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The proud (and profitable) collector

by R. Michaels
 Special to Q-Notes

There are some things that are best kept in the closet until you're ready to sell them — collectibles! The recent two-day collectible show in "Atlantique City" would have made anyone upset that has emptied their troves of those now expensive playthings from yesteryear. And yesteryear doesn't have to be that many years ago.

How could that G.I. Joe Jeep I played with be on sale for \$175? And what about a Popeye PEZ dispenser at \$150? I had a drawer full of PEZ figures. If you had an Olive Oyl dispenser it goes for \$300. Who didn't have Play Doh? You could have bought an unopened can of this glob (circa 1957) for only \$125.

The twice-a-year Atlantic City show has moved off the Boardwalk to the new Convention Center which easily holds 1600 dealer booths. It's billed as the largest indoor antique and collectible show in the world. The main floor of the center could hold 12 Super Bowls simultaneously.

This year's spring show featured a special exhibit celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Steel Pier, Atlantic City's legendary entertainment center. One of the famous acts was the "Diving Horse." The horse didn't show up, but two women who were on the diving horse in the 1930s did and shared their experience with visitors. One of the horses (Red Lips) had a tendency to roll over after it hit the water. That could get tiring.

Back to those old treasures you or your mother threw away. Did you have a "Flipper" lunchbox? Try \$185 if it had a thermos. How

many Steiff stuffed animals did you have? Well, a 5" bear was selling for \$500. A dinosaur was priced at \$1495.

Long before I was born — in the 1960s — I've heard they had cheap plastic lamps with brightly painted scenes that appeared to move because of the revolving center piece. These "motion lamps" now go for 30 to 100 times more than they originally sold for. I saw a "Burning Ship" lamp that was priced at \$325. Then again one shouldn't be surprised. The "Rock and Roll Monkey" (battery operated, of course) was a steal at \$475.

Most of our first cars were a few inches long and cost 79 cents or so. Some of the toy cars and trucks have appreciated in value more than IBM. Some of the Dinky Toy brand were impressive — Breakdown Truck: \$180; Austin Truck: \$580; Esso Truck: \$650. Japanese imported cars and trucks from the 50s and 60s were very pricey. How about a Corvette Convertible by Bandai for \$350 or the Corvette Sports Coupe for \$2750. That was probably half the price of the real model in 1957. The Corgi "Green Horner's Black Beauty" vehicle — in the box — seemed a bargain at \$580.

If you missed this collecting feast, you'll have lots more opportunities to repurchase your past this summer. There are hundreds of large and small shows planned around the country — from the gigantic Brimfield outdoor shows in Massachusetts to the July show in Portland, OR that claims it will be even bigger than Atlantique City with 1700 booths. Wear comfortable shoes and remember: if you have more than three of something, it's a collection. ▼

out there

Don't call it Frisco

by Ira Gruber
 National Gay/Lesbian Travel Desk

People who live in San Francisco wouldn't think of living anywhere else. The "quintessential gay city" is urbanity epitomized. Like a vain actress, "The City" has an attitude that borders on narcissism despite its cultivation, sophistication and eccentricity. First and foremost, this is America's most self-centered city. But the reality is that if you've got it, flaunt it. And they do it big in the Golden Gate City. Las Vegas may have the largest convention center and New York City the most museums, but no place can hold a candle to San Francisco. It's just not museums by the number here. And it's not just about gambling. It's like being in Paris, soaking up the atmosphere.

The newest attraction is the Skydeck at the Embarcadero, but does anyone care? A gazillion travel writers have written about the Museum of Modern Art in the past two years, but does anyone really care? People here bask in the glow that they live in America's most stuck up city.

Spotted in 1769 by explorer Gaspar de Portola, its first mission was founded in 1776. If you are really in to history, visit the San Francisco Public Library in the Civic Center area where the dome of City Hall is 16' higher than that of the Capitol in Washington, DC. The

library is home to the best gay history archives in the world.

If you are familiar with Union Square, Fisherman's Wharf, Chinatown or Golden Gate Park, you may want to visit other areas that are unknown to you, like the Mission District. But more likely than not, you will want to revisit the old because it is forever changing. Check out the new attractions at Pier 39.

Sam Wo's, 813 Washington Street, is one of the hippest places to eat. Not having to wait for a seat here means you sort of have arrived. The legendary Sam Wo's is more than inexpensive prices, celebrated and extremely rude waiter Edsel Ford Fung, and the quality of the food. It's the penultimate Chinatown experience at the most written up Chinese restaurant in America for less than \$8.00 a plate.

The ships at Hyde Park should be on your itinerary. The Maritime Museum Building in Aquatic Park has a sparkling new exterior.

If you are on an extended stay and feel adventurous, take the Green Tortoise to Yosemite for a weekend or the Gray Line for the day. If you're willing to rent a car, you can visit Filoli, a fabulous estate in Woodside. If this sounds too suburban, head to downtown San Jose where they not only have a real bathhouse, the Wintergarden, but about a dozen gay bars. San Jose has so much to do and see that you'll need at least three days there. Call 1-800-SANJOSE for their visitors guide.

In all other cities, one has to proclaim 101 things to do and see. In San Francisco, you've done that just by being there. Many cities you revisit are never as good as they once were. But this place always delivers — without trying. That's part of the magic. ▼



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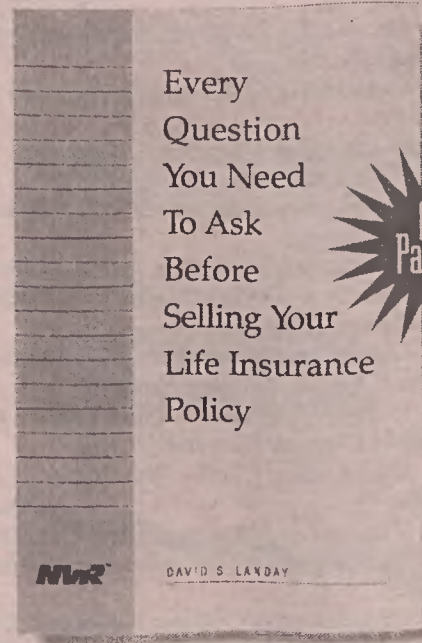
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