

# One Person's Junk ...

## With The Right Eye, Treasures Can Be Found Amid The Trash

BY NICOLE BRODEUR  
© 2015, The Seattle Times

SEATTLE — For Sarah Littlefield, there's decorating gold in that there junk. Picking.

It's not the most glamorous way to describe your livelihood, the skill you have been developing for years, the thing you do when you walk into a room stuffed with belongings and know there's something special waiting to be found.

But that's what Sarah Littlefield does for Seattle restaurants, retail stores and people who have the money but not the time to search for a Certain Something for themselves or someone else.

All of them call on Seattle Junk Love to find what they didn't even know they were looking for, but what Littlefield is skilled at spotting: Pendleton blankets, leather cowboy hats and old signage. And, quite often, the perfect Christmas gift.

"I buy things knowing this person is going to want it," Littlefield said recently. "I have a roster of people that I shop for. If I'm lucky, the piece is sold by the time I get to my car."

These are especially busy days for Littlefield, whose Etsy shop and Instagram feed carry regular posts of what she's picked from the piles at estate sales and flea markets from Seattle to Mexico, as well as places like New York and her native North Dakota.

A Filson Mackinaw coat. A constellation of belt buckles. A battered Thonet chair oozing with restoration potential.

"It's that thing when you know you'll never see anything like it again," Littlefield said of her picking technique. "I know what people are on the lookout for."

Littlefield, 47, grew up in Fargo, N.D., the daughter of an educator mother and a university professor father who was "super curious" about architecture and history, and who could hold forth on obscure subjects like wheat production during the Civil War.

At Oklahoma State University, Littlefield's instinct was to become a history major, but instead she got into recreation administration and started hitting estate sales in her free time. It was her way to stay connected with things past and to learn in the process.

"Half the fun is the research, the backstory," Littlefield said of her finds. "The beauty is in a thing's utility, or history, or the fact that it's site-specific."

Littlefield moved to Seattle with a girl-

friend in 2001 and worked for a remodeling firm until 2008, when the housing crisis cost her her job. She did staging for a realtor, which helped her polish her design skills. She saw where one vintage item could anchor, or enhance a room.

All the while, she kept at the estate sales, picking up things she found interesting.

When Jody Hall was starting Cupcake Royale in 2005, Littlefield helped find furniture, lighting and casework for the stores.

"I used the newspaper, Craigslist, drove around with a map," she said, shaking her head and cradling her iPhone like a bar of gold. "It was the dark ages, for sure."

What Hall didn't want, Littlefield sold to other restaurants and shops, who asked her to look for more. So did set designers on films and at the Microsoft Studios, as well as private people looking to put some pop, or history, in their homes.

Littlefield also took over a corner of the Georgetown shop called District, where Macklemore spotted and bought one of her hats.

Recently, she helped Filson with the design of its new store.

And she has picked up clients, who ask her to search for things such as barware and paintings of saints.

In addition to Cupcake Royale, Littlefield has helped with the design of the Salt & Straw ice cream shops in Portland, Linda Derschang's Bait Shop and the Urban Animal veterinary clinic on Capitol Hill. That last job led to her being asked to help design a veterinary clinic in Toronto. It is located in what was once the oldest continuous funeral home in Ontario.

There's a lot of that going on here; the old being gutted and repurposed. But that doesn't mean there's a wave of stuff to pick through in Seattle.

"It's rough," Littlefield said. "The competition is rough."

So rough that she will spend the night in her van outside an estate sale in order to get in first. There's always a line of shop owners and collectors looking for vintage clothing, tools, records and electronics.

"I go in and I look," she said. "It sounds stupid. There should be some science to it. But I can't explain it. More, the trick is to know where to go regionally, based on the age of the cities and the towns."

"You used to be able to go to an estate sale in Wallingford, but not anymore. Things have turned over."



JOHN LOK/THE SEATTLE TIMES  
Some of the vintage photos collected by professional picker Sarah Littlefield. Part of her personal collection includes photos of same-sex couples.



JOHN LOK/THE SEATTLE TIMES/TNS  
Sarah Littlefield, professional picker, poses for a portrait with paint-by-numbers artwork she has collected over the years.

Maybe you can find some good picking in the old warehouses in Georgetown or South Seattle. But for the most part, it's architectural salvage, "and that's another person's gig," she said.

The place to go junking are rural areas, smaller cities. The Midwest. ("My homeland," Littlefield cracked).

At the home she shares with her wife, Larisa, Littlefield stores her finds and keeps her own collections of chalk animals, photos of same-sex couples and paint-by-numbers of outdoor scenes.

Some things have been impossible to part with: the 1920s-era Calumet Baking Powder clock that once hung in the kitchen of her father's farm. The Trapper Nelson backpack (started by local Lloyd T. Nelson in 1924) on

which the owner had sketched his journeys.

"I mean, shut up!" Littlefield said, pulling the photo up on her phone.

One recent find: A 3-foot-by-6-foot framed drawing of the old Fisher Flour Mill on Harbor Island. It includes a Norwegian ship docked out front, complete with wicker deck chairs; a man driving a delivery truck and another man walking in the front door.

Littlefield keeps it on the mantle. It will likely stay there.

"I'd sell it to the Fisher family," she said, "but that's about it."

In that sense, Littlefield is not so much a picker, as the one who finds the things that people didn't even know they wanted, or needed, or couldn't do without.

Sounds about right, she said.

### Senior Living

## Loved One In Assisted Living? Make Holidays Merry For All

BY DEBBIE CARLSON  
© 2015, Chicago Tribune

Stress levels during the holidays often increase, and families with a relative residing in an assisted-living facility may fret about how to include the family member in celebrations. Typically, residents in assisted living — as opposed to nursing homes or independent living — are mobile enough to get around, but advanced age or health issues can limit their capabilities.

