

# A castle for the perfect treasure



BY BRIAN  
EHRENWORTH

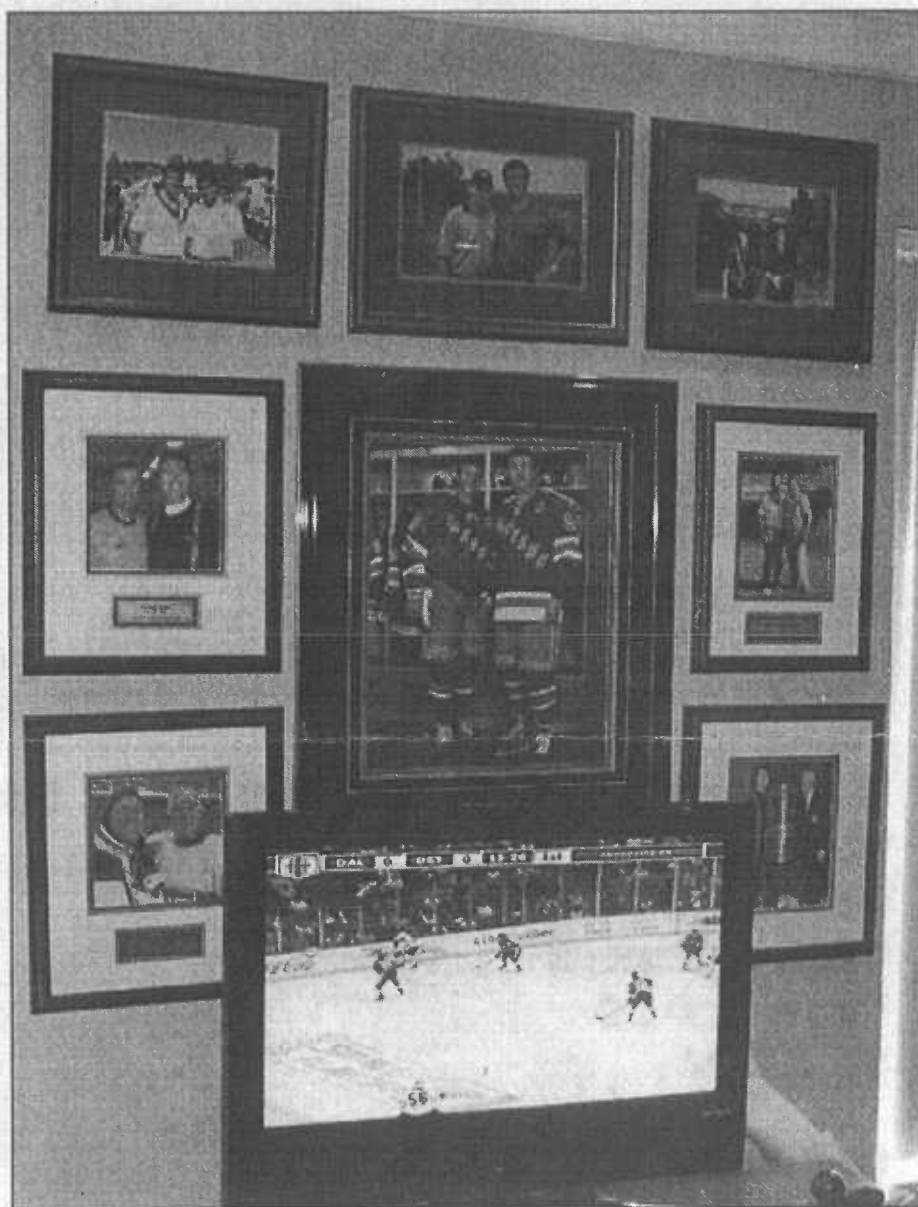
Everyone has their own reason for starting a personal memorabilia collection. For some, it may have begun as a way to meet a

celebrity asking for an autograph as an excuse to say hello and shake hands with a star. I think that's the case with most of us who grew up in the 60's and 70's, before collecting became an art form, or more to the point, profitable.

Whatever the reason, we all have the same dilemma after time... what do we do with all of these treasures? For those entrepreneurial types it may be simple. List them on eBay or trade them with other dealers. But the vast majority of the people who collect, simply collect because they want to surround themselves with images that represent something they are passionate about, a memory of a great sports moment or sports hero that has become a meaningful part of their life. Ultimately these are the individuals that really drive our business because sooner or later the trading and profit making of any item subsides and it becomes a permanent part of someone's collection.

These are the people I find most interesting because they are so passionate about what they have collected. I admit at times it can be tedious listening to stories about how an item was acquired or why the owner feels it is so important, but as a golfer I am used to this, because in order to convey the unbelievable approach shot you made on the 16th, you must also listen to incredible "up and down" your friend made on the 12th. All of us in this collecting category have one thing in common; we all have a dream to create the ultimate shrine to display our treasures. I know this because I have built my whole business predicated solely on this concept.

