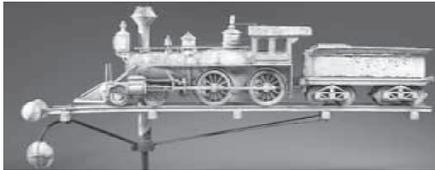


**Editor's  
Notebook**



**Mark Newhall**  
Editor &  
Publisher



This 5-ft. long weathervane topped a train station for 89 years. It was recently auctioned off for \$1.2 million.

**Antique Weathervanes  
Worth Millions To Collectors**

It's hard to believe, but old weathervanes are selling for millions of dollars to rich collectors looking for genuine "folk art". Prices have gone up so astronomically in recent months that thieves are using helicopters to steal the potentially pricey weathervanes right off barn roofs.

Here's an example: From 1882 to 1971, a 5-ft. long copper weathervane topped the train station depot in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. When the station was sold, the seller had one condition: he wanted to keep the weathervane, which was in the shape of a steam locomotive. He took it down and later sold it for a minimal amount to a local dealer. After passing through the hands of numerous art dealers over the years, the weathervane recently sold to Pennsylvania art dealer Todd Prickett for an amazing \$1,216,000.

Here's another one: The Lexington, Mass., Historical Society owned a weathervane for many years that dated back to 1910. The copper vane, in the shape of an early automobile, leaned against an old bed in a storage room for years. No one paid any attention to it until the Historical Society decided last year to sell part of its collection to raise money for renovations.



Auctioning off this 1910 weathervane resulted in an unexpected windfall of \$941,000 for a local historical society.

They thought the weathervane might bring \$30,000 or so. But on November 4, 2007, it sold for an astounding \$941,000 to Jerry Lauren, brother of the famous fashion designer.

Other recent examples include a mid 1800's Goddess of Liberty weathervane bought last year for \$1,080,000 by Boston art dealer Stephen Score; an 1883 gilt-copper grasshopper weathervane also sold to Score last year for \$520,000; and the most amazing of all, collector Jerry Lauren paid \$5.84 million in late 2006 for a 5-ft. tall Indian Chief weathervane that had been expected to sell for no more than \$150,000.

With values like these, it's not surprising that weathervanes have become targets of rural thieves.

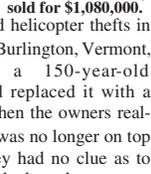


This 5-ft. tall Indian Chief weathervane holds the record at \$5.84 million.

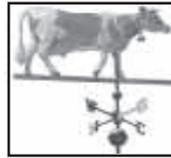
News reports have cited helicopter thefts in recent years. In Burlington, Vermont, thieves stole a 150-year-old weathervane and replaced it with a cheap replica. When the owners realized the original was no longer on top of their barn, they had no clue as to when the theft had taken place.

If you don't have a million dollar weathervane on any of your farm buildings, you might want to think about

**Goddess of Liberty sold for \$1,080,000.**



putting up a fancy weathervane now. Who knows, it might be worth a few million someday to your great, great grandchildren. Ken and Lizanne Jensen at West Coast Weather Vanes in Santa Cruz, Calif., make and sell custom weathervanes, some of which sell for as much as \$20,000. They have a huge variety of stock weathervanes, which can be seen at their website ([www.westcoastweathervanes.com](http://www.westcoastweathervanes.com); ph 800 762-8736).



A modern day weathervane made by a California company.

**Liberty Quotes**

"Government is like fire. If it is kept within bounds and under control of the people, it contributes to the welfare of all. But if it gets out of place, if it gets too big and out of control, it destroys the happiness and even the lives of the people." *Harold E. Stassen*

"It is useless for sheep to pass resolutions in favor of vegetarianism while the wolf remains of a different opinion." *William Ralph Inge*

"Violence and naked force has settled more issues in history than any other factor, and the contrary opinion is wishful thinking at its worst. Nations and peoples who forget this basic truth have always paid for it with their lives and freedoms." *Robert Heinlein*

"A nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people." *John F. Kennedy*

"Too many Americans have twisted the sensible right to pursue happiness into the delusion that we are entitled to a guarantee of happiness. If we don't get exactly what we want, we assume someone must be violating our rights. We're no longer willing to write off some of life's disappointments to simple bad luck." *Susan Jacoby*

"No one can read our Constitution without concluding that the people who wrote it wanted their government severely limited. The words 'no' and 'not', employed in restraint of government power, occur 24 times in the first seven articles of the Constitution and 22 more times in the Bill of Rights." *Rev. Edmund A. Opitz*

"If pigs could vote, the man with the slop bucket would be elected swineherd every time, no matter how much slaughtering he did on the side." *Orson Scott Card*

"Anything that keeps a politician humble is healthy for democracy." *Michael Kinsley*

**Worst Car Engines Ever**

When automakers put out a bad engine, the "bad news" can hurt the company for years. Here are 8 of the worst car engines from the past 50 years according to the Center for Auto Safety:

**1. GM's Diesels** – Responding to the fuel crisis of the late 1970's, GM rolled out a 5.7-liter diesel V-8 that was produced from 1978 to 1985. The big problem? It was based on a previous gas engine. The block, though beefed up, could not stand the stress and strain of the high-compression diesel pistons. Cylinder head bolts broke. Gaskets blew. Crankshafts failed. Engines overheated. A poorly designed fuel pump contributed to the problem. The engine was so bad, it took nearly 20 years for most consumers to get over thinking badly about automotive diesels.

