

Our Collections and Collectors We Know

- Kerry Cochran



The expertise and enjoyment we gain from a lifetime of collecting, organizing, building, modeling and writing will die with us if we are unwilling to share.

Over the past few years, (actually over 20 years) I have been exposed to several people that had very large collections of photographs, slides, modeling and models in their collections.

Unfortunately, deteriorating health conditions have temporarily prevented these people from working on their projects from time to time. However, their collecting continued and in some cases they were able to continue to work on their hobby.

In other cases the person was unable to care any longer for their collection, and the sad fact was that they had to dispose of their collection in order to move, or return to their home or passed away.

One thing that I have noticed during these events is the enormous amount of the collection and in some cases new products and materials, many still in the original boxes and stored without any amount of work done on them.

Another thing that I have noticed, was most were stored without any type of inventory so neither the person knew what they had or a way to account for the collection.

Digging through a massive amount of a collection requires an enormous amount of patience and skill, let alone the time, to be able to arrange the collection for passing on to a family member, a sale or a donation to an organization.

All too often we see and know someone like what I am describing. If so, what can you, and possible we, as a community of interest do now to avoid a similar situation?

First, do not assume that a family member (even immediate family) knows what the person has, how much it is worth or where it should go. Even if they do know, they may not care and may not go to the trouble of sorting through a lifetime of collecting, preferring instead to sell it as a lot or toss it in a dumpster.

Second, document what you have and store it in a manner that facilitates packing for movement and possible sale.

Third, keep an inventory of all of your collections, assign a value to individual items. While we all think our collections are priceless, everything has a price provided there is an interested buyer. Books and brass models will sell, however do not expect to recover the cost unless the item is exceedingly rare.

An inventory is a great way to help you know what you have and in the event you are not able to pass along your collection, it gives others a means to help dispose of the collection.

One final note I would like to mention, is the expertise and enjoyment we gain from a lifetime of collecting, building, modeling, reading and writing will die with each of us if we do not share it with others.

Please think about helping your society, by writing articles, giving presentations, taking to other members and making documents about your experiences.

Please consider the fate of your collection while you can. I assure you that those who can help, will and your lifetime of hard work will be available for the next generation to enjoy.

(Author's note: This should not be taken as any legal advice and you should consult your attorney and tax professional for any legal matters.)

Should you have any questions on this subject, please contact Kerry Cochran, FRRS/WPRM Archives (Historical_Archive_dept@wplives.org).