

THE PIPE Collector



**Happy
Holidays
From
NASPC**



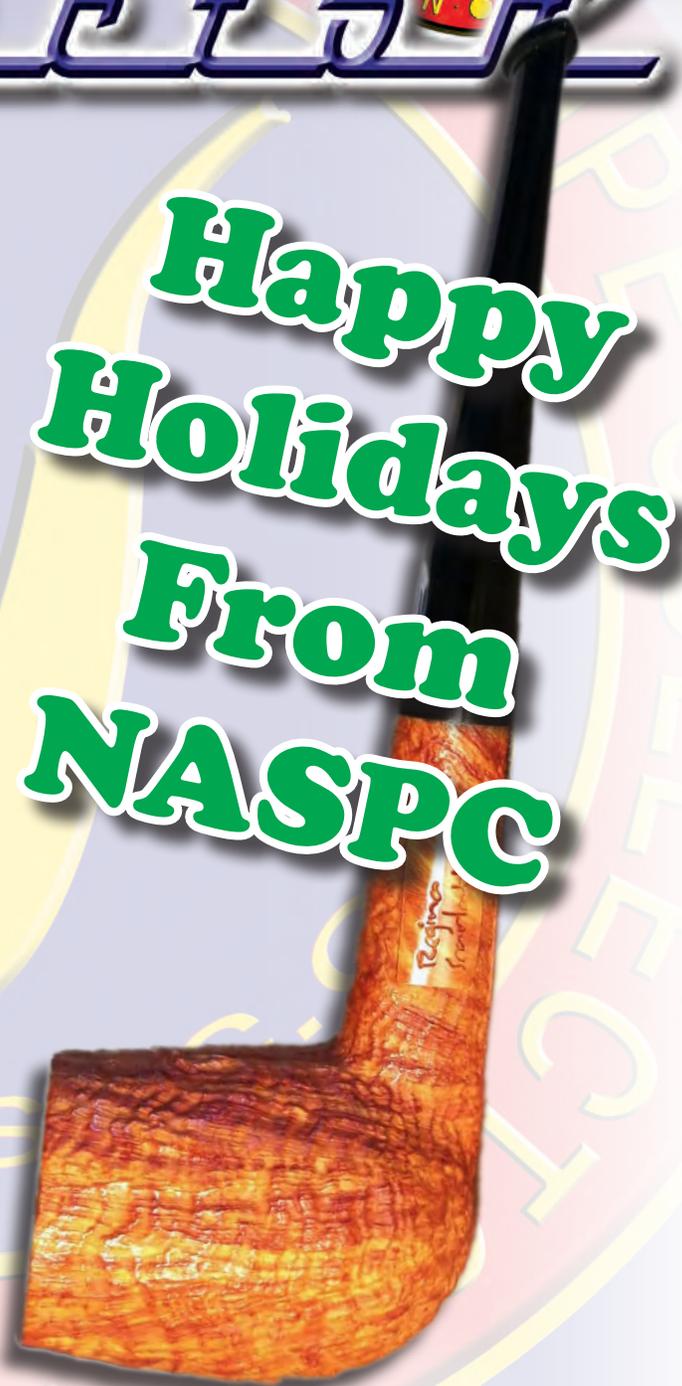
**Remembering Your First
Of Pipes and Tobaccos**

