

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors Serving the National Capital

July-September 2004

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Meeting September 28

Please join us at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Bethesda at 8 P.M. for our September club meeting. Bring along your recent acquisitions for our "summer finds" program.



Thank you to everyone who contributed to our June 27th show. We had excellent participation by our club members as well as good support from the Baltimore Antique Bottle Club. The new location proved convenient and economical. Now, all we need is more customers.

We are already starting to plan for the 2005 show. We hope to keep the same weekend and location but bring in many more people. The Saratoga, New York show will move to an earlier weekend next year, which means we will not conflict with them. We are also looking for ways to expand publicity. Please see Jim Sears (searsjim@usa.net) with any suggestions.

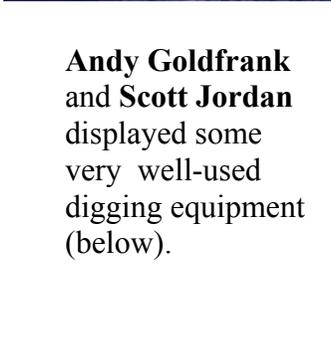
By the time of our next show we hope to have a new edition of *Washington, DC Area Bottles and Related Items*. Richard Lilienthal (dcbottles@yahoo.com) is organizing the update, but contributions will needed from many club members.

Pictures from our June 27 Show



Matt Knapp displayed commercial perfume bottles from his wife Dominica's collection (left).

Jack Sullivan showed hillbilly whiskey jugs (below).



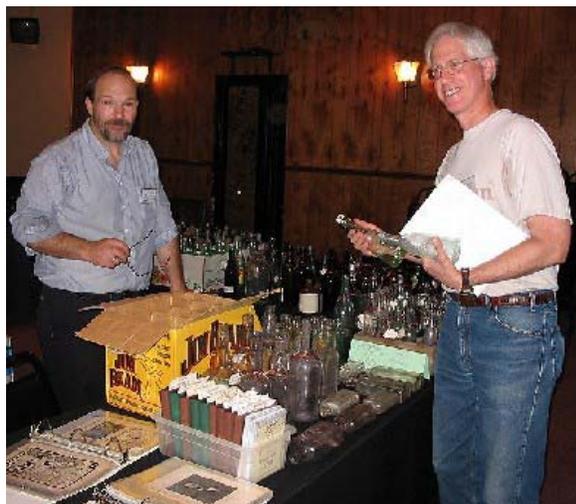
Andy Goldfrank and **Scott Jordan** displayed some very well-used digging equipment (below).





Indian Spring and Mineral Water bottles by **Jack Sullivan** (above)
Richard Lilienthal bargains with **Phil Godwin** (left)

Joan Goldfrank and **Al Miller** greet the public



Steve Charing offers a mix of bottles and go-withs.



Jim Sears offers a jar to customer **Perry Driver**.

A Different Kind of Father's Day Gift

By Al Miller Jr.

Since my early teens, my dad and I have been very close. We worked on cars, attended car shows, and frequently participated in organized drag racing at numerous California tracks for over a decade. We built, maintained, and drove several of the family cars; we'd win a few, lose a few, but always had fun. We trolled wrecking yards, swap meets, and the classifieds for "buried treasures" – parts we needed, might someday need, or might know someone who needed. Dad and I relished the thrill of the hunt; we could spend the better part of a Saturday roaming a huge auto wrecking lot and leave with one or two small items, perfectly satisfied with our "success" for the day.

Dad was the Best Man at my wedding – I had no shortage of good friends, but it seemed only fitting that my best friend be my Best Man. My 2001 move from California to the east coast was a new and sometimes challenging experience for both of us. It presented us with significantly fewer opportunities to get together and pursue our shared hobby of cars and speed. Dad continued to race, but would be the first to admit he'd rather we were both there - me driving and him as pit crew. During my visits back to the west coast with my own family in tow, rarely are we able to fit in a trip to the race track or the auto wreckers – there are so many family things to do and such little time as it is.

