



You can't collect everything, but why not try?

The first page of Glasser's illustrated wantlist indicates the breadth of his pursuits.

This story was written in 2022 as Mike Glasser was dealing with cancer, a cancer which took his life on April 29, 2024. He will be remembered as one of the nicest people in the hobby.



By George Vrechek

The Wrapper subscriber Mike Glasser has yet to meet a card that he doesn't like. Once he discovers a new set, it isn't long before it is on his wantlist. He describes his approach as "shotgun." Collecting has been a joy to the seemingly always upbeat Glasser. An adage in collecting is that you can't collect everything. Some would advise us to, therefore, focus on what we like.

However, Mike would likely respond, "But why not try?"

Early collecting

Glasser was born in 1963 and has been a subscriber to *The Wrapper* for the past twenty years. As a kid, he collected baseball cards from the early 1970s. His collection received a substantial, but temporary, boost from a fortuitous purchase by his dad. In the mid-1970s, Glasser's dad

happened upon a yard sale and a fellow who had T206s for \$1.50 each. Glasser's dad was not a collector, but he knew his son would be interested in the cards and bought 30 of them including three Cobbs, Mathewson, Tinkers, Evers and Chance.

Glasser admits the story would be even better had he hung onto the cards, but when he stopped collecting and got into music in 1980, he sold his card collection for \$750. With the proceeds he bought a synthesizer to use in the band he was in. He enjoyed his music career which included a record contract and going on tour, but he settled on something more practical for a career. Glasser and his wife own two day-care centers in Maryland caring for over 350 children.



The colorful 49-card T53 Cowboy Series got Glasser back into collecting the cardboard.

Reentering the hobby

Glasser has always been interested in paper ephemera, antiques and history. A card he saw at a flea market in the 1990s caught his eye. The card was from the 1910 T53 Cowboy Series. He bought two for \$1 each, and his card collecting interest was re-ignited. Two cards led to thousands. He liked the artwork, history and write-ups which reflected sometimes cringe-worthy attitudes of the era. Soon he found local card shows, stores, other collectors and *The Wrapper*. He started his "re-collection" with non-sports cards including cards from TV shows he watched as a kid: Hogan's Heroes and The Munsters. However, he liked about everything he ran into.

He went after the 19th century actress cards, tobacco cards from the 1910 era, sports cards from every era, modern non-sports cards, inserts, variations and upgrades. One of the local card shows he attends in Baltimore is called the Slade/Elks Lodge Show where he has found vintage non-sports cards and dealers who look for him. He has purchased from advertisers in *The Wrapper*. His youngest daughter joined him collecting and organizing a master set of T59 Flags which added to his collecting enjoyment. The T59 set has 200 cards in the base set but has backs from 12 different brands as well as different factories to create a never-ending quest. Glasser is currently at 1,660 cards of the master set.



Daughter Molly has helped organize the T59 Flags.

Cataloging cards

Glasser's online wantlist (<https://miglasser.wixsite.com/wantlist/non-sports>) reflects his enthusiasm for identifying and pursuing more sets to collect. One card in hand will cause him to add a set to his lists complete with photos and checklists. When I interviewed Glasser, he had identified over 300,000 unique cards that he has already obtained. Just in the category of pre-1981 non-sports cards, he has collected over 39,000 cards. Given the smaller number of cards in many non-sports sets, he has been pursuing over 1,300 non-sports sets ranging from N45 Actresses to Star Wars.

Glasser commented, "I've always loved non-sports, but I don't have the ability to edit my collection. I have a 'shotgun' approach to collecting. In other words, if I don't have it already, it becomes part of my collection which is how I ended up branching into the early actresses which absolutely account for a significant percentage of my collection. For example, I have 2,450 N245's alone - this does include back variations." When asked for images of his favorite sets, Glasser furnished scans of N45 and N145 - two huge issues of actors and actresses, N488 Actresses and the N554 Inventors and Inventions, which has only 10 cards identified. Jefferson Burdick wrote about the challenge of keeping all the mostly unnamed actresses straight, and he was a rather organized fellow.



Top row: N45, N145, N488. Bottom: N554 Inventors and Inventions

Glasser acknowledged, "You could probably find that most collectors have some excessive compulsive tendencies." His grandfather was a stamp collector and talked to him about collecting. Mike and his younger sister collected bottle caps as kids, organizing them and cleaning them. He came from a family of teachers. "My wife always says that if it isn't organized, it's a hoard, but if it's organized, it's a collection so my cards are well organized and cross-referenced. Open any list from my wantlist and each checklist has the location of the cards (either a binder or a box) and the number of unique cards that I have. I can find any card in my collection at any time - in theory."

Sources of information

Glasser uses several sources for identifying set checklists and variations. He has found that no one source has included everything. He uses the Non-Sports Bible, Trading Card Data Base and various other online and book sources. Glasser explained, "I always try to find checklists for

every set and there are a few main sources of information including the World Tobacco Index (I have the entire set of 7-8 volumes), the Non-Sports Bible and of course the American Tobacco card book by Forbes. I use all of the online resources but especially Trading Card Database which I contribute to on a regular basis by scanning and adding card images. Advanced searches on eBay are also an excellent source of up-to-date information as well.”

“I greatly expanded my collection when I was invited to join oldbaseball.com (OBC). More importantly, I've made some great friendships with other OBC folks here in Baltimore/PA.” He has met collectors with similar interests including Andrew White, Patrick Prickett, Cliff Franklin Ed Schott and his favorite non-sport dealer Doug Pall from Dover, Delaware.

Ed Schott commented, “I don't know how Mike does what he does. He is a real friend, one of the nicest guys you'd ever meet and has a variety of interests. He is very generous. The challenge is that when you think maybe you've found something that he can use, that you can give him, it turns out he already has it.”



Glasser also enjoys collecting the large T62 Fortune Series and the 1901 T405 Comic Cartoons.

Monster box bargains

Glasser enjoys picking up bargains, and he is patient. For example, he might hang around until the conclusion of a show and see if there are any table holders interested in wholesaling monster boxes of cards rather than lugging them home. He has picked up boxes for \$10 that provide continued collecting activities for sorting, organizing and trading. He doesn't shy away from expensive vintage cards either but likes to get them in good condition and graded. While he has collected modern cards, he is skeptical about the continued value of cards purported to be rare and scarce. One of one cards don't make much sense to him.

If the Father of Card Collecting, Jefferson Burdick, were still around today, he would embrace Glasser's approach and would enjoy seeing the litany of sets and images found on Glasser's wantlist. Thirty years ago, Gatorade came up with a slogan for their spokesman Michael Jordan – “Be like Mike.” Card collectors would do well to be like Mike as well, Mike Glasser.

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