



# TRUE BLUE

*Think your collection is out of hand? Read the musings of this Blue Willow collector run amok*

BY REBECCA J. RAZO

**W**hen it comes to collecting, we all have our vices. My best friend Helen is obsessed with anything—and I do mean anything—related to beagles, particularly Snoopy. Limited edition figurines, vintage lunch pails, high-end lithographs, a giant Pez dispenser, you name it. She has an entire curio cabinet devoted to the beloved beagle, and you'd be hard-pressed not to find a Snoopy artifact in every room of her home.

My husband loves jars—big, small, fat, thin, cobalt. He doesn't discriminate. He'll hang on to a brown glass vitamin jar and its plastic screw-top lid if he thinks it will come in handy someday. When he runs out of storage room for his jars, he tries to peddle them to visitors.

Under other circumstances, I might think that someone with a jar fixation or Snoopy fetish is a bit kooky, but I have an obsession of my own: Blue Willow.

It all started with my mother-in-law. I didn't know what Blue Willow was until the first Thanksgiving I spent with my husband's family. His mother had set the table using her exquisite gold-trimmed Blue Willow china—and I don't mean just dinner plates, cups and saucers. Virtually everything on the table was Blue Willow: the turkey platter, gravy boat, ladle, butter

dish, knife rests, serving ware, salt and pepper shakers, sugar and creamer, water pitcher, even the towels covering the rolls. I had never seen such a beautiful arrangement. I started asking her about the pattern (which is what I think endeared me to her) and within a month, I had purchased my first set of dishes.

Notice that I said "first set." Since that time almost a decade ago, I've probably collected enough Blue Willow to entertain 50 people. Some might say I've gone a little crazy, and I'll be the first to admit that I was probably a tad overzealous, especially during that first year. My mother-in-law laughingly told me that I had caught the "Blue Willow bug." What she didn't tell me is that there is no cure.

In addition to my multiple sets of dishes (my favorite of which has scalloped edges), I have several platters, six teapots, a gravy boat, two sugar dishes, a creamer, a butter dish, three water pitchers, a dozen serving bowls in various sizes, salad tongs, an egg cup, an egg, two dozen teacups and saucers, shot glasses, trivets, tea bag holders, dish towels, oven mitts, an umbrella holder, a toilet paper roll holder, and various

other decorative plates and accessories—and that's just in the color blue.

That's right. About two months into my collecting frenzy, I made a delightful discovery: The Willow pattern comes in a variety of other colors, including red, green, brown, purple, yellow and black. Soon thereafter, some of these colors found their way into my home. Among my favorites is a rare Green Willow ginger jar.

Even though I've been collecting for awhile, I consider myself a Willow novice because I continue to make new discoveries about the pattern. For example, I recently discovered a membership organization exclusively for Willow collectors. And a few months ago, I saw Willow-patterned wallpaper in a magazine. When I told my husband, however, he surveyed our living room—where almost every available shelf and wall space showcases a piece of Willow—and said, "Don't you think that might be a little over the top?" Something told me to drop the subject right then and there.

For me, Blue Willow nirvana came last Christmas by

way of my best friend: a complete set of vintage stainless steel Blue Willow cooking ware with blue glass lids. My husband, always a good sport, just rolled his eyes, resigning himself to the fact that Blue Willow will forever be a part of his life. And my friend was equally excited when she opened one of my gifts to her: a tin Snoopy trash pail.

Oh yes, collecting is a delight.

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Want to know more about Willow? Visit the International Willow Collectors Web site at [willowcollectors.org](http://willowcollectors.org).

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DIANA MARYE

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