**2. Chevy Vega 2.3-liter 4-cyl.** – This overhead-cam, aluminum block engine clicked, knocked and shook like an out-of-balance washing machine. It often burned excess oil. The problem was GM's failure to use steel cylinder liners. Late in its run, GM worked out all the bugs but it was too late. No one would buy it.

**3. Cadillac V-8-6-4** – In the early 1980's, Cadillac wanted to make a grand statement so they took a stab at cylinder deactivation with an engine that only ran on as many cylinders as were needed at any particular time. Unfortunately, the engine bucked and jerked as cylinders were turned on and off. The problem may have been that the sensors and computing power to control the process were not available at the time. Today, both GM and Chrysler have cylinder deactivation systems that work successfully.

**4. Toyota 3.0-liter IMZ V-6; SSFE 2.2-liter 4-cyl.** – The 1997 to 2002 models of these engines are prone to filling with oil sludge and seizing up. Toyota blames owners for not changing the oil often enough or for using the wrong oil. But experts say there's a defect in the breathing or circulation system. Toyota has since made improvements to the engines which solved the problem. More than 3 million owners were given extended warranties.

**5. Hyundai Excel 1.5-liter 4-cyl.** – This engine was built in Korea for the 1986 to 1994 Hyundai. It leaked and burned oil, dripped coolant, overheated and sounded like a badly adjusted sewing machine. This engine was one of the reasons Hyundai launched its best-in-industry 100,000-mile warranty.

**6. Chrysler Imperial fuel-injected V-8** – The 1978 Chrysler Imperial was powered by a 318 cu. in. V-8 that featured Chrysler Corp.'s first electronic fuel injection system. Problems included stalling, surging, failure to start when hot, and dealers who didn't know how to solve the problems. Chrysler eventually recalled the Imperial and installed a tried-and-true low-tech carburetor.

**7. Pontiac Fiero 2.5-liter 4-cylinder** – The only way to fit an engine onto the 1984-85 chassis was to use a smaller oil pan that held 3 quarts instead of the typical four. No problem as long as the oil level was kept full but, of course, many owners didn't and the engines burned up. Moreover, many of the engines had defective connecting rods which snapped when the oil ran low.

**8. Ford Windstar 1995-96** – This was the first model year of the Windstar. A bad head gasket failed in nearly all engines produced through the first half of 1996. Ford extended the warranty to 100,000 miles but, unfortunately, many of the engines failed even after the gasket was replaced. To add insult to injury, the replacement engines had the original head gasket defect and failed after a short period of time. (As reported in this space several years ago, I had one of those Windstars and ended up putting 5 engines into it – all under warranty. My Ford dealer and I became good buddies!)

**Take Your Car Keys To Bed**

Even if you've never bought a burglar alarm, you probably already own a pretty good security system. The electronic door opener that comes with most new car keys has a built-in panic alarm that sets off your car horn. Keep your keys near your bed at night. If you hear a noise outside or someone trying to get into your house, just press the panic button and your car horn will sound until the battery wears down. The unexpected sound of the alarm might just be enough to scare off most intruders. Even if you live quite a distance from others, your chances are good that someone will hear your horn and come to investigate. Tell your elderly relatives about this idea. If they should fall, or have a heart attack, they can use it as an emergency alarm.

No matter how bad your life, there's always a reason to be thankful. For example, I'm sitting here thinking how nice it is that wrinkles don't hurt.

An old couple was in their late 80's and in very good shape, mostly due to the wife who took great care to provide healthy food and kept both her and her husband on the straight and narrow. She was also frugal, making sure their resources would last them as long as they lived.

On a vacation trip, both of them were killed instantly in a car crash. Moments later they found themselves at the pearly gates, with St. Peter welcoming them into heaven. He took them first to the most beautiful mansion they'd ever seen and showed them the living quarters. The man asked, "What's this going to cost us?" and St. Peter told him the home would be free. They looked out the window and saw the most beautiful golf course they'd ever seen, and again, the man asked, "Well, what's it cost to play on that golf course?" Again, St. Peter assured him there would be no cost to use the golf course. They went down to the garage and found a late model top-of-the-line Cadillac in the garage and a 1-ton dually pickup with all the bells and whistles. St. Peter said, "Before you say anything, there's no cost to you at all for these vehicles. No need for insurance, and the fuel is free."

By this time, the man had become very irritated. He turned to his wife and said, "Honey, if you hadn't fed us all those alfalfa sprouts and broiled fish over the years, we could have been up here 10 years ago!"

After giving his sermon, the minister walked to the back of the church to greet parishioners. After shaking a few adult hands, he came upon the 7-year-old son of a deacon of the church. "Good morning, Jonathan," the preacher said as he reached out to shake the boy's hand. As they shook, he felt something in the palm of the boy's hand. "What's this," the preacher asked.

"Money," Jonathan said with a big smile on his face. "It's for you."

"I don't want to take your money, Jonathan," the preacher answered.

"I want you to have it," the boys said. "My daddy says you're the poorest preacher we've ever had so I want to help you."