BARRY – COLLECTING

**Barry:** I have been collecting for a number of years … uh … small antique items … uh … such as … um … tea caddies and apprentice pieces and beautiful objects that are crafted in wood. I first got interested in these items many years ago when I was working for an antique dealer and … uh … she has a beautiful Georgian tea caddy which dated from about 1730, 1740. And I just thought it was such a lovely colour and beautiful condition and … uh … I really started to get interested in these little objects. So as well as being an antique dealer … um … I buy these objects … um … to— to sell on for financial gain, but the nicest ones I tend to keep for myself. Um, I have half a dozen of them now and I tend to collect the ones that are more unusual. For example … uh … some tea caddies … uh … have a secret drawer in them that nobody would find unless you know where to look. Um, so I have a number of those examples where you lift up the lid and there’s a little piece on the side that lifts up and it reveals a little secret drawer underneath.

So anything like that, that is very unusual, I tend to collect. Also these are becoming very hard to find now. So you will see lots of tea caddies of various descriptions and sizes and various woods, but ones with secret compartments and a little bit extra about them are becoming harder to find. So that’s why I like to collect them, because they’re unusual, they’re unique. And also they will appreciate in value so … uh … they’re a very good investment, as most antique things are. Um, you can buy them … um … enjoy them, and in years to come they’re going to be worth a lot more money. So that’s the nice thing about collecting antiques is that … uh … your money’s really quite safe … um … and they’re lovely objects to— to own at the same time.

I think … uh … whatever you want to collect, whether it’s silver or … uh … small bits of furniture or— or tea caddies or art or paintings, you’ve got to have a passion for it. You’ve got to really enjoy it and appreciate it so you look at an object, or you look at an item, and you think ‘I really like that’. And … um … you can find examples on the internet. A lot of people now— there are various websites that you can … um … look at and you’ll see lots of antique dealers will advertise on them as well, lots of auction houses. Um, and there are a number of these sites you can look at, and once you know what you want to collect, what you’re looking for, then you can specialise in certain areas and certain websites, and that’s a good way of finding … um … a— particular objects. Also … um … auctions, you can tour round the auctions, which I find great fun really, trying to find … uh … nice objects, and you can go to antique fairs, there are lots and lots of antique fairs all over the world … um … some, sort of, very cheap … uh … antique fairs, almost like a car boot sale, and the other end of the scale, beautifully stand-fitted and, you know, very exuberant looking antique fairs, so … um … you can look at antique fairs. And … um … antique shops. Um, just go down your high street, or— or wherever you are. Um, and— and antique centres, there are lots of antique centres around … um … which will house a whole mixture … um … of things, ev— any sort of antique, whether it’s silver or furniture or paintings or art. So there’s several places to go to find your — your treasures, whatever you want to start collecting. But the important thing is— I think, is to— is to have a passion about it, is to be— is to be passionate about whatever you want to collect, and always try to get the very best.

Uh, sometimes I think ‘oh, that’s really nice’ but I can’t really afford to keep it for myself, I’ve bought it because it’s part of the business, but if I don’t sell it I’m not too disappointed cos I bring it home and it’ll sit on my mantelpiece or— or wherever and I’ll enjoy it until the next antique fair that I do, or the next— the next outing that I’m going to do. So sometimes I don’t mind if I don’t sell them. Um, obviously you like to sell them because that’s what we’re in business for, but … um … I don’t get too disappointed if I don’t sell some of these, because I quite like to keep them.

DAVID - COLLECTING

**David:** I like to collect two things. First, I like to collect fountain pens, and I also like to collect musical instruments, in particular, ukuleles. Uh, first with the fountain pens, I got started collecting fountain pens probably when I was maybe twenty. Um, my handwriting was always very, very poor and I thought if I had a fountain pen I could … uh … write more beautifully and that my writing would be easier to read, or more legible. I started off relatively simply … um … with a relatively inexpensive fountain pen. It wasn’t a collection, but one purchase led to another and another and I started to develop fountain pen envy. Um, I would see other people with particularly attractive fountain pens. Once I took a trip to Paris, for example … um … and I saw a beautiful pen there and I just really, really was intrigued … um … by that pen and wanted to have one. So I saved up my money and I— I got that pen. Um, and along the way I started … um … gathering more and more fountain pens. I didn’t intend it to be a collection, but after five and six and seven pens, it started to look like one. At about that time my handwriting was really good … um … because I’d invested in these pens, I also was taking more— paying more attention to my writing in the process.

Um, and then I realised I could acquire vintage fountain pens. Those are antique fountain pens that were made in the 1920s or the 1930s … um … and I was really interested in the fact that these pens still worked … um … eighty, ninety years later. So I became very interested in vintage fountain pens in particular. Um, there’s an American brand called … uh … Parker, and also a German company called Pelican who made beautiful … um … pens … um … in that period. And so increasingly I started to look for vintage fountain pens, and that was really interesting to collect because instead of just going into a shop, you could find … um … them in a— in a flea market … um … or online from … uh … someone who had collected them themselves, and there were lots of different outlets where I could … um … buy my vintage fountain pens. So that— that’s pretty much … um … the extent of my collection. I think I probably have about thirty to forty pens now.

Um, when people come to my house I don’t display them in a glass case or anything … um … I’m a little more disorganised than that, so— but I know where they all are and I get them out … um … if people want to see them. Um, I have one— I think my prized possession is a Japanese pen that I have … um … that has really exquisite … uh … details on it. Um, it’s a very beautiful pen and that even had the nib … uh … ground down at an angle to replicate the kind of nibs, which is the very end of the pen— … um … the kind of nibs that people used to use in the forties and fifties. So again, a very vintage feel.

The other thing I collect are ukuleles. Um, it started out with just one, I think a lot of collectors usually start off with just one … um … and then you just can’t stop. Um, actually in the musical area … um … among people who play ukulele, which is like a little guitar … um … from the Hawaiian islands which is where it originated. Um, in fact, actually it’s thought that the first ukuleles came from Portugal … um … and that Portuguese sailors came to Hawaii with a very small, guitar like instrument that— that the people of Hawaii then … um … turned into their ukulele, so that’s— that’s their ancient history. Um, but the ukulele’s a beautiful little instrument. Um, it’s very cheap … uh … and yet as you start collecting you’ll find that you can buy ones that cost hundreds, even thousands of pounds. Um, I’m probably still at the mid— medium-level. I haven’t graduated to the most expensive ones. Um, but it’s fun to collect them because, again, there are vintage ones that you can buy from the 1920s and 1950s … um … as well as new ones, and they’re available in all different kinds of wood, and the different woods have different sounds to them. Um, and they’re all sorts of different sizes so it makes it fun to collect those as well.

My ukulele collection … uh … I think people are pretty impressed with. Um, the nature of the ukulele is it’s very easy to play, and so when people come over to my house, I’ll give them a ukulele … um … show them a— a— a chord, a fingering on the— on the ukulele, and then they can start to play with me. So I re— it’s— it’s a collection that I— people can really use, which is great. Um, at my office— I threw a Christmas party at my office this year, and I brought the ukuleles with me and some music to sing Christmas carols. And it was really great because … um … everyone can pick up a ukulele and we played it with the Christmas carols and … um … we sang along with them and we had a really good time.