



flea market **MEMORIES**

By Lisa M. Schmelz | Photos by Jennifer Bronenkant

PROVIDING A NEW HOME FOR OLD THINGS, FLEA MARKETS ARE A PLACE WHERE THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE INTERSECT.



MY EARLIEST FLEA MARKET MEMORY IS A HAPPY ONE.

I was probably six years old and with my maternal grandparents somewhere in California's Central Valley. I don't recall much about that day, but if it were a photograph, it would reveal my grandparents standing behind card tables of assorted items they were trying to hock.

The ground wasn't paved on that treeless lot, and the dust was thick. My grandmother was wearing an off-white dress and a blue cardigan. My grandfather, as always, was a ruffled mess, his white short-sleeved shirt a mass of wrinkles and not fully tucked into his brown trousers.

Hard times were a near-constant for my grandparents. They fled the Dust Bowl during the Depression and worked for next to nothing in the fields of California, living in whatever structures they could afford, including a pump house one harvest season. Even after they found other work and achieved the American dream of homeownership, money was always in short supply.

Very little of what they had was bought new; almost always, it came secondhand. So it made perfect sense that people who grew accustomed to making do with the discards of others would ultimately earn extra cash as flea market vendors themselves.

While I remember being at the flea market that day and hearing my grandparents haggle with customers, I couldn't tell you what they were selling. What I do recall, with absolute clarity, is the hope I felt in learning a great truth about my mother's people.

"We're junk dealers," my grandmother explained to me. "We sell the junk other people don't want anymore."

The idea that there was a new home for old things intrigued me. In my young brain, it meant that just like good little girls would one day go to heaven, there was also an afterlife for all our stuff. Nothing had to die. Not people and not our things. For me, that felt very hopeful.

Nearly four decades later, I am still filled with that hope any time I happen on a flea market. Seeing those acres and acres of junk, as my grandmother would have called it, reminds me that the past, present and future really do intersect. And sometimes, if you're really lucky, it happens right in front of you.

WHAT:

Elkhorn Antique Flea Market

WHEN:

May 15, June 26, Aug. 14, Sept. 25

WHERE:

Walworth County Fairgrounds,
411 East Court St., Elkhorn, WI

ADMISSION:

\$5

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.nlpromotionsllc.com





HIGH PRAIRIE
LANDSCAPE SUPPLY

Geneva Lakes' premier supplier of landscape supplies!



Our knowledgeable customer service staff can help with your landscape project.

- Brick Pavers
- Retaining Walls
- Natural Stone
- Bark Mulches
- Fertilizers
- Much More!



W363 Walworth St. Genoa City, WI 53128

Located 10 Minutes South of Lake Geneva at Hwy. 12 & County Rd. H

(262) 279-6500 • www.high-prairie.com

Delivery Available

FOUR SEASONS FLOORING

Serving the lakes area for 20 years. Superior customer service and knowledgeable staff with over 75 years combined experience. Professional designer on staff.

CARPET • VINYL • HARDWOOD • CERAMIC • NATURAL STONE



FREE ESTIMATES

438 S. WRIGHT ST DELAVAN, WI 53115
262.728.6200 • www.fourseasonflooringinc.com



Locally, the seasonal Elkhorn Antique Flea Market is a sort of mecca for people who believe as I do.

More than an opportunity to shop for something old and offbeat, it's a chance to tap into the past, present and the future all at once. When I saw a black patent leather Barbie wardrobe case at the flea market in Elkhorn, I didn't want to buy it because I needed a place to keep Barbie's clothes. I wanted to buy it because once upon a time, when my parents were alive and providing me with food, clothing and shelter, I had one just like it. And \$16.50 is a small price for a 44-year-old orphan to pay to bring her parents back to life.

I didn't buy it, but I didn't need to. Just holding it brought back memories I'd long forgotten.

And so it goes, table after table. Crave a pneumatic foghorn? It's yours for \$1,295. "The brass alone is worth more than that," says the seller.

What can you tell me about the ship's cannon? "\$1,500. It shoots rope. One ship would shoot a line to another," he says. "I can make you a deal on the horn and the cannon."

Not today, thank you.

Ahead, an impeccably dressed woman is examining a '60s era dresser. "What did we say this was, 56 inches?" she asks the vendor of its length. He nods his head in agreement.

What drew her to this eight-drawer Kroehler dresser? "I'm looking for my granddaughter. She's in college and just moved into a small house and needs a dresser," she explains as she reaches for her cell phone and begins dialing.

"I found one that's 56 inches long," she tells her granddaughter on the phone. Will that work?"

There is a pause.

"Well, then measure the space. We'll be here a while, but I'd rather get it now because there isn't anything else like it."



