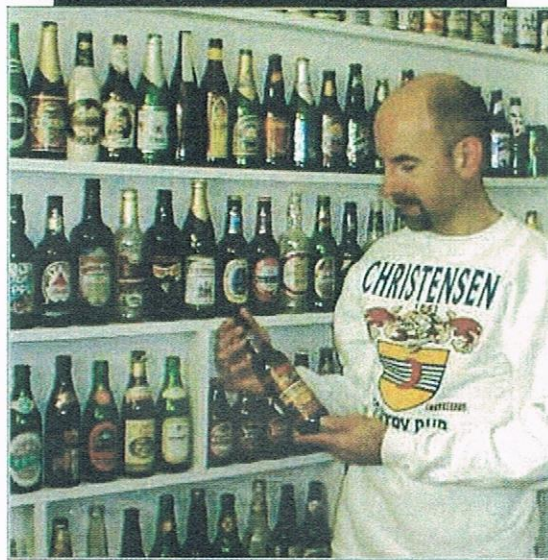




## THE COLLECTOR



If you're going to sing "100 Bottles of Beer on the Wall" to Ray Christensen, note that he probably will not be amused, and you will be neither accurate nor original. Ray has had 1,000 bottles of beer on his wall and he's heard the song before.

A man of many talents (marathon runner, owner of Attraction Web Design, designer of numerous websites) Ray began his collection just after college when he was in the navy sharing an apartment with two other officers from his ship. There always seemed to be a lot of beer around in a variety of colorful bottles, and those bottles began Ray's concept of fine interior decor. Since then, the collection has continued to grow, Ray has continued to use it to decorate his home, and the result is a unique and wonderful collection that is beautifully displayed.

Collecting beer bottles is a global hobby, and while many may pursue particular themes such as breweries, older bottles, or bottles with particular images, Ray's collecting style is more casual. Ray just appreciates both the bottle itself and the memory it evokes. "Each one has a story of where it came from, who gave it to me, where I drank it, or if it was a good or bad beer to drink. Of all the souvenirs out there, beer bottles are simply my favorite."

The art of collecting also involves the art of organized and attractive display. Ray started with bookcases that could be easily assembled but discovered the bookcases were deep for the purpose of displaying books, and the bottles were being hidden behind each other. Ray began making

four-inch wide shelves himself and lined his dining room with them.

What is just as unique as the bottles is the wood used for making those shelves. Ray's brothers cut and milled trees from the family property, so the very base of the collection is from the family itself.

Ray's collection has moved several times, starting in 1984 in the California Bay Area (where it was a good earthquake indicator) to its final cross-country move to Delaware in the early 90's. As for keeping everything in tact, Ray states, "I can safely leave my collection on display because I don't have children or pets." Just imagine what a frisky cat could do here.

Yes, the bottles are empty and no, he did not drink all the beer himself. Friends are eager to contribute to the unique collection, and Ray tells of one friend who dragged back 8 bottles from his honeymoon. One day, he received bottles from friends who had recently traveled and returned with bottles from China and Kenya. "The bottles become greater treasures when you think about the extra weight and limited luggage space in traveling today." When possible, Ray keeps the bottle's lid intact. The trick is to place a US Quarter over the cap to keep it from bending from the bottle opener.

"The most special bottle in my collection is a 1950's bottle from a pub in Germany," Ray claims. "A man who had been stationed there with the US Army had always visited the same local pub. Before he returned to the US, he packed an empty bottle from that pub as a

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souvenir. He held onto it all these years and contacted me when his wife wanted him to get rid of it. He couldn't imagine just throwing it out and wanted to give it to someone who would appreciate it. When he found my website, he felt he had found its new home"

As for wacky names, apparently beer has gone through the same moniker madness as hot sauces. Ray's bottles include Arrogant Bastard Ale, Nude Beer, Mississippi Mud, Dixie Blackened Voodoo, Smuttynose IPA, Wychwood Hobgoblin Dark English Ale, Dirty Dick's Ale, and Polygamy Porter. And let's not forget The Three Stooges Beer and Monty Python's Holy Grail Ale.

Having a collection that immediately presents a rather friendly and party-like atmosphere has been good for business for this well known web designer. "When clients visit, we meet in my 'Beer Room' surrounded by bottles. This immediately breaks the ice with people I'm meeting for the first time since they have so many questions. Even more importantly, my collection became the subject of my first website, [www.WorldofBeerBottles.com](http://www.WorldofBeerBottles.com). At that time, testing my skills with websites was just a hobby, but learning and experimenting with the site eventually led me to become a full time web designer. Now I work at home in the midst of a collection that launched a new career."

Ray will be the first to confess that having created a website about beer and having a home that is all about beer doesn't make him an expert on beer or the value of bottles. "People often contact me claiming that I must be an expert in this area and do I have any idea what their bottles or collection is worth. I'm just having a good time with this, so I would have no idea how to put a monetary value on what they have. I'm not sure I could put a monetary value on what I have."

And who gave Ray his 1000th bottle of beer? Believe it or not, I did. A good friend who was a Civil War re-enactor from Maine gave me a bottle of Chamberlain Pale Ale commemorating this Union brigadier general from his home state. When I finally drank the contents, I could think of no better home for that bottle than Ray Christensen's dining room. I get to visit it the next time I need an update to my website.

Don't forget to visit Ray's website for some interesting beer talk: pictures, commercials, videos, books, links to values on e-bay and posters. Guaranteed you will be entertained and enlightened...and maybe just a bit thirsty.



Karen Jessee is a professional organizer and founder of Simply Organized. She is a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers and the Philadelphia Chapter of Professional Organizers. She encourages people to simplify their lives and works with those who need to downsize and get organized. Karen helps clients make the decisions and create the systems that are best for them. She also teaches the strategies to help clients gain greater clarity, control, productivity and peace. Karen is a public speaker on these topics. Visit her website at: [www.nowsimplyorganized.com](http://www.nowsimplyorganized.com)

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