

## Going home? through nostalgic lenses

by Mark Pavilons

There are plenty of songs, poems and quotes about the desire to go home.

Sorry to say, it's just not possible. We can never really go back home.

Time is not very kind to us humans. If we could only freeze it, capture those special moments and hold on to them like the safety harness on a roller coaster.

But we can't. For us Boomers, all we have are some really bad photos of our youth, our early days, wearing strange hairstyles and shorts. And most are tucked away in envelopes from some photo finishing lab that no longer exists. Sure, we may have several stacks of those ringed photo albums, but how often do we pull them out, flip the sticky pages and rekindle those emotions? Hey, I'm all in favour of reminiscing, but others see it as being stuck in the past. But isn't that just where we want to be on occasion?

I recently joined a Facebook group that discusses 1970s Camaros and it's so interesting to see what some owners have done with these classic muscle cars. It's also neat to read comments from former owners who no longer have their favourite cars. I'm in that group. I briefly owned a 1970 1/2 RS with a split front bumper. It was a bit of a fixer-upper, but man I loved that thing. Sold it shortly after I started college. I cry every day.

In another Facebook group, hundreds of older men share their hobby of building models, mostly WW2 era planes, tanks and ships. I've built models since I was a teen and I remember, as a boy, going into hobby shops browsing the shelves. In some stores, they had display cases of painted models and dioramas that customers built. This was truly a kid in a candy store feeling. Nothing filled me with such child-like joy as this.

My hobby was sidelined and hobby shops have faded from the landscape. I picked it up again about eight years ago, purchasing small-scale kits from Japan. While these models come pre-painted, I had to add my personal touches to them.

In posts on the Facebook forum, many of the hobbyists are men in their 50s, 60s and 70s, who have picked up the hobby again, after decades of neglect. From the posts, it seems like so many of these guys have found joy again, in these simple pleasures. And some have quite nice work stations in their man caves!

Boys will be boys. To this day, I have the most fond memories of some of my old toys, Michael Keaton said, adding that guys never really get over their toys.

You're quite right, Michael. But then again, most of us don't have a Bat Cave!

I remember as I got tired of the countless models I built as a kid, I took them outside to a sand pit behind our house. There, I trashed them in mock battles with firecrackers, bb guns and the like. My mom never understood why I would destroy something I spent so much time creating. In my 20s, I transitioned through MicroMachines, and Star Trek offerings from Playmates. Recently, I amassed many tiny Star Wars models (X-Wing) made by Fantasy Flight Games. We mature people like to call our toys collectibles. They are action figures, vintage vehicles, classic comic book characters. They are valuable, we tell our spouses. They will be worth something someday.

This may not really be a way to venture back home, but boy does it bring back those childhood memories.

For me, it's like a foggy sense of calm and inner peace. It's simple. It stimulates the imagination as we mentally don our flight jackets and prepare to meet the enemy in foreign skies. It allows us to perch on the turret of a tank, heading home from victory.

Jason Mamoia once told his wife: "One woman, lots of toys!"

Men are not alone when it comes to favourite playthings. When the topic comes up at home, my daughters have very fond memories of their Polly Pockets, Littlest Pet Shop, Gogos Crazy Bones, and, of course, Barbies. And yes, I joined them on the rug many times.

The heart is always the place to go. Go home into your heart, where there is warmth, appreciation, gratitude and contentment, according to Ayya Khema. Can our hearts carry all these childhood feelings and memories forever?

Apparently so.

Dorothy once admitted "there's no place like home" and she was right. Dorothy didn't have a scale model of Manfred von Richthofen's Fokker triplane, but she likely had some sentimental knickknacks!

Maybe it's age, relative wealth or boredom that drives "mature" men back to the toy bench.

Even spending \$10 on a model kit when we were young pretty much depleted our allowance.

Today we have a bit more cash (or access to credit cards) to spend on these things.

While nostalgia may manifest this way in men, all of us share a love for classic songs by Elvis and the Beatles, coin-operated juke boxes, banana seats on bikes, Spirograph, Nestle Quick, 45s, and even those ice cream cups with the wooden spoons.

The wise among us knew the value of such things and hid them away, untouched. Today, they command decent prices for collectors.

Who wouldn't want a vintage juke box, pinball machine or even Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots?

Maybe it's through these exact things that we can "go home again," or at least relive some great moments.

Apples are great, but an hour a day with models and paints definitely keeps the gremlins away!