



Random Shots

with Howard Currier



Continuing with my series of regional shot glass collections, this column deals with the collection of Ed Sipos from Scottsdale, Arizona. Shot glasses are actually only the tip of the Sipos iceberg.

Ed is primarily an Arizona collector...a member of ABA and has been editor of the A-1 Chapter club newsletter of the BCCA since 1997. So, while this column is a slight departure from the "shot glass only format" of previous ones, you'll find a couple of pre-pro etched Tucson and Phoenix glasses mixed in among some spectacular mini-mugs, match strikers & other smalls.

For the second issue in a row, we're featuring a foreign born collector. Ed is originally from Brazil but has lived in Scottsdale most of his life, where he runs his own jewelry shop and brings a goldsmith's eye to the art of display of both jewelry and collectibles. You'll find him lurking in the eBay shadows under "azsaloon"

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



A: I'm not sure exactly. I've collected breweriana for some time so I guess it stemmed from that. I had a few pre pro etched beer glasses in my collection when I first took notice of the pre pro whiskeys. The etched whiskeys were very similar and some had very nice graphics. Plus at the time, they were cheaper and took up less space on the shelf.

Q: Do you recall what the first glass you actually purchased was?

A: I purchased two glasses from a little

antique store in Phoenix. The first was an Erminie Rye from Traitel & Rice and the second was a Puritan Grape Juice glass from Paw Paw, Michigan. I think they cost a couple of dollars each. I still have both in my collection.

Q: How large is your collection overall?

A: I have approximately 65 glasses right now. I've limited my collection to one display case to keep improving on quality. As I get better glasses, I may let go of one. I've reached the point, however, that the ones I own right now, I'm not sure I want to let go of yet, so I'll need to add another display case. I like to display my shot glasses in old hotel key cabinets that have been converted into display cases. I've been lucky and found two with the original glass doors. I have three right now. One for shot glasses, one for advertising openers, and one for my mini mug collection.

Q: So, you do collect other whiskey "smalls" aside from glasses?





A: Yes. I have a very broad range of interests. I found that there are a lot of really neat advertising items beyond just shot glasses. I look for match safes, pocket mirrors, celluloid items, mini advertising dice holder tins, and anything old and unusual. I also collect early Arizona advertising items. Mini mugs however have been a big focus of mine lately. I have approximately 60 of those in my collection right now.

Q: One of the aspects of your collecting that's always fascinated me is your focus on "display." Where do you find all these authentic old western cases and cabinets?

A: I find them mostly in antique stores or antique shows. I have picked up a

couple small ones through Ebay. That's pretty rare, however, since prices tend to be much higher, especially those with etched advertising on them. I've always been fascinated with the early display cases. They can add a whole new dimension to a display.

Q: Another thing that sets you apart from many other collectors is the amount of participation and depth of knowledge that your wife, Alice, shows. Quite a few of us have to battle a spouse for space, time, resources, etc. Has this cooperative effort been there from the start?

A: Yes. Although she doesn't specifically collect anything in particular, Alice has always shown interest and

wanted to participate in my hobby. The best part is that she loves to travel and hunt for antiques and collectibles. She's found some real good items in stores or shows more than once. She also has a knack to keep me in balance when I want to dig deeper in my pockets for a good item.

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

A: I don't think I have any real secrets. When lucky, I find shot glasses at antique stores and antique shows. In the beginning, I used to re-sell glasses more than I do today, but now I'm also pickier in what I acquire. Ebay has been the biggest factor in building my collection





overall. Believe it or not, my shot glass collection consisted of less than eight glasses prior to my joining Ebay in 1998. Only after I joined did I truly expand my collection and knowledge about glasses. Arizona is not a hotbed for finding pre prohibition shot glasses so I mainly depend on the internet to find those good glasses. As a matter of fact, I have yet to meet another collector in Arizona specializing in pre pro shots. I know many collectors who believe Ebay has been a bad thing for this hobby. But in many respects, it has made available many unknown glasses to collectors.

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

A: My first two sources, and what sparked my early interest in whiskey shots, were Barbara Edmonson's two books: *Old Advertising Spirit Glasses* and *Historic Shot Glasses*. Both books are highly recommended to the novice and advanced collector. Ebay is also a great source to learn about glasses. The more time you spend searching for glasses, the more you learn which are common and which are more scarce or desirable. What has become, in my opinion, one of the best sources to learn about shot glasses however, is Robin Preston's pre-pro.com





shot glass website. He has done a tremendous service to this hobby by building that web site. Then again Howard, your efforts should also be recognized in aiding his website. The neat thing about Robin's website, is that he encourages everyone to participate. The database section of the website is an excellent source to get familiar with what's out there.

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

A: I'm not sure if I have a specific favorite, but if I had to pick the top three shot glasses, I would say the enameled Pacific Club from Washington, the L. Fuldner & Co. of Milwaukee, and the Adam Mickiewicz of Chicago.

I just picked up the enameled Jed Clayton and an etched G.A.R./Metzger glass a while back. Those will probably get bumped up to my favorites. My two all time favorite glasses in my collection however, happen to be two glasses from Arizona. One is an A.F.C. Kirchoff from Phoenix, and the other a Bail-Heinemann from Tucson. They are actually etched beer glasses and not shot glasses due to their size.

The Kirchoff and Heinemann are the only two Pre Prohibition etched glasses known from Arizona at this time. I say it that way because you never know when a new unknown glass may pop up. It makes me wonder if the Melczer Brothers in Phoenix ever put out an etched glass. If they did, I'd love to see it.

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

A: Regarding shot glasses, I'm not sure I have a real good story to tell yet. I like to think that my big find is still to come. When I find that trunk full of label under glass shots, I'll let you know.

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

A: Could I say...most of the good ones I get outbid from on Ebay? But then again, that would be much more than just one. I've let some real good ones get away from me on Ebay because I wasn't willing to step up to the plate and pay the big bucks some of these glasses command.

I guess we all have to draw a line somewhere.

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

A: No particular glass. I search for glasses mainly from the western half of the United States, but if they look good and the graphics are nice, I won't discriminate.

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

A: I think young collectors should focus on acquiring good condition glasses with nice graphics and few flaws. One day we'll all have to let go of our collections, so if you stick with more desirable glasses in clean condition, you'll make it much easier on yourself later on.

If you have a certain region that

appeals to you, or type of glass you like, that can be a good start also.

It is very important to get informed before spending too much money on any glass. There's a number of different reference guides (most of which I've already mentioned) that can help a novice learn what glasses are common and which are harder to find. Patience and common sense are key elements when buying glasses especially on Ebay.

One of the most rewarding things to remember however is making friends. That'll always pay you dividends in the end.

Howard Currier is an avid collector of shot glasses and breweriana from Boston, Denver and San Francisco. He can be reached by email: hecurrier@attbi.com.