But every change brings opportunity as well. After moving east, I became more fascinated with my family's history. In the search for a keepsake from my Great-Grandfather's turn-of-the-century Colorado brewery, I discovered bottle collecting in general and bottle *digging* in particular. Thanks to the tutelage and generosity of Potomac Bottle Collectors members and avid diggers like Peter and Andy, I was introduced to the wonders of dump- and privy-digging. A new hobby was born!

What's the connection? This Father's Day, I was fortunate to have my parents out for a 2-week visit to Virginia. While we had many plans to see the sights and spend time together with my wife and daughter, I was also eager to introduce Dad to my new passion of digging through old dirt in search of long-buried glass "treasures". I called Peter during the week and we arranged to meet on Sunday morning.

We didn't have any new "leads" on digging prospects, so we planned to head into Alexandria to hit the same construction site we'd been working over during the past six months. Peter and Andy had been watching the site long before construction

began, and after the requisite local archaeology survey had been completed and the heavy equipment moved in, the opportunity to salvage a few local bottles finally arrived in mid-winter. The construction crew made out pretty well, picking up tons of bottles as they excavated the site. Most of the hard-core bottle digging took place on the weekends, as the construction crew didn't want diggers in the site when they were moving heavy machinery.

At least two privies, significant dump layers, and long-since covered over stream banks on this site, distributed over two city blocks, had already yielded a wide range of goodies to the shovels and picks of numerous club members and other diggers. Notable items over the six-month period included everything from 1915-era machine-made Robert Portner Alexandria beers to several colored iron-pontiled squat sodas (including a cobalt blue blob embossed Dyottville Glass Works). Also among the haul were more Portner examples (clear machine-made and blown beers); local pharmacies (*ES Leadbeater & Sons Alexandria Druggists, Warfield Druggist Alexandria, Lunt & Allan Alexandria*); a white with Albany slip shoulder jug (stenciled in blue *John Ahern Fine Liquors Alexandria Virginia*); an embossed *EJ Miller Alexandria* crock; about a dozen hutch sodas (including an *FH Finley & Son Washington DC* and three different varieties of *Jas McCuen Alexandria*); a *Jos Tharp & Sons Washington, DC* half-pint amber strap-sided flask; a clear *Fairfax & Co. Alexandria* whiskey; amber Washington DC and Roanoke Cokes; not to mention an 1859 Indian head penny, horseshoes, marbles, and various other artifacts.

After considerable success early on, we'd abandoned the northern block months ago, as the contractor had long since finished there and the previously dig-worthy areas were now filled in or covered with new basement foundations. For the past several months, the southern block had continued to evolve as new sections were excavated. In turn, each time we'd come out there was *something* new to explore. Over the course of 5 or 6 visits, this part of the site had treated us well and occasionally skunked us, but always held promise. "If they'd only dig that corner over there...", we lamented. We knew that eventual removal of at least some of the soil in the southwest quarter of the lot was inevitable. We also knew from the maps that such activity may reveal some potential privy locations. However, we'd made trip after trip to the site and begun to wonder if they were ever going to dig this particular part of it.

Sunday morning brought warm sunlight and a light breeze. During the ride into town Dad listened in as Peter and I chattered over the recent digging exploits of Andy and others, the club's upcoming

bottle show, and our prospects for success on this outing. Peter mentioned he'd considered cancelling on us due to a busy day and late night on Saturday. As we approached the construction site we told Dad about the area's history and our digging adventures over the past few months. When we pulled up for our traditional "drive-by" scouting pass, Peter and I both nearly jumped out of our seats – the whole southwest quadrant of the lot had been excavated to 4-6 feet below grade! Visible dark layers and blotches were clearly apparent along several of the walls of the new hole. "Oh my...", Peter said. "Look at that, oh man!", I exclaimed. Peter turned to my dad and explained our obvious excitement with a smile, "You're hearing two diggers talking now..."

We quickly parked the car and threw on our digging clothes. We immediately descended into the newly excavated area, about 50 feet wide by 150 feet long, and started scratching around in a fairly obvious but admittedly thin trash layer. Shards were everywhere! We soon began uncovering a mix of machine-made and blown bottles, most of them broken but not badly. We milled about a bit and settled into areas along the east wall of the excavation. Tunneling away, being careful to periodically remove the dangerous overhang, more (and intact!) bottles began virtually pouring out. Dad watched as Peter carefully scratched away to remove the dirt from the edges of a barely visible bottle heel. Soon he was duplicating the process himself; after

finding several promising but ultimately broken items, Dad found his first intact bottle – a *Rumford*. Ironically, my first bottles on my first dig 2 years ago were a *Rumford* and an *OK Davis*.



