

LETTER FROM POISONLAND

BY
MIKE DICKMAN

Have you ever dreamed of finding a unique type of poison bottle, something that no other collector had ever seen? We've certainly had such dreams, and we suspect that many other poisonheads have as well. For some lucky ones, though, the dream is reality.

Before we get to that, let's define terms. By "type" we mean a particular kind of bottle, as opposed to "variety," by which we mean some discernible difference within the same type. In the world of poison bottles, each "K" Number is a different type, while each different color or size of one "K" Number is a different variety. Technically, "unique" means one-of-a-kind, but it is doubtful that many unique poison bottles were manufactured so we'll broaden our scope to "rare," meaning seldom occurring or found. Arbitrarily, let's define "rare" in this context as a dozen or fewer specimens known.

So, do you own any? A "type" of poison bottle of which 12 or less examples are known? If you do, we want to hear from you! Seriously: we'd like to feature such bottles for the education and enjoyment of our association membership (and we'll keep the owner's identity confidential, if he or she wants). Just write to Mike at PO Box 549, Santa Fe NM 87504, or email to mikedickman@yahoo.com.

As we said, some lucky folks (unfortunately not Mike) already own such bottles. Let's begin with two rare types of poison bottles: **KC-114** and **KR-79**. Both are spectacular, interesting bottles that came to light fairly recently. In fact, the late Rudy Kuhn did not assign them "K" Numbers until his unpublished third, partially-completed volume.

The photographs on the next page really speak a thousand words about these rare types. Beginning with **KC-114**, there are two known varieties, both BIM and both blown in clear glass: 5½" high and 2¼" diameter (which Rudy mistakenly listed as 7" high) and 4⅛" high with 1½" diameter. Only one specimen of the taller bottle is known, owned by veteran member Mary Riggin (#46). There are at least four specimens of the smaller version known,

All of the KC-114s bear a base embossing as follows: "Patd June 8, 1875" inside of a circle. One of the 4⅛" KC-114s has a paper label, handwritten in ink on five lines: Poison (underlined twice)/Juek Nux Sum Co./ Dose: One to five drops in water/Wm. Caters (signature)/M.D. Interestingly, a lucky collector purchased two of the known 4⅛" KC-114s at a flea market in Pennsylvania, and later resold them in the early 1990s. The KC-114s have been attributed to New Zealand, but we do not know why, and do not have any evidence one way or the other. As you can see from the photographs, the KC-114 has a ground-glass stopper. Without revealing delicate information, the prices of the KC-114s seem to range from \$1,100 (a bargain, even in 1992) to \$6,000+. Mary Riggin's KC-114 was a gift from her husband, so of course the price shall forever remain a secret.

The other rare type featured here, the **KR-79**, also is BIM and blown in clear glass (with an amethyst tint), with a tooled lip and a height of 4 inches. The bottle is illustrated without comment in William C. Ketchum's lovely 1975 book entitled "A Treasury of American Bottles". The example used in Ketchum's book was owned by the late bottle dealer Jim Wetzel, who resided in Ardsley, New York, and died in 1980, at age 67. Wetzel apparently purchased the bottle at an auction in the early to mid 1970s, paying in the range of \$700 and later complaining to Jim Hagenbuch about having overpaid. (Does that sound familiar to anyone else out there?) Apparently, the bottle stayed in Wetzel's personal bottle collection and passed with his estate. We think we know who owns that specimen of the KR-79, but we have been unable to confirm so we won't speculate publicly. We have, however, confirmed the existence of a second specimen of the KR-79 owned by member Gary Perigan (#2), which came from the East Coast about 7 or 8 years ago. Gary's specimen has a base embossing ("Patented") and does not have the amethyst tint. Gary pointed out that the KR-79's obverse and reverse are slightly oblong shaped (i.e., the two sides are slightly rounded), while the sides are straight. We have heard rumors, so far unsubstantiated, about the existence of 2 or 3 additional specimens of the KR-79. The country of origin, manufacturer and substance contained in KR-79 are apparently unknown.

The **KC-114** and **KR-79** may be seen as the Holy Grail of Poisondom: each one is a classic and interesting "type" of poison bottle of which 12 or less examples are known. Hopefully, we'll be able to look at other such bottles in future letters.

References:

Ketchum, William C., Jr., "A Treasury of American Bottles" (Bobb-Merrill Co. 1975) p. 187.

Kuhn, Rudy, "Poison Bottle Workbook" Volumes I and II (privately published), and unpublished Volume III.

The Poison Bottle Newsletter previously published some information about the K-C-114 and KR-79, including Vol. 4, No. 1 (Jim Hagenbuch) and Vol. 5, No. 2 (by Philip Soehnlen). For those interested, Editor Joan Cabaniss can provide members with a complete set of the newsletters, for the cost of copying.



KC-114



KR-79
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