Tobacco Brides

Low Country Pipe Club

**Puffing In Toronto
and Roanoke**

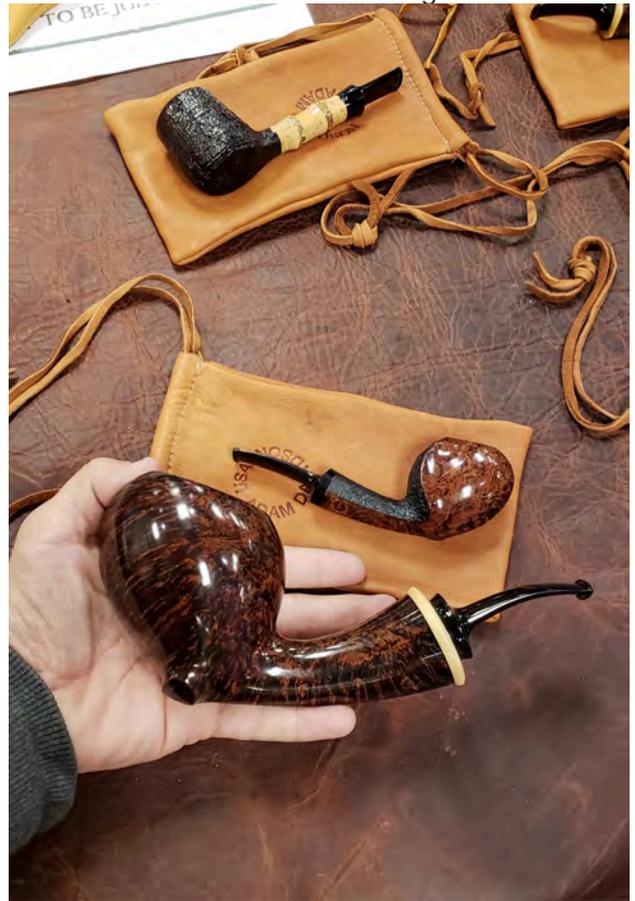
Estate Pipes: The \$20 Pipe



Castello 'New Line' which made for briar aged since 1982. The other is a lover Adam Davidson magnum - beautiful piece. Adam had not made a magnum since 2014 so it is rare.



Adam Davidson Magnum



I will end this missive by saying I hope Sam is in that 🇺🇸

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PUFFING IN TORONTO (A SEQUEL) AND ROANOKE (A POSTSCRIPT)

by Dan Locklair (locklair@wfu.edu)

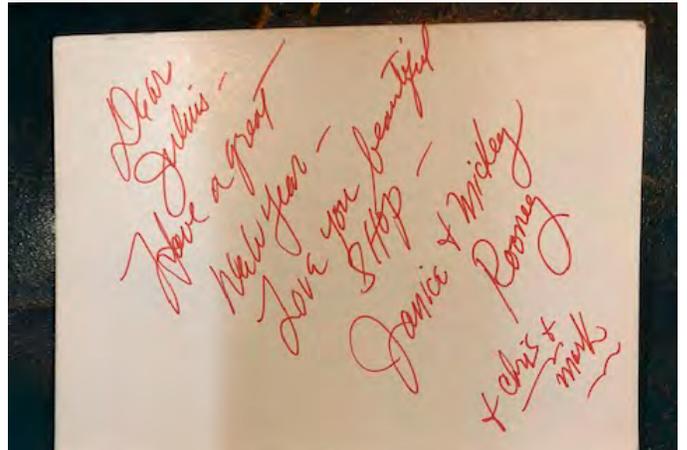
// Julius, you are the da Vinci of pipes!" Those words were spoken by the American actor, singer and comedian, Zero Mostel, and they were said with vigor and directed straight at the Hungarian/Canadian pipe maker, Julius Vesz. Although spoken in the 1970's, they ring just as true today as they did then when Mr. Mostel, on a Canadian tour with the musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*, paid one of his many visits to Julius Vesz Pipesmith in Toronto.



Mostel, whom Julius informed me was a very good painter, was but one of many celebrities to visit his workshop and store over the years. Virtually all of the celebrities developed lasting friendships with Julius. How many other 20th century pipe makers have created pipes for the likes of Bing Crosby, Mickey Rooney, Danny Kaye and the great cellist, Pablo Casals? Like the gold-banded pipe that Julius created for Anwar Sadat of Egypt, the pipe he made for Casals was personally picked up and delivered by close associates of the two great men. The Casals' assistant was especially impressed that Julius loved classical music and the sounds of Brahms and other composers were ever-present in his workshop.

Julius first encountered Mickey Rooney when the legendary actor was on tour in Toronto. One day Rooney simply appeared in Julius's shop, soaking wet from a sudden rainstorm. Rooney was agog over the pipes that he saw in Julius's shop. However, he explained to Julius that he could hardly afford one, saying: "I have so much alimony to pay on eight wives!" Feeling compassion toward the legendary actor, Julius told him not to worry that he would gift

him a pipe and tin of Mac Baren's tobacco, which he did. From that day on, Rooney became a friend and lover of Julius's pipes, even remembering him at Christmas time.