Any successful entrepreneur must have a knack for understanding what



makes people tick. In my case, I was lucky. It turned out that there were millions of people out there who had the same goal as me, which was to surround themselves with a collection of all the things they are passionate about in life in the coolest possible way. I was fortunate to have an existing picture frame business which could be adapted to make this happen.

It goes without saying that we all proudly and lovingly display photos of family and friends in our offices and homes as a constant reminder of what is important to us, and no memorabilia col-

lection will ever take over their importance. But I have always got a thrill in meeting a sports hero or collecting a memory from a special event and got a twinge of excitement every time I glanced at a photo reminding me of the moment. So why not surround yourself with as many as possible?

I probably spend more waking hours in my office than anywhere else including home. So this is where I display my collection. It's a collection, of course, unique to me, custom designed for me, by me. Since I do spend so much time here, it needs to be multi-faceted.



Mike Wilson's collection is displayed as a shrine to Wayne Gretzky, Team Canada, the Toronto Maple Leafs, and the Notre Dame Fighting Irish.

It is broken down into sections. To my immediate right and closest to me is my family wall which includes my favorite photos of those people most important to me. Believe it or not, Wayne Gretzky and Sidney Crosby do not make "this" wall.

Straight ahead, I proudly display a framed 7'x 5' 10,000 piece puzzle of a map of the world (circa 1611) that took me six months to build (and about 5 cases of wine consumed), surrounded by numerous framed 8x10's of golf events I have been involved in, including shots with Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Ray Floyd and Fred Couples and Tom Watson. To my left is a framed 16x 20 of me and Wayne Gretzky and in full New York Ranger uniforms before stepping on the ice as team mates at the Gretzky Fantasy Camp. Also on display is a shot of Gordie Howe and myself posing beside the Stanley Cup. Paul Coffey and

myself in the Edmonton dressing room just prior to the outdoor Heritage Game in Edmonton, and a photo with me and my friend Russ Courtnall actually on the ice after the game.

Behind me are my trophy fish mounts, along with treasured shots of family fishing outings and photos of a couple of fishing trips with my friend Henry Waszczuk host of "Fins and Skins" and "Fishing the Flats". My favorite piece of fishing memorabilia though, is the photo of with me with the unofficial world record holder for a 10-year-old

who caught a 43" Musky on 10 pound test. It happens to be my daughter Nicole. We never kept the fish or submitted it, but we did measure it and photograph it. Thus, it remains the unofficial world record.

My outer office is a wall to wall eclectic mix of autographed photos, mostly personalized to me, from athletes I have

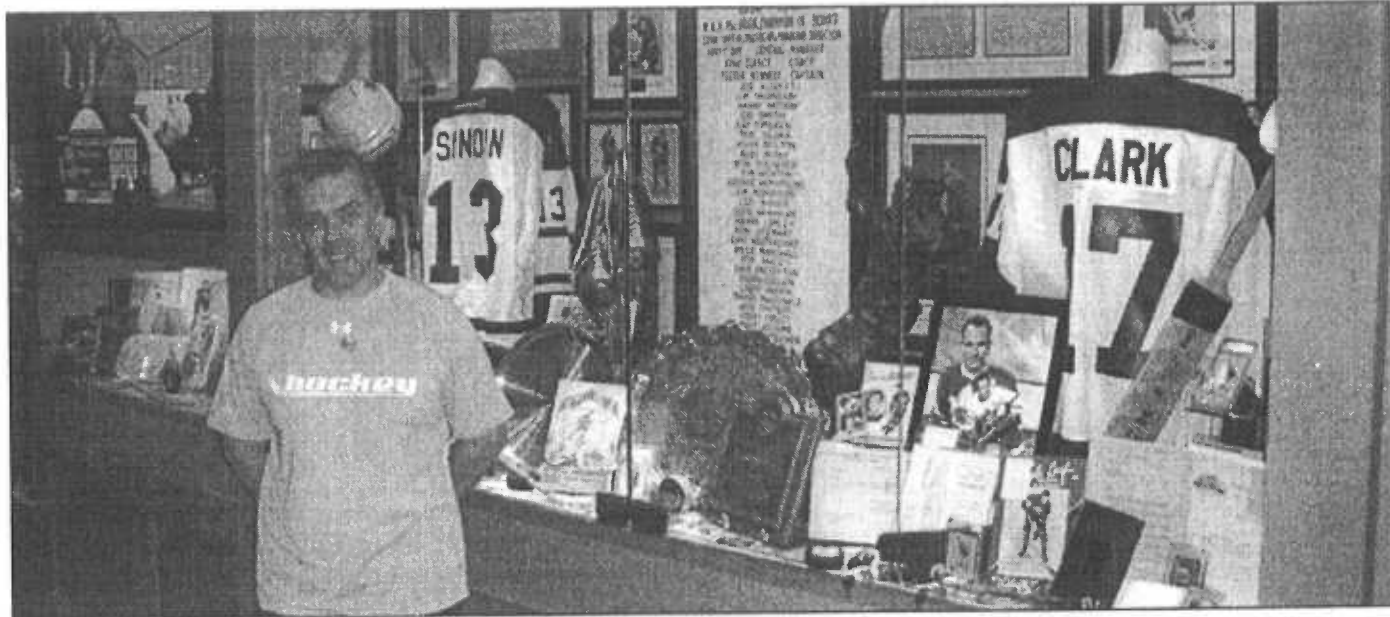
worked with, many of whom have become friends.

