

No Matter what, toys will sell

By Dave Heun

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Dan Schleifer of Big Rock looks at a toy pickup truck Sunday during the Antique-Collectible Toy and Doll World Show at the Kane County Fairgrounds in St. Charles.

Popeye, Felix the Cat, G.I. Joe, Shirley Temple, The Lone Ranger, Fred Flintstone, Huckleberry Hound, Barbie, Mickey Mouse, Davy Crockett and countless others get together a couple of times a year at the Kane County Fairgrounds.

They were together again Sunday as part of more than 400 vendor displays at the Antique-Collectible Toy and Doll World Show, which drew its usual heavy crowd of buyers and sellers.

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“I don’t care if there is inflation, deflation or the dollar changes ... toys will sell,” said Laszlo Molnar of Mentor, Ohio, at his booth. “I have been doing this for 30 years, and it’s sort of recession-proof because it’s a hobby (toy collecting) that people will continue to pursue and allocate a certain amount of money for it.”

Molnar said that no matter which show he is at, he will generally sell about 80 percent of his inventory.

“I actually can’t buy enough to keep up with the demand,” Molnar added.

Molnar’s assessment would be right on target, if the majority of the hundreds of people checking out toys and dolls at the fairgrounds exhibit halls were enthusiastic buyers.

Vendor Don Wilson of Indianapolis wasn’t quite as sure.

“This is one of the bigger shows, but each year is different, as things can change with the economy,” Wilson said. “You just can’t predict how you will do at a show, but at this one, I’m usually here to buy.” Regardless of the economy and the budgets that buyers and sellers are dealing with, the toy show at its roots still tugs at hearts that remain nostalgic to childhood bliss.

It also reminds older visitors about the earliest days of power marketing for certain toys.

“I think Mickey Mouse and the Disney toys were probably the first dose of real heavy marketing in the 1930s or so,” Joe Desris of Kenosha, Wis., reasoned.

But few toys struck a nerve with young boys as well as the Davy Crockett boom of the early 1950s. Cory Glaberson of Oak Park had several Davy Crockett items on display.

“A gentleman who passed away had all of these Davy Crockett pieces, and his family asked if I could sell it for them,” Glaberson said. “A fair amount of my business is based on families approaching me, or estate sales, in which there are lots of collectibles.” Many attendees zero in on one specific item, or a certain line or make of toys.

Batavia Mayor Jeff Schielke would fall into that category.

“I have been coming to this show for 25 years now, and I am always looking for old fire trucks,” Schielke said, aligning his hobby with the fact that he’s been a volunteer firefighter for much of his life. And how many fire trucks does Schielke own?

“I have about 1,400 now,” he said.

Steve Martin of St. Charles was at the show with his sons, Kevin and Tom, and they all had specific items they were seeking. The boys were on the hunt for anything related to Star Wars or Super Mario Brothers, while Steve is a collector of the Marx U.S. Presidents figures that were popular in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

One entire hall was devoted to dolls, and that’s where lovers of Barbie, Shirley Temple, Raggedy Ann, and many others were spending time.

One type of doll, sold by Donna Davidson’s Reborn Dolls by Donna and by Karen Smith’s The Busy Stork, was so lifelike it left visitors amazed.

“People will buy these to display their daughters’ christening gowns, or they are also used in nursing homes, as they have a very calming effect,” Smith said.

Davidson said that some women purchase them simply because they enjoy holding them.

“To each his own, I guess,” Davidson said. “Some people will collect them and have whole rooms full.”

Ellen Dodge of Galena, Ill., had a traffic stopper on display at her booth – the sexy “leg lamp” made famous in the film “Christmas Story.”

“I had a friend who wanted to get rid of it because she was afraid her husband would want to keep it,” Dodge said with a laugh. “So I told her I would try to sell it.”

The next show is usually in April, but to avoid a conflict with the Easter holiday, it was moved to May 15, according to show organizer Herb Regan.

It’s the next time you’ll have a chance to spot a plastic set of the Beverly Hillbillies in their truck; a Fort Apache playset; tons of model car sets, Matchbox and Hot Wheels; vintage metal toys from the 1920s; a Hopalong Cassidy coloring set; Laurel and Hardy dolls; or a Johnny Yuma, The Rebel, game.



Collector Linda Jungers of St. Charles checks over a doll Sunday at the Antique-Collectible Toy and Doll World Show at the Kane County Fairgrounds in St. Charles.