

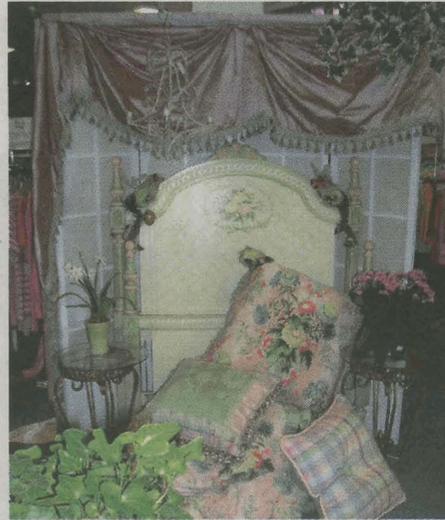
IN COUNTRY

THE WHITE ELEPHANT

By Patricia Daly-Lipe

Every trip to the town of Middleburg, VA warrants a visit to a special place: The White Elephant. Since my church always had an annual white elephant sale, I immediately understood the significance of the name.

It was 22 years ago that two sisters and their mother began what has become a must-visit, must-purchase-something store. Sisters Leslie and Cynthia Broockman, with their late mother Gloria, began in 1988 with what they considered a brief indoor garage sale. It was winter and too cold to sell on the sidewalk some of the furniture and other excess items they no longer needed after moving up from Florida. So, as fate would have it, they were offered an empty room, which happened to be an unused storefront in Middleburg, to conduct a sale. It was only meant to last two days. Instead, the idea of "consignments" flew into the picture and the "sale" continues to this day.



"Follow your dreams," their mother advised her daughters. The dream became a reality as chance encounters led to the creation of what are now two consignment shops, one in Middleburg and one in nearby Warrenton. Cynthia says, "If you have the courage to dream and wait patiently with complete faith, they'll come true." Despite all the odds, and there were many, the story behind this family not only creating a consignment business (quite by accident) but allowing the venture to help others serves as an inspiration to anyone wishing to follow their dream.

On a recent visit to Middleburg, I walked into The White Elephant and, not needing anything in particular, but always curious, headed down the aisle of antiques. There are two sides to

the store plus a basement divided into two sides. On the left, you will find a collection of apparel and accessories. Many of these are new. None are over two years old. Everything from jeans to evening gowns, jewelry to shoes.

On the right are "decorative accents and furniture." All incoming consignments are carefully screened for quality. You will not have to search through "junk" to find valuable items. This particular day, I observed a man looking closely at certain items, making notes, and walking on to carefully study another object. I had to ask, "Are you an antique collector?" Yes, he was. Not only a collector but, I believe, although he would not tell me as much, he had a business selling antiques. I was not surprised.

In our home are signs of The White Elephant

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everywhere. I won't tell. Okay, maybe I will, just to entice you. But you must keep our secret!

One day, we brought home an art nouveau side table for the living room. On another occasion, we came home with a three piece entertainment console for downstairs. And a few years ago, we could not resist a beautiful Oriental rug. Many items at The White Elephant are one of a kind, including paintings, jewelry, and china. The choices change constantly, so you must make a habit of snooping.

Reasonably priced, many items are one of a kind and many are collectable. Their collections, which change almost daily (since the inventory and sales are continuous, seven days a week), are incredible. For wedding gifts, graduation gifts, birthdays, and for your personal

collections, it is hard to resist a purchase at the White Elephant. There are always lovely, helpful ladies working at the shop should you have any questions. Plus I always meet fascinating people many of whom, like me, make it a priority to poke around the hidden treasures and rarely leave empty-handed.

Visit The White Elephant at 103 West Federal Street in Middleburg or www.whiteelephant.com.