Why, even the Queen of Jazz, Ella Fitzgerald, owned three Vesz pipes! Along with the Hollywood legends, presidents, prime ministers, sheiks and other prominent world and business leaders who have puffed and collected Julius Vesz briars, one of the latest well-known figures to discover Julius and his work is former New York City mayor, Rudy Giuliani. But fame and status are hardly prerequisites for owning a Julius Vesz pipe! No, literally thousands of men and women from all walks of life have had the good fortune to own and smoke a Vesz briar. While Zero Mostel and others from his generation may have left us now, Julius Vesz, now in his 85th year, continues to produce his distinctive, quality briars. As with composers such as Giuseppe Verdi and Ralph Vaughan Williams, who continued to produce quality compositions in their later years, so, too, Julius's distinctive pipe making continues to go from strength to strength.

An interview that I did with Julius Vesz appeared in the October 2017 issue of **The Pipe Collector**. It was done at the site of his long-time workshop and

retail store in Toronto's historic Royal York Hotel. No sooner had that article been published than I learned from Julius the distressing news that the new owners of the Royal York Hotel had decided to completely renovate the hotel and to permanently eliminate all shops! After decades of being a loyal tenant and destination shop in the Royal York, receiving this shocking news was a jolt to Julius. Since the hotel set an early spring 2018 deadline for all shops to be vacated, Julius had immediate decisions to make. For people made of lesser stuff, a most understandable decision would simply have been to retire. After all, the Canadian winters are not for the faint of heart and Julius's daily commute from the suburbs, often in heavy ice and snow, had become more and more challenging.

After much serious reflection and discussion of options with his wife, Susie, and two sons, Rob and Tom, Julius decided to continue to create his celebrated hand-crafted pipes. I cheered his decision and briefly noted this welcomed news at the end of my article in the August 2018 issue of **The Pipe Collector**, *Puffing in the land of the Esterházy!*

For Julius, the big question remained: Where would he relocate? After investigating several Toronto real estate options, Julius ultimately decided to revisit the beginnings of his career and, literally, return home. The decision was made to establish Julius's pipe-making studio adjacent to his suburban Toronto home. Following numerous consultations with architects and builders, and in the midst of the cold and icy months of the Canadian winter, carpenters immediately went to work converting Julius's home garage into an almost exact replica of his workshop in the Royal York Hotel. Although most of the construction work was completed by the spring of 2018 and the extensive contents of his Royal York shop moved to the new location, several more months were necessary in order for Julius to tweak the many component parts of his new workshop. But, by late summer Julius was up and running and, again, doing pipe repairs and making his distinctive briar pipes. Thanks to a new website (<https://www.veszpipes.com/>), and the fortunate retention of his long-held Julius Vesz Pipesmith telephone number, Julius is now well-connected for this new chapter in his life and work.

As a long time dear friend of Julius's and an unabashed fan and collector of his beautifully crafted pipes, I had wanted to be among the first to visit his new workshop. I had even hoped that I might possibly do so around the occasion of his 85th September birthday. But, alas, due to professional commitments, that pipe dream didn't materialize. With one of my busiest autumns ever, the October weekend of Wake Forest University's Fall Break looked like the only possibility for a quick trip to Toronto. With that date, too, I would also be able to see the fine professionals who oversee my Ricordi music catalog and, with luck, miss the beginning of

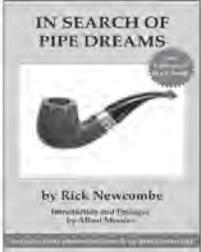
Canada's wintry weather (but, even in October, you never know that for sure!). The Thursday/Friday Fall Break in the Wake Forest calendar is a gift each year, both for the opportunity to catch up from the first half of the semester and prepare for the second half. Could there be a better way to celebrate such a juncture than to have a pipe dream come true? So, off to Canada I went for a two-night stay. To see Julius and observe him at work in his new space was a joy to contemplate!