I mentioned that my collection is designed for me. It's designed so that on this long weekend where my choice would be to be fishing with my world record holding daughter instead of being stuck here doing work, I can pause (as I just did) look up at the picture of her and I holding the enormous fish, and bring me right back to that moment.

It makes sitting in my office so much more enjoyable and is a constant reminder of why life is so great.

Ultimately, this is the premise behind most personal collections and throughout the years, I have seen quite a few. We all know people that proudly hang a favorite jersey or two. But in recent years I have seen some pretty impressive collections. Apart from Walter Gretzky, who definitely has an unfair advantage in acquiring treasured memorabilia, a

## For What it's Worth



Mike Wilson shows off what Brian Ehrenworth calls the nicest collection and display he has ever seen.

couple of collections come to mind. I have a friend, Anthony, who has a room with 20' ceilings which are covered from floor to ceiling with jersey cabinets (all from Frameworth), displaying his mega collection. Because the cabinets can easily be opened, he can rotate the hundreds of jerseys in his collection at will, enabling him to constantly showcase his latest acquisitions.

Another friend, Jamie Shand, who I first met at the Gretzky Fantasy Camp a number of years ago, sent me a clip from a movie filmed in his home. The site was specifically chosen by the company because they were looking for the ultimate personal memorabilia collection as a backdrop for their film. Until recently, I thought Jamie's collection was the best I have seen, but unfortunately, Jamie, it is no longer. Last weekend, my friend Mike Wilson invited me over to view what I believe is the most incredible collection I have viewed outside a Hall of Fame. In fact, he hired a consultant from the Hockey Hall of Fame to help design his displays. Mike and I have been friends for a number of years. From time to time I see him or his wife in our showroom, framing up a newly acquired treasure.

Although I have always been impressed with the uniqueness of each new piece he added, I had no idea of the scope of his collection.

A few weeks ago I received a call from Mike saying that he needed some help styling up a number of new pieces. Mike's new basement display was near completion and he needed someone to come to his home to help with the finishing touches. I was on my way to China at the time so my head designer Steve Fraser agreed to help him out. House calls are generally not part of our thing.

Upon my return the display had been completed and Mike joked that in order for Frameworth to get paid, I would personally have to drop by to see the collection and pick up the cheque.

What I saw was beyond your wildest dreams... the ULTIMATE personal memorabilia collection. Never mind the

upstairs where he displays his music collection with original pieces from the likes of the Beatles and the Doors, the basement is where it's at. It has been completely remodeled to showcase his complete sports collection. The most amazing thing is, once you hit the end of the stairway, you no longer feel that you are in a home. It looks and feels like you are in a museum or a Hall of Fame.

Mike's big passions outside of his music collection include the Maple Leafs, Wayne Gretzky, Team Canada and Notre Dame football. Glass cases and displays have been built into the walls to showcase his incredible collection of jerseys, sticks and other artifacts, most of which are game used. Mike bought up seats, turnstiles, section signs, stick racks, locker stalls and even the dressing room door from Maple Leaf Gardens.

He has Game worn jerseys from Ted Kennedy to Darryl Sittler and contracts and scoresheets from Wayne Gretzky as well as letters from Bill Barilko requesting a try out from the Leafs, and from Punch Imlach to Terry Sawchuk berating him for missing curfew.

Mike's collection is by far the most impressive I have seen outside of a Hall of Fame.

But even more important is the built-in theatre with big screen TV's and comfortable theatre chairs which allows Mike and his friends to plop themselves right down in the middle of everything and simply take it in. Each piece has special meaning, hand picked because of its importance to Mike and his family. I can only imagine the sense of accomplishment in a quiet moment when Mike sits back in a room so unique and views all the memories and things he is passionate about.

And whether it's a single framed autograph from the first time you meet your hero, or a collection as extreme as Mike's, isn't that what collecting is all about. I think so!

That's my opinion anyway.... For What it's Worth!

*Brian Ehrenworth is the President of Frameworth Sports Marketing. Visit their website at [www.frameworth.com](http://www.frameworth.com)*