A few booths down, a group of women speaking Japanese are clearly in awe of an orange Pyrex bowl. Only one woman in the group speaks English. "I like to buy the Pyrex, Corningware, Fire King in all the colors," she says slowly and in halting English.

As she speaks, her friends cross the aisle to another booth. When they squeal, no translation is needed. The glassware-loving Japanese woman abandons me to see what her friends have discovered. The happiness is palatable when she hands over cash to the vendor, one of her friends clutching an

orange bowl with a sunburst pattern as though it's a newborn baby.

Beyond the born-again Pyrex, an older man in denim carpenter overalls is carrying a large metal pot that looks like something Hansel and Gretel would run from.

"I'm just going to boil water in it," he says. "I'm going to wash small car parts in the

boiling water. They wanted \$10, but I got 'em down to \$6," he says, smiling.

Leaving an exhibit hall, a well-dressed man is carrying a large clear plastic bag of '70s holiday ornaments. "This will fill out the tree quite nice," he announces.

"Which one?" asks his shopping partner, raising his eyebrows and tilting his head to the side. "You have over 30."

"The new one I'm putting up this year," snaps back the Christmas-loving man.

They both laugh as they walk away.

Near the exit, a husband and wife in matching NASCAR jackets are examining a Philco television. A canvas Coke totebag, filled with their finds, hangs from his belt loop.

The Philco has definitely caught their eye. A Briefcase 19, it is brown and cream, sports a handle on top for easy transport and offers 13 channels of viewing pleasure. A single retractable antenna can be pulled from its side. The asking price is \$25.

As the seller talks about its history, a small crowd forms. It is all I can do to keep my wallet in my purse. My grandparents owned a similar set and passed it on to my parents.

Admiring the Philco, I picture my grandparents behind the vendor's table. Inside, I feel a sense of peace that, on most days, is just out of reach. And it turns out, that was all I needed on this flea market trip.

But next time, I'm getting the Barbie wardrobe case. ♠



"Let my 20 years of knowledge and experience save you time and money!"

Mick Balestrieri, ABR

Lakefront & Resort Home Specialist

Office (262) 348-3244 • Cell (262) 949-3996

E-mail mickb@keeferealestate.com

www.LakeGenevaRealty.com



 <p>LAKE GENEVA: Magnificent log home on Geneva's south shore set on 1.3 ac of lush landscaping & 100'+ frontage, featuring 7 luxurious BR suites, 6 FP's, gourmet kitchen & Adirondack decor. MLS#1058554.....\$6,950,000</p>	 <p>LAUDERDALE LAKES: 6BR, 9BA Cape Cod on exclusive island setting w/395' lvl frntg. Features chef's kitchen, great rm, 3 FP's, en-suite baths, LL W/O, pub, theatre, bunk rm, & 4.5 car. MLS#1176304.....\$2,500,000</p>	 <p>LAKE BEULAH: 5BR/5BA Mediterranean masterpiece on Lake Beulah w/480' lvl frntg & beach, 1.5 wooded ac's, guest quarters, 3 FP's, 3 kitchens, spa & screen porch off BR's. MLS#1158664.....\$1,995,000</p>	 <p>WHITewater LAKE: "New Construction" May 2011 Completion Whitewater Lakefront featuring 5BR, 4BA, 3 fin. lvs & custom finishes on frontage w/ easy slope, fab. views & sunny exposure. MLS#1173938.....\$949,900</p>	 <p>LAUDERDALE LAKES: 4/5BR Deakin Isle home w/sweeping lakeview, 270' lvl swim frontage on Green & Middle Lake, 4 piers, chef's kitchen, fam rm w/FP, 3 season rm, huge master. MLS#1177604.....\$925,000</p>
 <p>LAKE BEULAH: 3BR, 1.5BA Lake Beulah cottage with finished lower level walk-out on 100' swim frontage, boat house, two piers, 2.5 car garage & electric tram. Fabulous views. MLS#1166342.....\$849,000</p>	 <p>LAKE GENEVA: Located just steps to the "Manor's" fabulous lakefront park is where you'll find this stately 4BR, 2.5BA brick colonial set on 3 large lots. MLS#1149656.....\$545,000</p>	 <p>LAKE GENEVA: Bank owned lot in exclusive South Shore Club on Geneva Lake. Build your dream home on this premier sized, sloped lot & enjoy SSC's amazing amenities. MLS#1162888.....\$399,000</p>	 <p>RICE LAKE: Build your dream home on this wooded/sloped lakefront lot w/75' frontage, panoramic views & storage shed on tranquil 137 acre lake for skiing and fishing. MLS#1180459.....\$219,900</p>	<p>SCAN ME</p>  <p>View all my listings on your smart phone by scanning this QR (Quick Response) code</p> <p>DOWNLOAD FREE QR CODE READER APP.</p>