some antique shops and found my first shot glasses - one was an "Old Drennon" from Louisville and a "Lick Run Sour Mash" from Cincinnati - several others. That was the start. I saw Bill Gaylord at an auction in Sacramento about fifteen years ago and I thanked him for writing that series of shot glass articles.





Q: I'm curious why you limited your collecting field to Louisville and Kentucky shot glasses?

A: My interest in collecting has always been in the local area. Being a native of Louisville, the distilleries in Louisville, Bardstown and Western Kentucky have always been fascinating. One could build a collection of a thousand or more shot glasses with all the brands and variations.

Q: Just how large is your collection of shot glasses?

A: My collection is rather small for the availability. Currently, I have about 156 glasses. I pick up and eliminate a few here and there based on how common a glass might be.

Q: Do you collect other whiskey related material aside from glasses?

A: Distilleries were prolific advertisers - lots of give-away material - and I try to collect a little bit of everything. I have a few advertising signs, trays, tip trays. I have a collection of enamel and color enamel back bar bottles, decanters, sales-



man sample back bar bottles, a few nice amber whiskey bottles and, of course, whiskey advertising jugs of most sizes.

Some of the fun things, however, are the "smalls" that distillers gave away - the turn of the century watch fobs, match safes, pocket mirrors, advertising cards, celluloid notebooks - just all sorts of small things that would hold advertising.

I also have a small collection of quadruple plated water pitchers and teapots.

Q: How do you display your shot glass and bottle collection?

A: Well, at the moment, that's a problem. We just moved into a new home and most everything is packed up in boxes.

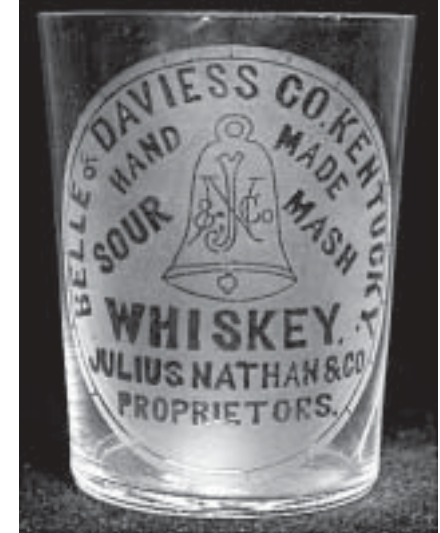
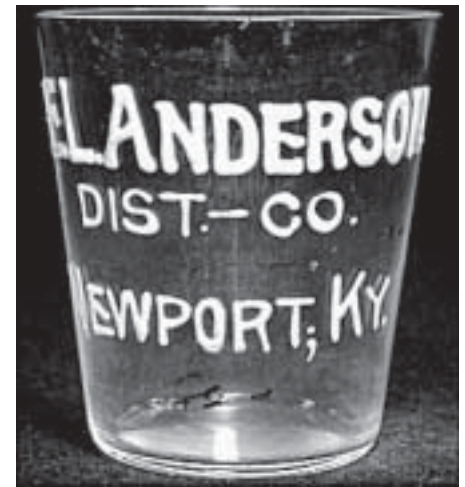
However, I think if I had an old wooden back bar, I could display the glasses and bottles around the bar. So far, we've not had any luck finding one short enough for our basement, which is only eight and a half feet high.

Q: Without revealing any secrets, what are your chief sources?

A: The secret is out, I'm afraid. The best source is antique bottle shows. I have always traveled and antique shops, shows and malls are still a pretty good source. eBay is good but bring your checkbook - the good glasses can go pretty high in price. People know I buy shot glasses and I do have an opportunity from time to time to buy a collection.

Q: What references do you use to check the availability and value of glasses?

A: I have three books on shot glasses by



Barbara Edmonson. Barbara was kind enough to use some of my glasses in all of her books, so I can draw on that experience of working with Barb, I think other collectors hold a wealth of knowledge and experience and I've tried over the years to keep in touch. A new source is pre-pro.com - this will be the source of the future where you have internet databases devoted to collecting shot glasses.

Q: In your collection, what are your favorite glasses?

A: I like the "Harper" with the picture of a lady playing the harp. Also, I like the "Green River, Owensboro, Ky." glass with the famous Green River logo and the "Buchanan Hand Made Sour Mash" with the glass covered label in the bottom. Other favorites are glasses that described a distilling process - "fire copper", "hand made sour mash" and, of course, anything with "bourbon" in the advertising. Also, anything from Paducah, Maysville and Bardstown. They are highly prized in the local area and are among my favorites.

Q: Tell us about your biggest coup in picking up a special shot glass.

A: I've been collecting for so long, I don't know if I remember: but I think what stands out is buying a couple of large collections over the years, taking out the few that I needed and retailing the balance of the collection.

I would not call buying a collection - someone's life work - a coup, but it is something special.

Q: How about "the one that got away"?

A: In my case, most of them got away.

In my thirty years, I have sold about six thousand or more shot glasses. I have been a dealer first and a collector second.

I think I've hung on to most of the scarce Kentucky glasses but I am amazed by how many I have not seen - they are only pictures in a book or on a website. I still do a yearly sales list on pre-pro shot glasses, back bar bottles, etc. The next list is Nov/Dec 2003. The list is free. Email me at pvanvactor@aol.com for a copy.

Q: What's that one special glass you've been hunting for?

A: There's a story about a local collector (who's now deceased). He told me one day that the cleaning lady broke his "Krisrinkle" shot glass. He was pretty broken up too - it must be some glass, but I've never seen or heard of one. I'd sure like to find that shot glass.

Q: To wrap it up, what advice would you offer to young collectors just starting out?.

A: It's a lot different today than when I started. Today, you actually need money - sometimes lots of it. I would say to pick up those shot glasses you see that are in near excellent condition and reasonably priced. Get a copy of the latest Edmonson book, HISTORIC SHOT GLASSES: THE PRE-PROHIBITION ERA and learn the difference between some of the hard to find glasses and other glasses that you might see quite often. Try to buy high quality glasses with sharp lettering, graphics, etc.



As a postscript, and with apologies to Paul, I'm including a picture of the Rheinstrom Bros.' Krisrinkle glass.

It's a Cincinnati glass, and I had one in my collection but sold it off a few years back.

The glass is tricolored enamel lettered with gold curlicues above and below the brand name.

Originally a bold red, white and blue, the copy I had was a washed out pastel version.

Hope it didn't go to someone with a cleaning lady.

Howard Currier is an avid collector of shot glasses and breweriana from Boston, Denver and San Francisco. Visit him at the his website: <http://12.253.179.109> or email him at [hecurrier@attbi.com](mailto:hecurrier@attbi.com).

