Knot your typical collection

Only slightly less voluminous than his collection of Jeffersonian correspondence is J. Jefferson Looney's collection of neckwear. He has 375 ties, give or take, and he wears one per day until each has had its moment in the sun, or at least the office. After the last tie has been worn, he begins the process again. Looney has amassed his collection mostly from yard sales, thrift stores and online auctions. Some date from his high school days. Many fit into themes, and he will pay up to $10 for a tie that fills a particular hole in his collection, a standard that has been relaxed significantly from his former ceiling of 25 cents. Here are some highlights and lowlights that were chosen by Julie Lautenschlager and Ellen Hickman, two editors who work with Looney on the Jefferson Retirement Series.

Staff favorite

This gaudy, festive tie is the staff's favorite, said Hickman and Lautenschlager. Looney wears it the Monday after Easter.

Mom & Dad

Rock Chalk Jayhawk! This recent acquisition is a nod to Looney's parents, who went as students at the University of Kansas.

Princeton

At least 10 ties represent Looney's grad school alma mater. So far, he has none from Maryland, his undergrad school.

Jefferson

This pattern of Jefferson silhouettes is one trustee's favorite, so Looney wears it when he knows he will see her.

Lincoln

In case you were wondering, this was the tie du jour on Feb. 12, Lincoln's birthday, the day these photos were taken.

Geometry

This frayed specimen is among Looney's favorites. "The hand of age is upon it, but I love it too much to give it up. Besides, it's no more decrepit than I am."

Space

Space-related ties remind Looney of his father, a charter employee of NASA who has worked with the U.S. space program since before Sputnik launched.

Lobsters

Hickman considers lobster ties to be a minor theme in the collection because there are at least two. Looney disagrees. But they both like this one anyway.

Memories

Looney carried his young twins up a hill to the church sale where he got this tie. He vowed it would be the last time he hugged both at once.

Namesake

This loon-patterned tie (loons for Looney, get it?) was a present. "Someone actually gave me that, so they may have paid full price."

Science

Looney flouts the obvious and does not wear his bacteriak- and virus-covered microbiology tie when he is ill.

Not ornaments

Looney liked these festive Christmas ornaments but discovered after he bought the tie that they are actually bowling balls.

Holidays

Most holidays are represented, including one-offs such as Y2K and the bicentennial. Yet to be acquired: Groundhog Day.

Hidden themes

This is not a stamp collection but a Columbus Day tie, as these stamps depict his discovery of America.

Food

Edibles are a recurring theme. Looney has two ties devoted solely to Tex-Mex cuisine.