



# Mostly about People

By Wally Tralbing

Should you ever have to ask Mrs. J. S. Atwell to "Please pass the salt and pepper"—brace yourself.

If she feels the least bit jocular, jocose, or maybe whimsical, she could bury you.

The lady has 851 sets.

Mrs. Atwell is a white-haired widow of 77, who lives in an upstairs apartment at 232½ Walnut avenue. But don't let this trifle description dominate your mental picture. She's "all systems go."

Mrs. Atwell can work up more enthusiasm than a Fort Lauderdale college riot over her collection.

She's been peppered with shakers from all over creation for 11 years.

Part of her ceramic amassment is in a box under her bed. There's two more boxes down in the garage, and the rest are crammed Fibber Magee-like, on bookcase shelves.

She got down on her 77-year-old knees like a spring chicken to hunt out her favorites.

Mrs. Atwell has items that you'd die from lack of salt before daring to dream they were shakers.

Like: a lawn mower, set of lanterns, pair of chairs, dust pan and broom, watermelon slices, telephone, RCA pooch, Mexican hats, grandma and grandpa sitting in rocking chairs (bless them), Greyhound buses, and a rattlesnake.

Most of them would give you some bad moments.

For example if you saw a miniature hat rack on the table with a straw hanging on one side and a derby on the other and your potatoes were flat as saltless popcorn, you'd ask Mrs. Atwell if she had any salt around.

She'd look at you as if you were hard of seeing and say: "Land sakes, it's right in front of you." The salt is in the straw, and the pepper in the derby.

If her gold-gilded player piano was on the table, you'd press the keys and up would pop small shakers from the top.

Most of these come from resort-type cities, or countries around the world, or airlines, trains, buses and hotels.

So I had to ask the nasty question.

"No," exclaimed Mrs. Atwell, with a tinge of hurt in her voice, "Never have I taken one single set out of a hotel, or restaurant, or from any place."

"People bring me these shakers when they travel. Hardly a week goes by without my receiving at least one pair," she said.

We continued our review: an old GE refrigerator, a set of pocket watches, a long drooping dachshund with salt holes in the head and pepper holes on the

rear, ten pins, beer steins, a Mixmaster.

Imagination in salt and pepper shaker trade knows no bounds.

How would you like to salt your eggs with a flat tire and add a little pepper from an old fashioned tire pump.

Or use tooth-shaped shakers yanked from a set of lower ceramic dentures.

Or watch the pepper rain out of a miniature ice cream soda.

Or face a couple of tombstones of a morning.

Or turn the switch on a toaster or TV set and go "wheweeee" when the shakers pop up.

And from good old Santa Cruz comes a seagull set. That perplexed Mrs. Atwell for a while, but not for long. She found the outlets in each of the eyes.

One of her favorites is a set made by her son out of deer horns.

Why on earth does one collect such silly things?

For one thing, it brings her periods of joy and makes her new friends that ordinarily an elderly widow could not find.

And recently she discovered value. A New York man visiting here, heard of her collection and spent a day going over it.

"He offered me \$3000 for the lot," said Mrs. Atwell in her small apartment upstairs. "I said no, but I promised him first chance if I ever got a notion to sell."

"Land sakes," she said after a time, "we haven't begun to see all the shakers—and they keeps coming."

"I haven't met a person yet who hasn't sent me a pair."

She looked me right smack in the left eye when she said it.

She has everything in shakers, so I thought it might be novel to give her some salt and pepper.

But this won't do because of a health problem.

She can't touch the stuff.