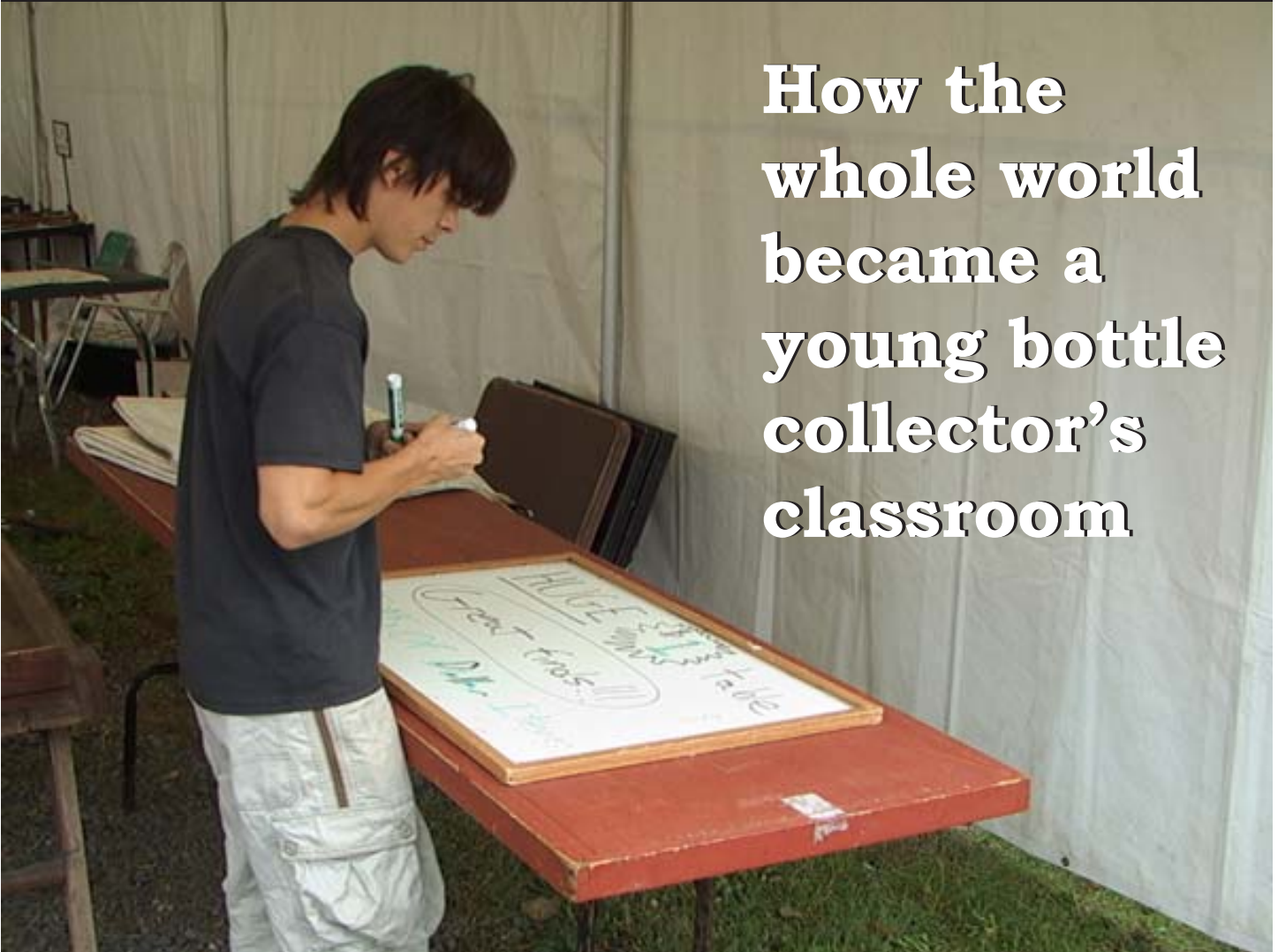


# BONUS FEATURE

## How the whole world became a young bottle collector's classroom



*As promised in the Autumn 2011 edition of *The Bottle Muse*, we are pleased to present a Bonus Feature about Hunter Foote – the young bottle collector who was accepted as a college student at the age of 13 and graduated near the top of his class four years later.*

