

Arizona License Plate Society

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

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Birth Year: 1936
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How did you start collecting plates? Was there someone who was your mentor?

In 1971, my 6 year old son began picking up Arizona plates that he found in the desert while we were out hiking. I started looking for plates with him and we turned it into a hobby. I didn't have a mentor but I was at the Phoenix Greyhound Park Swapmeet in 1973 with a sign saying I wanted to buy old Arizona license plates and I met Roy Carson. He told me about ALPCA and the local club, ALPS. I joined and my membership number is 1466. I attended the original ALPS' meets until it dissolved.

What plates do you collect and which are your favorites? Where do you get most of your plates?

I collect Arizona only. Almost all of my plates were acquired before 1978. I had a total of approximately 1500 plates including about 200 non-Arizona plates. I have sold about one-half of the plates at our regional meets since October 2004. I view collecting as a hobby and do not intend to try to make a lot of money from selling my plates. I want to sell them to other collectors and refused to sell some to an antique dealer who came to my house under the pretext of being a collector. I intend to keep only my Arizona run, some dealer plates, and some motorcycle plates. I recently bought some motorcycle dealer plates. My favorite plates are also the ones with the best story so I'll talk about them later.

In the 1970's I picked up many plates off the desert. My son and I often went to swapmeets and second-hand stores. Each small Arizona town had a town dump where locals would haul their junk cars. People burned their trash at the dump so I passed up a lot of plates that were burned. Now it is hard to find an old fashioned second-hand store (or junk stores as we called them); the swapmeets are either gone or changed into "marketplaces"; and the EPA forced the closure of the town dumps and replaced them with "landfills" where one person has the salvage rights and you can no longer scrounge around for plates. There was also an old mine in the Mazatzal Mountains that I visited in 1971. There were a lot of license plates laying around and nailed to trees and the barn. The caretaker had not been paid in months so he quickly rounded up 50 plates and sold them to me. They were all Arizona and before 1950.

Do you have tips for newer members on the best places to acquire plates?

Everyplace you go, ask if they have any license plates. Buy them when you find them because if you walk away and think about them, they won't be there when you go back. There are plates on eBay, but shipping charges are often too high.

How often do you make it to Arizona License Plate Society events?

I've been to four out of the last seven. I began attending to sell of my accumulation. Now I'm having so much fun I'll have to find a reason to continue attending.

Which plate in your collection has the best story?

In 1971, a friend saw some license plates in an antique store. The next morning I was there before it opened. I bought a 1916, two 1917, two 1918, one 1919, and two 1920 Arizona plates for about \$20. Four of the plates had the same number. They came off a wall of a barn near Buckeye that was being demolished.

How many plates are in your collection? What types? What do you wish you had more of?

I had about 1400 plates. 1200 were Arizona and about 200 were non-Arizona. I wish I had more motorcycle, dealer, and sample plates. I've sold about one-half of the accumulation.

Do you display your plates?

I've always had a few on the wall; the 1916-1919 run and the 1932-1934 Arizona plates. The rest are in boxes. The ones that are displayed are strung together with curtain rings. It's an inexpensive way to fasten them together.

What other non-license plate hobbies do you have?

I collect Arizona Brewing Company advertising items, cans, and bottles. My major interest is in animal traps as well as magazines and books about trapping.

