



Remembering Martin Maloy: Renaissance Man and Collector Extraordinaire

'Never bored and never boring,' Marty and his wife Deborah enriched their lives with art, dogs, travel and a list of pastimes and hobbies that never stopped growing

While the imaginative creations of 19th- and 20th-century manufacturers are at the heart of antique toy collecting, the lifeblood of the hobby has always been the collectors themselves. The friendships and unique camaraderie developed over decades of interaction at shows, auctions, club events and each other's homes are what have united collectors and kept them engaged. It's as though they all share a secret that others don't know: that you'll meet the most interesting people through antiques. And that certainly includes the late Martin Maloy, a Renaissance man whose many talents and skills formed the framework for a life that was rich and fulfilling beyond his dreams.

"Marty," who passed away on March 3, 2025, left his fellow collectors an abundance of wonderful memories from 60 years of toy-hunting alongside his lovely wife, Deborah. However, Marty was modest when it came to talking about his accomplishments in life, so few would have known much about his fascinating background, how he and Deborah met, or what inspired them to build what would become a world-class collection of toys and other fabulous antiques. The time couldn't be more right to share the Maloys' story with you.



Brooklyn Roots and the War Years

Both Marty and Deborah were born in and grew up in Brooklyn, New York, but they didn't actually meet there. Always a forward thinker, Marty used a friend's address so he could attend Erasmus Hall High, a school across town that he felt would provide a superior education to the one he would receive in his own neighborhood. Erasmus Hall would produce many high achievers over the years, including chess grand master Bobby Fischer, actress Barbara Stanwyck, novelist Mickey Spillane, and music mogul Clive Davis.

Following graduation, Marty studied electrical engineering at City College, today a part of the City University of New York, and would eventually obtain a master's degree in sales and merchandising. His schooling was interrupted by World War II. He was drafted into the US Navy, where his engineering background got him assigned to radar duties.

When his ship left California, Marty and his fellow sailors were hoping their destination would be Hawaii, but it ended up being China. No palm trees or ukuleles. They arrived in Shanghai and docked in the Yellow River, which Martin later described as "a sea of mud for miles." He was also shocked by the grinding poverty, which was evident everywhere they went. Seeing "Old China" before the Communists took over was likely an impression that stayed with him forever.

After the war, Marty returned to City College to complete his master's degree. Subsequently, he was hired as a manufacturer's representative, selling sophisticated electronics products in the early days of a growing industry. He made many trips to the Silicon Valley and quite likely met many of the pioneers of what is now a juggernaut sector within the global economy.

Martin's success as a salesman could be attributed to his natural ability to relate to people. He could enter a company's premises and speak to anyone at any level, from the shipping clerk to the president. He also had a great sense of humor and was an entertaining storyteller.

Meanwhile, still years away from meeting her future husband, Deborah graduated from Brooklyn's James Madison High School and went on to earn her degree in elementary education from Brooklyn College. Shortly thereafter, she was assigned to a school where she taught the lower grades.



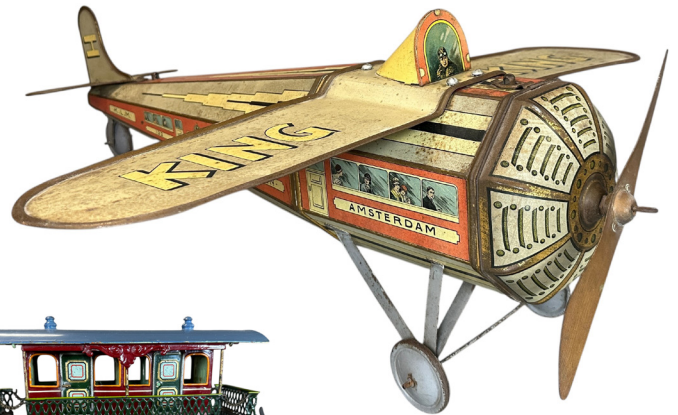
“There’s Too Much Orange in That Painting”

As fate would have it, Deborah and Marty met at a resort hotel where both were staying during a Christmas break in 1962. Deborah recalled, “His first words to me were, ‘There’s too much orange in that painting.’ We joked about that many times, and little did we know that one day we would be collecting, among other things, paintings – one of which was a scene of the Shanghai shoreline, loaded with ships, many displaying the American Flag.”

Some things are just meant to be. Three months after the chance “orange painting” encounter, Marty and Deborah were married. They moved into Marty’s apartment in Rutherford, New Jersey, and less than a year later, bought a large, traditional two-story home in Wayne, New Jersey. It’s where they lived together blissfully until Marty’s passing last March.

