

# Muskegon collection shows off creative cribbage boards

By [Aaron Ogg | The Grand Rapids Press](#)

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MUSKEGON — One of the cribbage boards in Dan Betz’s 450-piece collection offers a valuable tip — on hygiene, not game strategy.

“If you sprinkle when you tinkle, be a sweetie and wipe the seatie,” reads the lid on the handmade, pine board. Lift it up and proceed to keep score around a toilet seat — perfectly suited to tally a flush hand.

Betz’s pieces range from bizarre to clever.

A battleship board features removable cannons that serve as scorekeeping pegs. He has others crafted as full-size benches, a bowling pin and a pineapple.

When Betz, 67, a computer programmer, retired in 2003 from Muskegon Area Intermediate School District, his obsession with cribbage boards blossomed. He began hitting yard sales at a frenzied pace, hoping to uncover rare finds. Now, his basement is filled with the holey little wooden planks.

“One thing led to another, and now you see what’s happened,” Betz said. “I’m a die-hard treasure hunter.”

His collection includes loads of boards crafted by the Drueke Co., founded in Grand Rapids in 1914.

Betz’s boards will be on display from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday and Friday at the Crowne Plaza Hotel during the [American Cribbage Congress’ Grand National 28 event](#).

Drueke crafted game boards and pieces from its facility, at 601 Third St., beginning in 1941. Many of the company’s cribbage sets were shipped overseas to military

servicemembers during World War II.

The company later split into three entities, which were purchased by the Ludington-based Carron Co. in 1990 along with exclusive product rights.

The former building is targeted for \$6.5 million in improvements by local furniture retailer Robert Israels.

Betz's most prized Drueke board is a circular item from 1938 made of walnut with a glass ash tray in the center. He picked it up on eBay for \$100, "but I wouldn't sell it for twice that," he said.

Betz is a member of the Cribbage Board Collectors Society, founded in 1991 and composed of 40 members.

Since many boards are crafted by hobbyists, it can be difficult to pin down specifics on when and where certain pieces were made and their appropriate values, Betz said. The collectors society publishes a guide containing as many boards as are traceable.

Betz, who has been playing cribbage for about a half a century, founded the grass-roots Muskegon Cribbage Club in 1994.

A high school friend taught him the game, and their group of friends would play penny-a-point: lose by 10, pay 10 cents. He got serious after he realized his buddies were taking him for a ride.

"I found out later they were taking every advantage — cheating whenever they could," Betz said.

