

Taking a look at our own circle of life



MARK PAVILONS

It's been said that the average North American has three stages of life - wanting stuff, accumulating stuff, and getting rid of stuff. A truer word could never be spoken. When you think of it in those very straightforward terms, it begs the question: just what the heck are we doing? In my case I'd like to squeeze in a stage between the last two - the refusing to get stuff because I don't need it and it's too expensive phase. We all must realize by now the fleeting nature of the things in our lives. Let's turn the clock back to our youth - the Boomers will understand. When we were young, we were happy with the necessities - clothes, decent running shoes and a bike. They didn't have to be fancy and some of the time they were hand-me-downs. We were happy if the folks took us out to eat at the Red Barn or Ponderosa, or grabbed a bucket of KFC on the way home from work. Of course, when we got older, we needed a car. Anyone living in a relatively small town knows this. Growing up just outside of Bolton meant I had to do what was necessary so I would borrow Dad's Oldsmobile or Mom's Chevy Citation. We didn't care what the car looked like, we were happy it moved. I got my '365' and then my real licence after driving around Bolton for 15 minutes back in the early 80s. There were no G, G2 or G-anything. No restrictions, no limits on passengers. Generally speaking, we were respectful of our parents' cars and knew we'd get clobbered if we returned home with a new dent or flat tire. All in all we were cautious and tried to avoid trouble. During our youth, we didn't really aim to collect stuff. That just wasn't a thing. I had vinyl records, and tried to assemble a decent stereo - a mash of garage sale speakers and Radio Shack components. A few knick knacks lived on the shelf next to my desk. I only began accumulating stuff when I met my beautiful wife. We picked up cool and cheap things at every flea market and discount store we visited. The only luxuries we gathered were a handful of statues from a local gift store. That, and some really cool framed posters. Every time we moved we also tossed, and discovered a need to renew or replace things we needed. As our houses and family grew, so did our necessities. If we were lucky, and snared a great deal, we accumulated some personal treasures. We saved our excesses for our children - they had every popular toy, movie and fashion accessory known. I believe my son still has a collection of Transformers and Harry Potter Lego somewhere. A small fortune in trinkets to be sure. And again, much of this stuff fell out of use, or out of fashion, and ended up in the garage or destined for the nearest thrift store donation bin. We've gotten rid of stuff so many times, I don't know why we still have so much. I think my accumulating stage started late in life, some time in the last decade. When I discovered eBay, I entered a whole new world of cool stuff from around the globe. My display case quickly filled up with tiny model airplanes, spaceships and collectibles of all shapes and sizes. And only in the last couple of years have I sought out ancient and medieval artifacts, such as coins, and pendants, to proudly display in our master bedroom. They're relatively small and don't take up much room at all. They're not overly rare or valuable, but they're cool nonetheless. My wife, unfortunately, never had any serious hobbies. My oldest daughter, likely in a wise move to prepare for her big transition one day, began hoarding things in our basement. Everything from pots and pans to an air fryer, vacuum and kettle are nestled in a corner, waiting for her to take with her. At this rate, she'll be able to completely fill her first apartment or home. Mom and dad didn't raise no fools. After a few purges, all that's left is our messy garage, filled mostly with trash, empty boxes and the like. For some reason, this expansive space, somewhat like our Tupperware cupboard, can never stay clean. This is always on Kim's to-do list and it will be front and centre when spring cleaning

time arrives. Recently, I sent some of my 'collectibles' mostly science fiction items to a local store on consignment. They were literally hidden away in boxes and drawer and I haven't even seen them in years. I've heard the rule of thumb is if you haven't used something, played with something, or displayed something within 3-6 months, it's time to get rid of them. There are also other reasons for a regular clean sweep. I had the gut-wrenching task of clearing out the belongings of three family members from their abodes. Aside from the sadness, the horrible reality is our lives can be reduced to just a few boxes of knick knacks, old pieces of furniture, yellowed pictures on the wall and crappy old clothes. It really sucks. So my friends, if we are far removed from those three stages of life I mentioned, where does that leave us? I'd love to be in the man cave stage, surrounded by pinball machines, neon signs, walls of collectibles and perhaps even a superhero suit or two. And yet, my practical side intervenes, putting a damper on my mental parade. Priorities. In order to help my fellow human beings, I am willing to take all of your antiques, old gold coins, muscle cars, suits of armour off your hands. After all, I'm just trying to help you out!