Before recounting my Toronto visit with Julius, though, I should reflect on the travel itself, for it does have a tobacco component. Like pipe dreams, travel plans can sometimes get altered or not happen at all. In truth, I almost did not get to Toronto. It never occurred to me that a quick-moving hurricane named Michael would take aim on the Piedmont area of North Carolina on the very October day that I was scheduled to fly to Toronto. But, it did! Driving to the airport early that Thursday morning through high wind and heavy rain, I was virtually certain that I saw Noah's Ark parked along side the road. So, seeing it through my pipe-smoke fog, I reasoned that if my flight was canceled, at least I could hitch a ride with Noah to Toronto, for I was bound and determined to get there!

Fortunately, my flight left Greensboro only slightly delayed for Atlanta, the city of my connecting flight to Toronto. Even if your destination is heaven, if you're flying Delta, a stop in Atlanta is virtually assured. Only later did I learn that my flight from Greensboro was one of the last to leave the airport that day. It is always a bit unsettling, though, when the pilot warns the passengers before even taking off that the entire duration of the flight will be "bumpy." And it was! But, in Atlanta, the sun was shining brightly, all foreshadowing an incredible visit with "the da Vinci of pipes!"

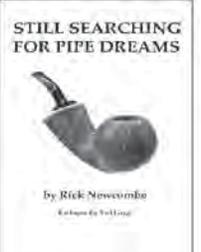
Over the years I have heard many flyers complain about Atlanta's airport. But, I happen to think it among the most efficient airports in America, and, for smokers, it is one of the best since the airport has smoking lounges. Although they are indicated on the larger airports maps, the lounges are often hard to find since no ceiling signs point you to them. It is as if the CDC (based in Atlanta) has conspired

AUDIOBOOKS AND E-BOOKS



IN SEARCH OF
PIPE DREAMS

by Rick Newcombe
Interviews and Photos
by Howard Anderson



STILL SEARCHING
FOR PIPE DREAMS

by Rick Newcombe
Edited by Yell Long

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with the airport to make it so difficult for smokers to find them that they'll repent of tobacco and give up searching for the lounges! But, even as Michael had threatened my trip to the Vesz Promised Land, someone was smiling on me, for both my outgoing and incoming flights in Atlanta were at gates adjacent to smoking lounges. I couldn't believe it!

Turns out, I was the only pipe smoker in the Atlanta smoking lounges on both legs of the trip. As pipe smokers, we tend not to mind being loners, so it certainly didn't bother me. Cigarettes abounded in the lounges, but you can never tell when you might, just by example, win over someone. In the lounge, a man (I almost wrote "good-ol'-boy"!) dressed race-car-driver-Richard- Petty-style, had to stand in order to have a cigarette in the fully occupied lounge. He stood to my left. I was reading. Soon, though, I heard the following words directed at me: "That's some mighty good smellin' pipe tobacco you got there, sir! I'm going to have to take that up some day." I turned and thanked him and said that I truly hoped he would. You just never know, do you?

It was a smooth, on-time flight to Toronto. After clearing Customs (and why does Customs always take so long and, for the workers, appear that it is the very first time they have ever received incoming passengers?!), I was on the way to my hotel. Checking into the hotel I did have one pipe dream extinguished. In making my hotel reservations over the phone in the US, I was pleasantly surprised to be assured by the US Hyatt agent that the Toronto Hyatt Regency had smoking rooms. I was elated and requested one! However, upon registering, I was unceremoniously assured by the hotel clerk that the hotel was all non-smoking. When I raised an objection based on my pre-reservation conversation, a very efficient manager, himself a smoker, quickly clarified to me that the hotel's renovation several years back had done away with all balcony rooms. These rooms had allowed for smoking. He then proceeded to show me the best covered outdoor place to smoke and offered me a free breakfast buffet the next morning. So, even with a pipe dream shattered, he, at least, apologized and made things better. (With the ever-increasing anti-tobacco sentiment in the US and Canada these days, I could only wonder if enthusiasm for smoking rooms might see a renaissance in the near future? After all, the Wednesday following my visit, Canada was ready to welcome legalized marijuana!)

I met Rob Vesz for dinner that evening. He is a kind, energetic man who bears a striking resemblance to his father (including in the hairline department!).



