



Searching for medical antiques has been an interesting journey for Dr. Brantley Molpus.

# Marvelous Medical Collection

This collector proves that just about anything that strikes your fancy can be collected.

By Sarah Kezer

There is a natural satisfaction in possessing things that no one else does, but it's not materialistic motives that drives enthusiast **Dr. Brantley Molpus** of **Winter Park**. For this collector, it's about the journey rather than the destination.

## MEDICAL ANTIQUES

Molpus was inspired to collect medical antiques by the old medical books that ended up at his antique shop in Winter Park. "I started noticing the number of medical items at estate sales and property auctions," says Molpus. "For a while I was the guy showing up at your garage sale at 7 a.m."

With a little bit of research, Molpus found an unexpectedly large network of fellow medical item collectors. "Some are physicians and nurses themselves and some are family members of physicians who may have found a possession of their grandfather's and began a passion for it that way," Molpus says. "It's great to talk with other collectors because they love to tell you all they know about their finds."

Since he was receiving packages from places all over the world, Molpus decided to make some excursions himself. He traveled to Scotland, England and places where he says dated items were easier to



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come by.

One of his biggest finds was from the basement of a medical school. Molpus says that the intact human skeleton from the late 1800s found there is very rare.

"There are a lot of laws that pertain to shipping human remains so it was a challenge to get it home," Molpus says.

At its largest, his collection grew to take up three entire rooms of his house. The items varied from old blood drawing and anesthesia kits to a portable wooden box and large needle once used to treat a collapsed lung. "It's fascinating to see how far medicine has come," Molpus says.

According to him, his oldest medical textbook dates back to 1758 and his favorite item is the Walton Minnitt Gas-Air Apparatus, a portable anesthesia device. Molpus says he's only come across an item like this online and it was in the Science Museum of London.

After about eight years of actively searching, Molpus decided to start parting with some of his collection. He gave the human skeleton and other items to his brothers. He says it hasn't been easy parting with his pieces because each item reminds him of the journey he took to obtain it and many are one-of-a-kind. Choosing to keep about a quarter of his collection, Molpus has donated several items to medical schools for others to study and enjoy. **■**