After their move to Wayne, Marty continued to work as a manufacturer’s representative. Then one day he surprised Deborah by saying, “I’d love to start my own company.” Deborah’s immediate response was, “Don’t!” But Marty moved forward with the idea anyway, and it turned out to be a big winner. By the time he retired, his company had grown to more than 80 employees (including two salesmen lured from his former place of employment) and was operating lucratively as both a distributorship and a manufacturer’s representative.

When the company was sold, Marty was 69 years old. The new owners told him, “You’re too expensive for us. Good-bye.” Marty harbored no ill feelings. In fact, he was only too happy to oblige, because in the years during which he built up his own business, Marty had lived by one rule: never allow work to become your entire life. He was, indeed, a man of many interests.



The Blue Comet and a Fascination with Trains

Not long after the Maloys moved into their home in Wayne, they learned of an antique show at the Morristown Armory. “We had barely arrived at the show when Martin spotted a toy train in a seller’s booth and said, ‘That’s just like the train I had when I was six years old.’ He bought the train, which he later learned was similar to, but not exactly like, his childhood train, but that didn’t matter. It was the start of one of his many hobbies,” Deborah said.

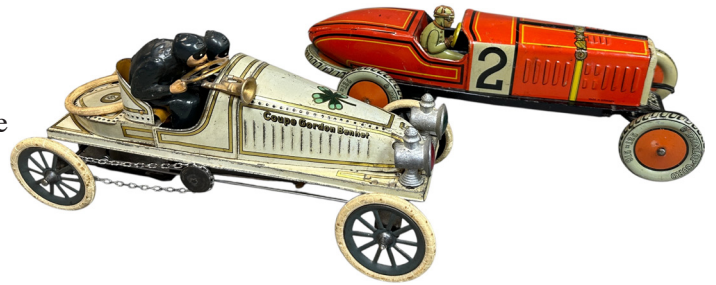
It should be mentioned at this point that Marty’s love affair with trains was probably in his DNA. His father worked for the Central Railroad of New Jersey, and one of his earliest memories, at the age of three, was going to see the Blue Comet – the real locomotive, not the toy. That occasion sparked Marty’s lifelong interest in trains.

When Marty discovered garden railroads, that opened a new avenue to him. Along with this friend Gordon Guenther, he built a railroad in the garden of the Maloys’ home. The verdant and inviting backyard retreat was often the site of two- or three-day meets with train engineers and their families, many of them coming down from Canada. Anyone who had the chance to visit Marty and Deborah’s lush garden might have been tempted to ask where they ever found such a talented landscaper. One needn’t have looked very far for the answer. The Maloys reveled in gardening and did all of the planting, feeding, pruning and other maintenance work themselves for as long as they were able to do so. It should also be noted that before the idea became mainstream, Marty devised a composting area whose contents he called “black gold.” It was the secret ingredient that made the couple’s impressive garden grow and thrive.



Marty was unquestionably a good man to have around the house, both indoors and outdoors. Although he wasn't knowledgeable about plumbing, there was little else that he couldn't do. In Deborah's words, "There wasn't a room in our home that didn't show evidence of his skills as a carpenter. He built display shelves for our many collections."

Building and flying model airplanes was another pursuit that expanded Marty's wide circle of friends. He joined a group that flew the planes in the New Jersey Meadowlands, an area just west of the New Jersey with a fantastic view of Lower Manhattan. Whether they had permission to do so or not is speculation at this point, but they made sure no wildlife was disturbed. As it happened, the wife of one of the model airplane pilots was a bridge player, and when she learned that Marty and Deborah also played, she encouraged them to join the bridge-playing group at the local Adult Center. They continued to play regularly with their circle of fellow bridge enthusiasts until COVID put a halt to in-person socializing.



A Home Without a Dog is Just a House

Another avocation that Marty and Deborah shared with great passion was dogs and dog trials. Deborah has loved dogs for as long as she can remember, going back to when she was a toddler. When she met Marty, she had a black Labrador Retriever named Sam. After she and Marty moved into their home in Wayne, Sam joined the household. Then one day while on a business call, Marty found a blue ribbon on the door of his customer's house, with a note reading, "This is why my lawn is rarely mowed." As it turns out, the customer was running his blue-ribbon-winning dog in Retriever Field Trials. After attending a few trials, Marty and Deborah were hooked.

By that time, their cherished Sam was too old to begin training, but not long afterward they welcomed a young puppy whom they could train and run. Dogs who participate in field trials unequivocally love it, but the Maloys soon learned just how demanding the sport is for the owner/handler.