*Born in Worcester, MA in February of 1994, Hunter has resided with parents Dawna and David since the family moved to Wales, MA (by way of Southbridge) roughly a decade later. Rounding out the Foote clan are Hunter's older brother Shane and a bottle-digging dog named Cocoa. What follows in Hunter's own words is the story of how the whole world became his classroom.*

I was home-schooled for about 90 per cent of my life. I gave public school a short try, as well as some experimentation and experimental, off-of-the-beaten-track schools.

Alas, nothing quite fit me, or I didn't fit anything; possibly both. I wasn't a fan of people my own age and I spent my time either alone or with adults.

The infrequent play date usually ended in me being a tad bored. My social occasions were tagging along with my dad to meetings, etc. I was quite happy at home, and whatever I felt I was missing out on was worth missing out on in my opinion. I was living life my way, and learning all about things people said I would never use.

What was — and is still perhaps the most rewarding part of the home-schooling experience — is not what I learned, but the skills I learned through learning my academics.

I was taught how to learn, which is the most valuable skill in school in my opinion.

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***“I went to (college) and asked to sign up for classes. Well, actually, my mom did because I wasn’t tall enough to see over the counter in the administration building.”***

***-- Hunter Foote***

Photo of Hunter Foote fiddling up a storm at Brimfield Bottle Show by Brian Kutner. Picture of him preparing for sale (opposite) courtesy of David Foote. To view more photographs of Hunter and his violin, please go to next page or see Autumn 2011 edition of *The Bottle Muse*.

When my mom said she couldn’t teach math above the algebra level, I grabbed the calculus book and started to teach myself. I did the same with science, English, music, and business. Music and business — but not combined — were my two favorite subjects. Music was my artistic release, and business was always an avenue in which to challenge myself.

I made a hobby out of reading balance sheets and evaluating corporate strategy and finance. Pricing stock options and looking at the “whys” of corporate America was my idea of a good time. I liked it all . . . except history. I never got into history for some reason, except for American bottles — obviously!

When I was 13, I asked my mom if I could go to college. I was getting tired

of home-schooling, and I am sure she was getting a little tired of having to put up with me day after day. She, of course, doubted they would accept me, which was all I needed as a push to get in.

Against her suggestion, I headed off to Holyoke Community College in Western MA in attempts to get into their Music Program — one of the best programs, and I believe the only such two-year program in Massachusetts.

I was told that in order to qualify for acceptance at HCC, I would have to be 16 so I instead went to Quinsigamond Community College and asked to sign up for classes there. Well, actually, my mom did because I wasn’t tall enough to see over the counter in the administration building. I wouldn’t take no for an answer, so they signed me up for three classes.

My intention was still to enroll in HCC, so when my semester was over I headed back and grabbed the first appointment slot with the admissions director the day she got back from her vacation.

I walked in with my transcript from the three classes (all As), and I was ready for a battle, but after a short discussion, I was accepted on the condition that I secured a paper from my school system’s superintendent saying it was okay for me to officially conclude my high school studies.

My parents drew up a “graduation from home-schooling certificate” on my 16th birthday, and we filed the necessary papers with the local school district. A few months later, I graduated with a degree in Music and a degree in Liberal Arts -- **both Summa Cum Laude.**



“Church has recently become a significant portion of my life, and I am thrilled with the people there,” says Hunter Foote, who has also done volunteer work for a local Hospice as well as performing for terminally ill patients in hospitals. “I always enjoy sharing my music with people who really need some connection.” The 17-year-old especially enjoys composing music and playing Celtic tunes. To view videos of past violin performances, please click on the following links: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvFa7qFWuM&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvFa7qFWuM&feature=related) and [www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkAQZ2WdZSQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkAQZ2WdZSQ)

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