

Students, teachers find joy in collecting souvenirs, memorabilia

Sophia Hsu | Media Team

For English Teacher Mark Mazzenga, collecting "Star Trek" memorabilia has been a constant throughout his adolescence and adulthood. Mazzenga has accumulated a collection of "Star Trek"-themed board games, magazines, action figures and even wine bottles.

"It really comes from my affinity for the television show and the culture surrounding it," Mazzenga said.

Mazzenga began collecting the franchise's merchandise when he attended his first "Star Trek" convention at around the age of 11. He said the driving factor for most collectors is owning a physical part of something special to them.

"I just find that when you love something that has a culture and an ethos, you just want a piece of it," Mazzenga said.

Similarly, Leila Beal (27) said collecting sand from her travels is a way to immortalize her favorite memories.

"It's really cool to have a bit of the place that you went to, and it helps bring a bit of the scenery," Beal said. "You can really remember your times there, which I think is really fun."

Beal said she has accumulated sand and rocks from various beaches for over a decade, which she now arranges into small bottles and displays on their designated shelves.

"We have sand from all the beaches in Normandy, from Hawaii, different beaches across the state as well as a few from pebbly and rocky beaches in Europe," she said.

Likewise, World Languages Teacher Carlos Alvarez's collection reflects his travels across country

borders. As a collector of various currencies, Alvarez tries "to take a package of coins and notes" from each of the places he visits.

However, his collection is not limited to currencies from the countries he has seen firsthand. Since beginning his collection, friends have started gifting him coins too.

"I know people who have really gotten engaged with this and sometimes they bring me mon-

ey from different places that I've never been to," Alvarez said. "It gives me the opportunity to say, 'Oh I really want to go to that place.'"

Like Alvarez, Mazzenga said he credits many items from his "Star Trek" collection to his friends and family.

"What happens with collections is that when people know you're interested in something, they tend to gift you things," Mazzenga said. "Particularly, in recent years, the majority of my collection has come from other people."

Rocco de Langlade (26), who collected hats for roughly

four years, said it all started with a present.

"Someone got me a hat one day," de Langlade said. "I wanted more, and now I get them for my baby cousin."

De Langlade said his wool hats are unique and quirky-looking, with the majority of them coming from market stands at Winter Wonderland.

"I just remember wearing different ones to school in the winter when I was like in Grade 6 or 7," de Langlade said.

In addition to collecting bottles of sand, Beal said she has also always collected magnets with her father.

"We collect magnets from basically every single place, museum, or country that we go to," Beal said. "We have these huge magnet boards in our house that have like hundreds of them now."

Like Beal, Alvarez said he ensures his foreign currency collection is kept "tidy and accessible." Although he is aware of how valuable some of his coins and bills are, including currency from Spain dating back to the 19th century, he refuses to trade or sell them because his love for his collection means much more.

In Mazzenga's case, he said some of the most valuable items in his collection include

autographs from famous "Star Trek" actors. He said one of his favorite memories was when he received an autograph from actor Avery Brooks, who played Captain Benjamin Sisko and coincidentally, had a son who attended the school Mazzenga taught at the time. After Mazzenga explained his connection to the actor, they had a long conversation in the middle of a huge queue of people at a "Star Trek" convention.

"On top of the physical artifact, it was just so nice to have that interaction and memory," Mazzenga said.

Alvarez said he keeps his currency collection at his father's house for safe-keeping.

"Every single time that I'm back there, I always look through it because it brings back a lot of memories," Alvarez said.

Although it has been trickier for Alvarez to get a hold of different coins with the rising use of credit cards, he said he still manages to find a way to grow his collection.

For Beal, memories are what lie at the core of her collections. She said she often looks back at the sand she collected from Juno Beach, Normandy.

"It reminds me of all the times I spent with my brother on the beach and just playing and looking around for cool shells," Beal said.

Mazzenga feels collecting is how he is able to grow closer to fellow Star Trek enthusiasts and bond over their love for the show like the way in which "one might wear a sports jersey."

"I like to be a part of that culture in that community and have that, I suppose, identity if you will," Mazzenga said. "I also really like [collections] because they are memories."

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— English Teacher Mark Mazzenga



Photos by Sophia Hsu, courtesy of Leila Beal, Carlos Alvarez, Rocco de Langlade and Mark Mazzenga