

Amazing Pipe Set from the Collection of Mike Axelrod

by Mason Klinck

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You will remember Dr. Michael Axelrod from my previous postings. He is the president and co-founder of the Golden Gate Pipe Club of California, and a very serious collector of pipes. While I have posted earlier on his various pre-transition Barling sets and his wondrous Comoy 24 day pipe set from 1950, I believe that what I recently saw at his house in the wooded hills of Marin county, California may be the best yet, if not the finest ever. Press on, dear reader.

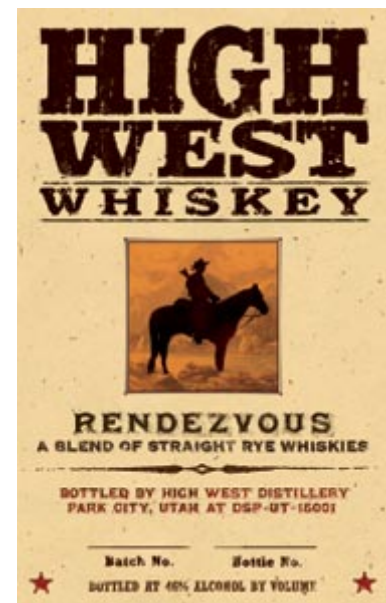
Mike is a generous soul. Immediately upon my arrival at his house, he offered me a Manhattan cocktail containing only the finest ingredients as made by the bartenders of the celebrated [Moss Room](#). For those not familiar with the hedonist by-ways of San Francisco, the Moss Room is a superb restaurant and bar located in the California Academy of Sciences.

To make this tasty drink, fetch from the freezer compartment a frosty martini glass. Pour into the ice-laden shaker one part of Carpano Antica Formula vermouth. Add two parts of High West Whiskey Rendezvous, a magnificent rye.

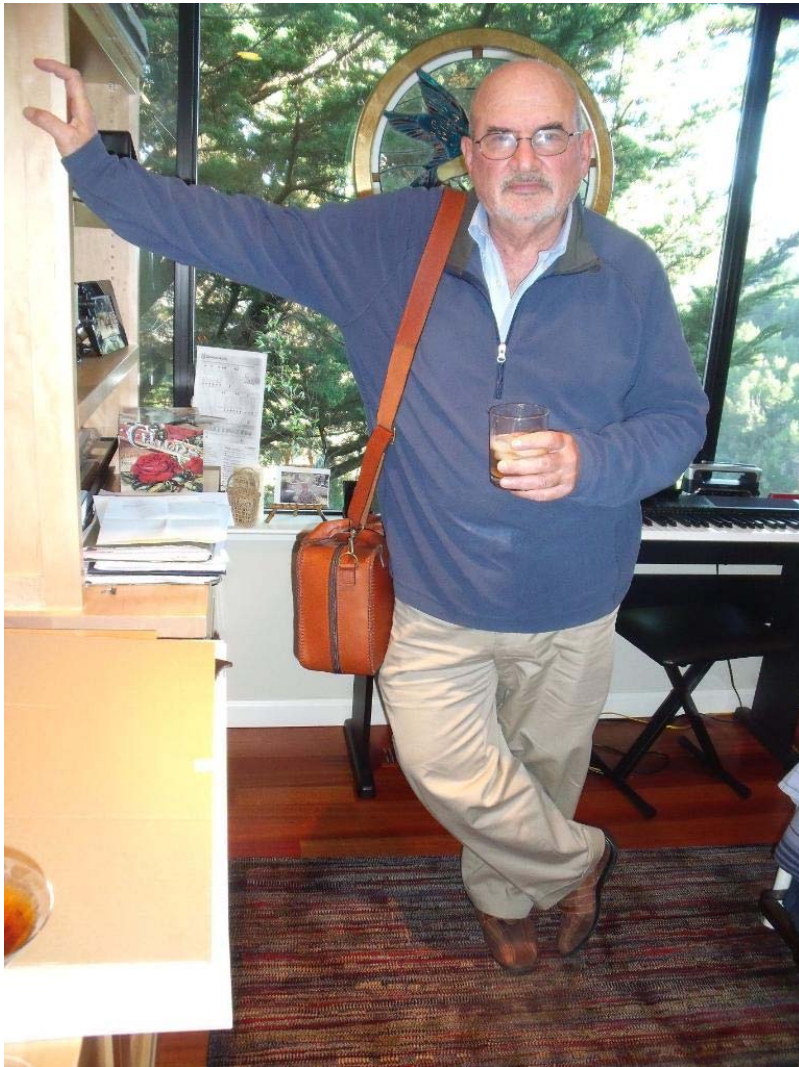
Add a dash of Angostura bitters.
Shake thoroughly, strain and pour into the glass.
Sip.
Say *Ahhhhhhhhhh*.