The burden can be twofold. Many families are unsure whether or not those relatives should leave their residence to join holiday celebrations. Also, they may be concerned about how much time they can or should devote to visit relatives, especially if distance is a factor.

"No matter how much you see your family in assisted living, I think you're always going to feel like it wasn't enough," said Stephanie Zishka, co-owner of BrightStar Care of Fort Wayne and Lafayette, Ind., and a registered nurse. "Don't beat yourself up if you can't spend more time."

Psychologists and administrators in these facilities say it's important for families to try to balance their other obligations with visits to loved ones during the holidays. Here is some advice to consider.

Consult with the facility staff. Before deciding on whether or not to bring grandma home for the day, ask the facility staff if such a visit would be disruptive to the person or the host family. Zishka and Dr. Ildiko Tabori, a Los Angeles-based licensed clinical psychologist, said facility staff can help you determine if the relative is functioning well enough for a home visit. Additionally, they said, families need to review whether their home is equipped to accommodate the visitor, especially if he or she needs a mobility aid.

Maryann Crenny, administrator and director of operations at FilBen



ARINA HABICH/FOTOLIA  
Holidays with elderly relatives who are in an assisted living facility can present challenges, but the rewards are plentiful, whether you celebrate in their home or yours.

Group, a New York-based developer and manager of assisted-living properties, said to keep in mind that elderly people can tire easily, so be prepared to limit the visit. Don't expect them to stay more than six hours, and keep early bedtimes in mind. It also would be wise to have someone available to drive them home at any time.

Decorate and deliver holiday reminders. Decorating the family member's room with appropriate holiday items is recommended. (Check with facility staff for prohibited items.)

For example, Tabori said, "bringing a small Christmas tree, the kind you buy at the drugstore, is nice."

The same applies to favorite foods. Again, consult with the nursing staff for any dietary restrictions.

Take advantage of technology. Jack York, chief executive of Colorado-based It's Never 2 Late, which provides senior-friendly technology to assisted-living communities, said there are ways to relive past holidays using slide shows or videos.

For facilities without technology,

families can bring in large-screen laptops or tablets. If visiting on-site isn't possible, York said that facilities equipped with Wi-Fi can accommodate webcams to connect relatives on holidays.

Celebrating there: All ages welcome. Facilities will often have holiday parties and invite families to take part, Crenny said.

"The elderly residents do respond extremely well with children, even if (they're) not their own. Children really bring residents to life," she said.

Gifts to go around. When you're celebrating at their place, don't just bring presents for your relatives to open. Bring a round of gifts for everyone to open, Tabori said.

"The patient can still watch the enjoyment of a grandchild opening presents," Tabori said.

It's the visit that counts, not its length.

"Any sort of visit is good," Zishka said. "Even a five-minute stop in can have a huge impact."

## Pet Tales: Massages Can Bring Some Relief To Aging Dogs

BY LINDA WILSON FUOCO  
© 2015, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

PITTSBURGH — Lucy at 11 years old is still lovely and frisky, but the miniature pinscher-beagle mix is showing signs of arthritis in her back legs.

Desi is only 3 years old, but before he was rescued, the Jack Russell terrier-beagle mix had a serious injury that almost cost him the use of a hind leg. His owner worries about Desi's long-term mobility and comfort.

So when Lucy and Desi's "dad" Kerry S. Kennedy had a recent birthday, his gift from friend Sue Kerr was massages for the little dogs.

I've never seen dogs get massages, so this was a treat for me. Luci and Desi were happy and excited when masseuse Raylene Hoover entered Kennedy's Fineview neighborhood home.

When Hoover got down to business, Lucy was initially skeptical, but Desi was quickly converted to the joys of massage.

There was no massage table or oils, no pummeling, pulling or hard rubbing.

"I work slowly with dogs and never force them," Hoover said as Lucy jumped up to her usual perch on the back of a sofa. "I start out by petting because that's what they're used to. Massage is different than petting."

The next step was using the back of her hand to brush against Lucy's side and back, then up toward the head to gently brush up against muscles that "go to the ears and eyes."

It's Integrative Touch Therapy that Hoover learned at a school in Ohio. She's been massaging dogs since 2008 and a professional pet sitter since 2004.

She touched and rubbed the "front end," although the probable arthritis is in Lucy's hind end. The dog draped a paw over Hoover's arm, an apparent show of appreciation and acceptance. Then she jumped off the couch and ran to Kennedy.

"She wants a break and that's OK," Hoover said.

Desi was happy to take Lucy's place on the couch.

"Lucy was tense, but Desi is not," Hoover said as she rubbed his neck and spine. When she got to his shoulders, Desi gave her kisses. "He is sensitive when I get to the hip area."

After a break, Desi returned to the couch and rolled over to present his "bad" hip to the masseur. "Desi figured it out!" a delighted Hoover said.

Lucy returned from her break and allowed Hoover to work on her knees and toes.

Most of her clients are older dogs, and many have arthritis or other health issues, but Hoover emphasizes that she does "wellness massages, although many owners swear they see improvements."

One day after their massages, Lucy and Desi were friskier than usual, Kennedy said. The dogs go to work every day at K.S. Kennedy Distinctive Floral, Gifts and Gourmet on Pittsburgh's North Side.

Kennedy has developed a unique specialty, providing pet friendly floral arrangements for the owners of dogs and cats. He has a 10-page list of plants and flowers that won't hurt pets.

Hoover gets health histories on her clients and works with the approval of their veterinarians. Many dogs are repeat customers, with regularly scheduled appointments.

"I seldom get calls for cats," she said, although Lucky Tiger, one of her three cats, loves massages.