

Fading Wallpaper

Marilyn and I recently went junk store shopping. It is not that we are destitute, or need to shop only in the cheapest places. We visit thrift stores, garage sales and junk stores because we enjoy it, perhaps because of the need to examine other people's discarded detritus. Whatever, we made a trek to an old Oklahoma City strip center just north of 12th and Pennsylvania.

The little strip center used to feature restaurants, upscale stores and the Penn movie theatre. Now, the rundown buildings are all junk stores. We started our exploration at the southernmost store and worked our way north, along the way purchasing a 1982 Colorado Shakespeare Festival Poster, two old books - both first editions, published in 1914 and 1967, a walking cane, (Marilyn collects them, among other things) a plastic hardhat, a moose lamp and a wolf knick-knack.

The wolf knick-knack (I don't know what else to call it - it's a mini-diorama of a wolf, its mate and cubs, back dropped by a scenic wilderness panorama with a soaring eagle in the sky). It was the favorite piece of the old man running the place. I managed to bargain him down to twenty bucks for the wolf piece, the moose lamp and a few inside pictures of the old Penn Theatre.

I have no idea of the Penn's construction date but my guess is during the fifties. It has a vaulted ceiling and I am sure was quite grand during its day. Now it is filled with junk - old bed springs, broken appliances, an old jukebox, pictures, books and many other things too numerous to mention. The books made me sad. There were hundreds of them, the collective works of many diligent authors. Now they languish in a grimy corner, unread for decades, some perhaps never at all.

As Marilyn and I returned home with our purchases, I wondered about the fascination of visiting junk stores, garage sales and thrift stores, viewing the carcasses of people's former possessions. Maybe it is voyeurism, getting an illicit peek into other's lives. Maybe, but I like to think it's because memories are the fading wallpaper of our minds, and every now and then you find a treasure that someone else has forgotten, somewhere along the way.