But that is not why I am writing this report. Press on, dear reader.

Next Mike showed me a very handsome pipe bag recently purchased from Smokin' Holsters, known to SF as sagiter. Many pipe bags seem cramped affairs, and larger briars in particular take up so much room that a compartment for four pipes really fits only two. Nonetheless, you can see in the photo that this bag is spacious, elegant and skillfully constructed. Well done, Neil.



Here is Dr. Axelrod himself proudly posing with his new bag.



But that is not why I am writing this report. Press on, dear reader.

Finally, Mike showed me a mysterious affair looking like a suitcase, it was so large. What could it possibly be?



The leather tag on the bottom read “Harrods” in gilded letters on top, and below something in smaller letters, starting with “D”. Hmm. What could that portend?

Of course I have long been familiar with Harrods of Knightsbridge, the most exclusive department store in London. Their [legendary food halls](#) will post [hampers of delicacies](#) anywhere on the globe, and most famously delivered them to the trenches in the western front during the first

world war. Years ago, I would buy splendid ties and some pocket watches at Harrods, and I even recollect their tobacco shop selling a pipe mixture badged as their own. I think it was made by James Fox.

So anything from Harrods is bound to be a world class luxury.

But that is not why I am writing this report. Press on, dear reader.

Slowly, Mike opened the large leather case, and I saw it was hinged to reveal two compartments, each covered with a protective panel.

The workmanship of the case was noteworthy: the brass fittings, the leather and suede were all of the finest quality.

But that is not why I am writing this report. Press on, dear reader.

What is inside? Let us remove the left panel and investiagte...





Goodness. Here we see an exquisite array of blasted pipes. Now let's take away the right panel...



On the right hand side are smooth grain pipes.

Who could have crafted these gorgeous briars?

Do let's have a closer look-see at the label on the case.



Yes, dear reader, they are indeed Dunhills.

This 31 day Dunhill pipe set was commissioned by Harrods circa 1970, and is believed to be the only one of its kind.

What can one say in the presence of such a rarity? I was stunned. Shell shocked. Uncharacteristically speechless. Ever so slowly, I started removing the pipes from the case and examined them. Holding them up to the light, admiring their grains and blasts,

marvelling at their lightness and form were all pleasures beyond telling.

Just when I thought it could not get any better, Mike grinned and said: now you must pick one out to smoke.

Scarcely believing my ears, I hesitated, then fingered many and finally chose the most unlikely Dunhill of all: the freehand. I was struck by how restrained and “classic” it still looked, unlike some of the more wild and woolly creations of the Danes, bless them all.

Here is a photo of what we chose to smoke.

Mike picked the elegant bent shell on the top, and I selected the free hand on the bottom.

We then repaired to the balcony on the side of Mike’s beautiful home, looking down the precipitous slopes into the Marin hills. What an inspiring view.



Carefully packing our virgin Dunhills with Arcadia, one of Mike's favourite baccies, we reverently lit our pipes and sank into a trance. Each aware of how special this moment was, we sipped contentedly, admired how light the old briar was and how sweetly it smoked.

Occasionally a crow or scrub jay would squawk and land on the balcony to eat a peanut left out to attract wildlife.

Mike then remarked that he would bring the Harrods set to the November 3rd meeting of the [Golden Gate Pipe Club](#) at Telford's Pipe Shop in Mill Valley. Each club member would be allowed to select one to smoke.

Anybody who happens to be in the area on that day may PM me and I shall secure you an invitation.

Truly an unforgettable evening. Thank you again, Mike, for your generosity in sharing this treasure with me and for allowing me to relate it to Smokers Forums.

Your faithful reporter.



Mason K

"I don't want any of your statistics; I took your whole batch and lit my pipe with it." Mark Twain, on the writings of an anti-smoker