"You must train every day you can, weather permitting and jobs permitting," Deborah said. "Joining a club or clubs is a must so you can have access to appropriate fields and, even harder to find, good ponds, as well as experienced workers and judges. We did this for many years. It was an expensive, time-consuming pursuit through which we met many friends who were similarly obsessed. The last dog we ran, Mickey, was so good, we placed him with a pro. Eventually, he developed an incurable vision condition called central progressive retinal atrophy and had to be retired as our beloved pet."

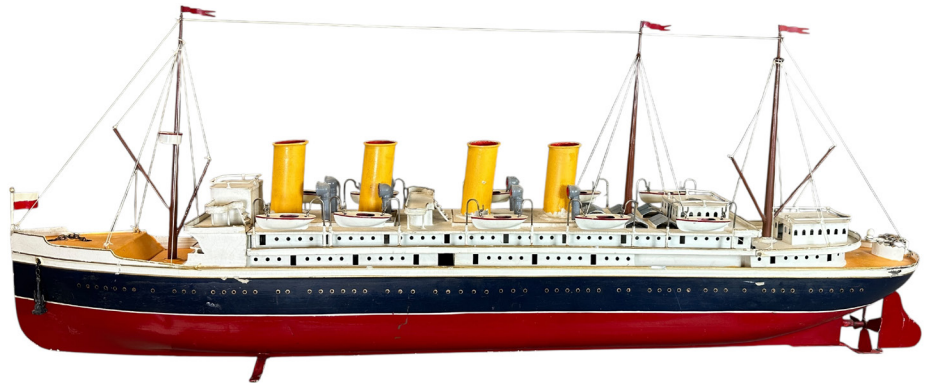
The Maloy household always included at least one bright, energetic canine, and at one time, there were even four retrievers happily coexisting in the home. When they reached the point at which they felt they could no longer deal with raising puppies, Marty and Deborah started taking in senior dogs from rescue groups and other sources. They ranged from a stray brought home by their daughter, to a pup found at their back door, to a dog their neighbor was unable to keep when she moved to a new home. In all, there have been 20 Maloy dogs, all of them treasured retrievers, in a range of colors.



Oh, the Places You'll Go!

Riding trains was something Marty especially relished. Deborah recalled, "In the Bicentennial year, we drove north into Canada and took a Canadian train to Vancouver. On the way, the train went through the Spiral Tunnel, apparently a rare feat of engineering. In Vancouver, we saw what looked like trees full of golf balls, but they were actually bald eagles!"

Marty and Deborah often remarked on how the nicest thing about collecting was the friends they made as a result of their travels. Toy shows, auctions and visits to collectors' homes as members of the Antique Toy Collectors of America (ATCA) took them to all corners of the United States as well as Canada and Western Europe. In turn, they also opened their own home to ATCA members several times during conventions. Marty credited many of his fellow ATCA members in helping to guide him as he built his collection, including Joe Freeman, Jay Lowe, Noel Barrett, and the late Bill Bertoia, to name but a few.



One Should Never Be the Oldest Thing in One's House

The fruits of their lifelong antiquing odyssey were displayed throughout the Maloys' spacious residence, including in the overhead toy room above their den, which they called "the library." There, visitors could view the Maloys' incredible specialty collections of American and European trains, early American tin cars and trucks; fire engines, boats and animals. Additionally, there were finely-curated displays of folk art, baskets, various types of advertising tins (tobacco, candy, crackers, etc.) and rare figural British biscuit tins, as well as full-size carousel figures, weathervanes, bronzes, carvings and a particular favorite of Marty's: duck decoys.

The decoy collection, which grew to number 700+ pieces, was launched in 1968 with the \$80 purchase of a buffle-head diving duck at a Ducks Unlimited auction. Over time, the collection was refined and reduced to around 200 of the best examples, a selection that was featured in Decoy Magazine. The only regret Marty ever expressed with respect to his pursuit of decoys was passing on a hand-carved and painted Charles Walker High Head Pintail. He felt the decoy was too expensive at \$1,000, but it would eventually increase in value many times over.



According to Deborah, Marty's lifelong interest in art began at the age of 12, when he visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The walls of the Maloy home were filled with 19th- and 20th-century American artworks, including early American Impressionist, industrial and marine paintings; and Currier & Ives prints. Jane Peterson, Antonio Jacobson and Thomas Chambers were among the noted artists represented in the collection.

So now you know a little more about Martin Maloy, who made every gathering more fun and who never met a person who didn't have the potential of becoming a friend. If Marty could offer just one kernel of advice, he just might advise you to enjoy your life, no matter what you're doing, and make plenty of time for your hobbies. He was "never bored and never boring," and that's what made him a mint/boxed original who won't be forgotten.



Details regarding the forthcoming auction of the Martin and Deborah Maloy Antique Toy Collection will be posted soon on Bertoia Auctions' website: Bertoiaauctions.com.