For his profession, Rob is a wood broker and has a thriving business. Although Rob never apprenticed with his dad to learn pipe-making, I still find it telling that, he, like his father, has a profession that focuses on wood. As I would see the following morning on my visit with Julius, all of the handsome wood in Julius's new workshop attests to Rob's ability to secure some of the finest hardwood available.

Julius is very close to both of his sons. Rob, a pipe smoker, has been working especially hard to help Julius transition the model of his business from a physical B&M store to a primarily internet and telephone business. It is Rob, for instance, who has overseen the re-design and day to day operations of Julius's new website. Both Rob and brother, Tom, an oral surgeon by trade, gave invaluable assistance to Julius over matters of design and construction for the new workshop, as well as the arduous task of getting the Royal York shop moved and set up in the new location.

And what a place it is! Entering Julius's new workshop was like entering a sanctuary! *Déjà vu* was also eerily present. For to walk in Julius's new personal space was just like entering his Royal York workshop! That incredible old-world shop, designed by Julius himself and long a mainstay of the Royal York Hotel, has now been re-created!



A visitor would never know that this elegant workshop was once a garage, for it has been totally transformed. Had he not become a pipe-maker some 60 years ago, I am confident that Julius could have been a designer. But, thank goodness that he chose to follow in the footsteps of his Hungarian grandfather and become a pipe maker!

It has always amazed me how neat Julius's workshop is. Pipe-making, by its nature, is dusty work. Yet, Julius's Royal York workshop was among the neatest and cleanest that I have had the good fortune to visit. The new one is equally so.

The "sanctuary" designation for Julius's shop is so very true. After a most welcomed and emotional reunion with Julius, I began to observe many details.



Not only are there family photos around, but also a host of memorabilia, both pipe and otherwise, that has spanned an illustrative career of 60 years.



Exceeding that age is a huge chunk of Algerian briar, reported to be about 500 years old.



The room is filled with memories as diverse as pipes from Julius's grandfather's era to a signed photo of Jack Lemmon



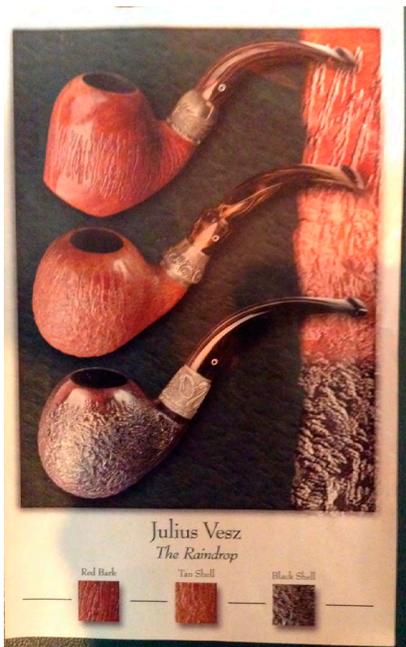
Mr. Lemmon, who had long been a smoker of Dunhill pipes, became a devoted Vesz fan after Julius created for him a pipe to Lemmon's own drawn specifications. Mr. Lemmon enjoyed it so much that his wife also ordered a Vesz pipe for herself! Jack Lemmon, who suffered from actor's anxiety, tended to bite through his stems. Julius still has two of them, including one that used a sterling silver lip to try and reign in Mr. Lemmon's teeth! In Julius's shop he also has a model of the German airplane that terrorized Julius as a child as it and similar aircraft flew over his home village in Hungary during World War II. It, of course, was the tragedy of the Nazis that led Julius to eventually escape Hungary for Canada. And

it was in Canada that he not only met his future wife, but set up his first pipe-making workshop in the basement of their home.

Julius's first pipes were known under the banner, Craft Briar Pipe Co. Transitioning to "Julius Vesz" some years later, his distinctive circle pipe stem logo has now been a registered trademark for 55 years. Early in his career in Canada Julius worked for Brigham Pipes. Thanks to an invitation from both Dunhill and Charatan, he became the authorized Canadian repairman for those legendary pipe brands. Further, for a period of twelve years, Julius was also the Canadian distributor of Mac Baren pipe tobaccos. But it is with pipes of his own Julius Vesz name that Julius has become acclaimed the world over and on which his legacy as a pipe maker will be known. "The da Vinci of pipes!"



