



CAN COLLECTIBLES BE RETIREMENT FRIENDLY?

From a family heirloom to a fine piece of art, collectibles mean different things to different people. A special collection or item evokes memories. It may also be part of your retirement plan.

Auctioneer Marshall Gummer took us on a journey through his experiences as one of Canada's most travelled appraisers. "I hunt for treasures every day, and I learn something new about objects every week and at every auction," says Marshall who grew up in Europe and spent his youth visiting churches, museums and art galleries.

Whether you're a seasoned collector or curious about what's in your treasure trove, let's explore this unique world.

Keepsake or forsake

A collectible is any object a person is interested in keeping. Collectors surround themselves with things they like. However, not everything's valuable. Marshall uses antique furniture as an example. He says "antique" doesn't mean much anymore. Nothing magical happens when an item turns 100 years old.

Rarity's key and if someone's looking for it, it's likely worth a second opinion. "Collecting is similar to investing in the stock market. You buy or keep the best of the best," says Gummer. "If you want to realize a gain, ask yourself if there's a market for your collectible. And then, ask an expert."

For what it's worth

Marshall doesn't sell anything if he doesn't know its value. So, how do appraisals work? Today, Marshall focuses more on the disposition of estates than on single-item appraisals. He takes a top-down approach and evaluates the most valuable item first. He appraises about 90% of items by memory. For the rest, he uses the Internet. "The web helps with identifying the value of most things. I rarely use a guide, but sometimes I find something obscure that requires more research."

He asks owners lots of questions about the estate so that he doesn't miss an opportunity. For instance, things like watches, jewelry and art can bring a lot of value.

A piece for your retirement plan

Certain items can add value to an investment portfolio. What's the best time to sell? Marshall says you have to sense when the market has peaked. It's not easy, but it's possible. That's why doing your research or dealing with an expert is important. If you want to sell something or add to your collection, he suggests:

- Finding a private collector
- Connecting with an auction house with North American exposure
- Using an online site



"Keep in mind that anything introduced as a collectible—like collector plates or limited-edition prints—will likely fall out of fashion," Marshall advises. People will accumulate a lot of something and then start putting bits of it on the market. That drives prices down.

We asked Marshall...What's the most valuable item you've come across? His answer...A very early Andy Warhol hand-coloured print called *Happy Bug Day*.

"The woman who presented the print to me had no idea of its value. Allen Ginsberg, an American poet, originally received the print from Andy Warhol," says Marshall. "Allen gave it to the woman's husband as a birthday gift. It'd likely be insured at a value of about \$100,000 today."

Vintage Barbie—You can be anything...even an investment

A vintage Barbie (1959-1972) collector explains what attracts her to the doll and its special place in her retirement plan.

"I love the vintage dolls and the fashions even more—that's why I started collecting 20 years ago. But, I wasn't thinking about my retirement plan then," says Linda Taverner, Communications Director at CIBC. "That changed as my collection grew."

"I understand Barbie's value because I've researched a lot—you'd do the same if you wanted to invest in a company's stock," says Linda. So, what's special about Barbie? She's been a part of pop culture since 1959 and has never been out of production.

Rarity separates vintage Barbie from today's dolls. Original Barbies were produced as toys, not as collectibles. This, and their age, make finding vintage Barbie items difficult—especially at reasonable prices. "Not everything old is valuable," advises Linda. "Always look for items that are in very good condition or better!"

How does her collection fit in her retirement plan? Demand for vintage Barbie continues to grow, and Linda says she can realize value in various ways. She can connect with her network of collectors, sell through an auction house, or liquidate pieces online. But for now, she's happy to continue feeding her passion.

Whether your collection is part of your retirement plan or not, preserving its value is key to a lifetime of enjoyment. Looking for more information? Try [Marshall Gummer Estate Auctions](#).

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