Three blown crown tops: amber Robert Portner, red-amber Red Raven, and olive unembossed



Blown aqua straight-sided Norfolk Coca-Cola (left)



Blown aqua Scotch Hop Ale Registered Phila (below)

We all lost track of time and immersed ourselves in the thrill of the hunt. The bottles literally piled up around us – many unembossed and other common machine-made examples (*Portner, Rumford, Davis, Listerine, Heinz, Worcestershire*), but many "keepers" as well, all dating from the 1890s to 1910s. Dad was pulling out a wide range of bottles as if he'd been doing this for years. We found several blown *Robert Portner Alexandria* amber

crown-top beers, blown aqua crown sodas and beers (straight-sided *Norfolk Coke*, script *Scotch Hop Ale Philadelphia*), an aqua *FW Brawner & Co Alexandria* mug-base hutch, two different sizes of *William P Taylor Alexandria* (local drugstore), a clear *Meade and Barker Carbolic Mouthwash, Richmond, Virginia*, a small amber *Bell-Ans* medicine, several small inks (*Bixby* and *Carter*), and countless common embossed and slick-sided small, medium, and large bottles. At some point we finally decide it was time to head home. We made sure to fill in our holes, using the dirt we'd pushed aside and many of the common and broken bottles as filler. We gathered our tools and the two buckets full of "treasures" and hit the road for home, quite satisfied

with our successful outing. After arriving at my house, we divided up the day's haul, snapped some pictures, and Peter headed home, thankful that he hadn't passed up the opportunity to dig that day.



Al Jr., Al Sr., and Peter with the "keepers."

My Dad doesn't wear ties, and he doesn't need any more "World's Greatest Dad" t-shirts, baseball caps, or coffee mugs. This Father's Day, my gift to him was a great time out in the sun, searching for buried treasure with his kid. I think he might be hooked...

Al Sr. with some of the day's finds



Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

**OCTOBER 2
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA**
Richmond Area Bottle Collectors Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 3 PM early buyers 7:30 AM), at the Showplace Annex, 3002 Mechanicsville Turnpike, Richmond, VA. Info: **ED FAULKNER**, 4718 Kylloe Lane, Moseley, VA 23120, PH: (804) 739-2951, email: faulkner@antiquebottles.com or **MARVIN**



CROKER, PH: (804) 275-1101, email: marvincroker@comcast.net

OCTOBER 10 BEDFORD, PENNSYLVANIA
Bedford County Antique Bottle Club 27th Annual Antiques and Bottle Show & Sale. (9 AM to 1 PM, early buyers 7 AM). at the Bedford County Fairgrounds, 4-H Building, Bedford, PA. Info: **LEO McKENZIE**, PH: (814) 623-8019 or **CHARLES HAZLETT**, PH: (814) 695-0128

NOVEMBER 7 ELKTON, MARYLAND
Tri-State Bottle Collectors and Diggers Club 32nd Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 3 PM), at the Singlerly Fire all, Routes 279 & 213, Elkton, MD. Info: **DAVE BROWN**, PH: (302) 738-9960.

NOVEMBER 21 GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA
3rd annual Greensboro Antique Bottle, Insulator & Collectibles Show & Sale (9 AM to 3 PM early buyers 7:30 AM), at the Farmer's Curb Market, 501 Yanceyville St, Greensboro, NC. Info: **Reggie Lynch**, PO Box 13736, Durham, NC 27709. PH: (919) 789-4545, or **David Jackson** PH: (336) 288-2677. Web: www.antiquebottles.com/greensboro



Mike Jordan won the people's choice award with an extremely colorful collection of hyacinth vases at the Expo in Memphis. Mike left our club to retire in Florida, but his collection has survived the hurricanes so far.

The October *Pontil* will provide much additional coverage of the Expo, including a celebration of the awards won by our club and its members.