My full-day visit with Julius was a joy. We sat



and puffed our pipes – classic Vesz Raindrops! – and solved a host of the world's problems that we had not already solved in our weekly phone conversations.

Julius recounted many stories from his past. Some of those stories have already dotted this article, but there are many others. They all attest to Julius's long and rich career as a world-class pipe maker and the many friendships that he has developed over the years. For some of our time together that day we were joined by a pipe-smoking friend of Julius's, Ted, who lives only a few miles away. Although Julius's Royal York shop is now closed, many long-time Toronto friends and customers still pay regular visits to him at his new workshop and the number of those visits will, no doubt, increase as time goes by.

A meticulous and astute businessman, for many years Julius regularly purchased large quantities of briar. As a matter of fact, it was thirty years ago that he last purchased briar! Some of it was Algerian (which is mostly gone now) and his favorite, Grecian. In short, all of Julius's pipes are made from old and aged briar. His mouthpieces are made from the highest quality grade of vulcanite cut from rods that were purchased long ago from a high-end (now defunct) manufacturer in Hamburg, Germany. Since he planned for a long pipe-making future and purchased substantial quantities of both briar and vulcanite, Julius has little worry of ever running out of pipe-making materials! He also has small quantities of other items that adorn many of his hand-crafted creations, including amber, bamboo, bone, silver and gold bands.



Some of those materials have come down to him from his own grandfather's pipe-making workshop in Hungary. Incorporating his past into the present, Julius continues to do some of his finest work. In the spirit of a magical day together, Julius sent me home with cherished gifts for both wife, Paula, and me. I also couldn't resist purchasing three new Vesz pipes on that October day and arrived back in Winston-Salem thrilled that THIS pipe dream to visit "the da Vinci of pipes" had become reality!



The world of pipes is a genuine coterie. The draconian and sanctimonious public health nannies that would like to see all tobacco banished from the face of earth will never understand how a small piece of wood – a pipe – filled with fine tobacco provides contentment and enjoyment that brings about and unites friendships for a lifetime. I think of that often and felt it intensely during my day with Julius, where, flanking bowls of tobacco enjoyed in his own Raindrops, he also puffed two of his favorite non-Vesz pipes: His first pipe, a Barling, given to him by his father, and an early Dunhill that was a gift from Rothmans, the British tobacco firm.



It reminded me that, early on, Julius found inspiration from the great pipe makers of the past. And, like all gifted creators, he absorbed what he saw and learned into his own distinctive style. "The da Vinci of pipes," indeed!

Several weeks after my travels to Toronto, I had the pleasure of being in Roanoke, Virginia, to conduct rehearsals and, a week later, a performance of my **Requiem** and **Gloria**. The performances, on the *St. John's Music on the Corner* concert series, could not have gone better and were wonderfully received by the enthusiastic and full St. John's Episcopal Church.

Milan Tobacconists has a long, rich history in Roanoke, being established in 1912. On my only other previous trip to Roanoke in the late '80's, I had the good fortune of being waited on there by Joe Milan, one of the three sons of the founder of the shop. Milan's was known for its own pipe tobacco blends and, even if the shop at the time of my early visit had been somewhat compromised with magazine sales, it was obvious that Milan's remained at its core a pipe shop.

In 1994 the Milan family planned for retirement and, in order to continue their family's important

Roanoke legacy, sought a buyer. They were fortunate to discover Don Roy, a tobacconist from Coral Gables, Florida. His daughter, Renée Meyer and her husband, David, now run this landmark shop at its current location in the heart of downtown Roanoke.



Although only several of the original Milan pipe tobacco blends remain, Milan's is an exclusive tobacco shop (with no magazines now!) and is fully stocked with pipes, tobaccos and cigars.



The spacious shop is handsome as can be and carries an extensive array of mostly mid-priced pipes, including Peterson, Savinelli and Nording.



The store's celebrated history is told on the Milan website (<https://www.milantobacco.com/>) and their substantial offerings are easily secured by mail. But, should your travels ever take you to Roanoke – situated in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains – please do consider Puffing in Milan's. I certainly did! 🍷