



Toy trucks and busses at Bay West Antiques in Traverse City.

Record-Eagle/Meegan M. Reid

# On the hunt for toys

Local antique dealers say collecting isn't child's play

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**S**till holding on to those Beanie Babies, waiting for their value to soar? Hoping for a juicy return on that plush, multi-colored investment? Local antique dealers politely suggest that you give it up and start a different collection — unless, of course, you are one of the very few who collect purely for fun.

Beanie Babies, like many other trendy collectibles, go through brief periods of widespread popularity only to plummet in value once interest has faded, according to Sherry Sondag, an antique dealer at Bay West Antiques in Traverse City.

This instability is characteristic of antique and collectible toys, she added.

Although true antiques, items at least 100 years old, have more steady value that tends to increase with time, so-called "collectible" or "vintage" toys have more unpredictable market value.

Opinions on the exact definition of a collectible toy vary as well. Sondag said the accepted definition of "collectible" is that it must be at least 30 years old, but she added that the term has come to describe items that are only a few years old.

Zoe Kroes, who works at Downtown Antiques and Collectibles in Cadillac, said that the status of an item depends completely on the age of the buyer.

"Some kids come in and think stuff from the '70s is *really* old," she said.

Many of these same young people are responsible for a good deal of the collectible toy trade, according to Harold Edmondson, owner of Cherry Acre Antiques in Traverse

City, adding that the kids are interested in items "that they never knew about, mostly because they weren't around to see them."

But the people with the most interest in collectible toys (as well as the disposable income to indulge in such pursuits) are those who were around to see the toys when they were new.

"Nostalgia has a huge part in the popularity of toys," said Sondag.

Kroes said that a lot of Baby

Boomers seek out the toys they played with as children, some of which may be older than they are.

"A lot of them go after the metal wind-up toys they played with at their grandmothers'," she said.

Kroes' has a passion for old A&W root beer mugs, recalling childhood nights at the drive-in.

"My kids wouldn't even know what that was," she said.

While some people may have a penchant for specific types of collectibles, such as metal lunchboxes, Matchbox cars or Hopalong Cassidy memorabilia, others just enjoy collecting toys in general.

But toy collecting as an investment can be tricky. Sondag said some antiques, such as pieces of hand-



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A "Charlie" doll and a handmade doll sit among other antiques.