

# Woman sees beauty, memories in scrap heap

By Susan Nolan. Portsmouth Herald. Sep 2, 2001.

NEWMARKET — Her soft footsteps sound almost reverent as Lois Beaulieu walks down the dirt road, past little memory graveyards scattered about the 10-acre junkyard behind her home.

Beside the dusty pathway, an old Singer treadle sewing machine sits silently inside an old Dodge van. The little drawers of its old cabinet are still filled with bric-a-brac, the machine head dismantled, sitting on the floor beside it. Just beyond the van, down the road and a little bit and off to the right, an old Glenwood stove stands steadfastly inside a dilapidated mobile home which awaits crushing.

"A junk man picks up bits and pieces of the lives other people throw away," Lois says softly.



Lois Beaulieu looks out over the junkyard she and her husband, Louie, started more than 50 years ago. Lois, who still operates Beaulieu and Wife Towing in Newmarket, is now selling the junkyard where so many memories live.

Staff photo by Deb Cram

Her late husband Louie had been the ultimate junk man. In the early 1930s he would pull his little red wagon to the dump in New Village in Newmarket where he picked up ketchup bottles, selling them for

2 cents a dozen.

Wilfred Louis Beaulieu salvaged so much junk that, at the age of 8, in the midst of the Great Depression, he was earning about \$7 a week. At the age of 9, he traded a bicycle for his first automobile, an Overland, and his future as Yankee trader and junk man was forever sealed.

By the time the couple married in 1949, Louie was only 21 but he had already purchased the land on Wadleigh Falls Road where the junkyard stands today. Just across the street, he had purchased a home for his new bride, and there the two lived the life of hard work and close kinship that would bring them through nearly 50 years of marriage and a lifetime of memories.

"His dream was to build a gas station, grocery store, and oil business," says Lois. And so until the late 1960s, the two had operated a Chevron station and neighborhood store from the home where they raised seven children and stuck together as a family. The same year they were married, they also started Beaulieu and Wife Towing, a business that Lois still runs today. In the early years, Louie would invest in junk cars and stash them across the street on the 10 acres that is the junkyard today. "Every spare \$20 he had, he would buy a junk car," she says.

At first Lois resented it. "But I began to see that if I didn't join it would divide us." And it was all about cars. In the early days, Louie did all the police towing for Newmarket and Beaulieu and Wife continues to tow for AAA today. "When my

kids were old enough, I could get up in the middle of the night and go out with Louie," she recalls. Women in the disabled or crashed vehicles were always happy to see a woman with the tow man. "I'd be talking with them and calming them down."

Lois and Louie worked side by side and by the time Louie died suddenly and unexpectedly in 1995, they had spent 46 years in business together. She promised Louie she would keep things going until their 50th anniversary, and she has walked past that dream by two years.

Today, the junkyard and its accompanying 61 acres are for sale. The town of Newmarket is looking at the land for a possible school site and Lois is preparing herself to finally let go of the place where discarded pieces of a half century's memories are stored, here and there, beneath the trees and among the wildflowers.

Almost a hidden secret, the junkyard wends its way along a forest road that reaches deep into the sprawling parcel. "That's my Beetle yard," says Lois, pointing toward a funny batch of old Volkswagens that resemble Thanksgiving turkey carcasses two days after the feast. "Look at them," she chuckles. "They pick them to death." The little cars, nestled together beneath towering pines, are missing every part imaginable — their little hoods lifted open, their doors, if any, ajar.

"They love the motors," Lois says of the old car enthusiasts who come to the yard for parts. "They don't care if they run or not." Time was when junkyards were magical places for hunting down a summer dream on a hot hazy day. Kids used to come there to find wheels for a soapbox car or a homemade fire engine.

"There was a time when you could go to the junkyard and get inner tubes but you can't do that today," says Lois. "Everything is a no-no today." Hampton District Court judge Whitey Fraser still goes to Beaulieu's now and then to unwind among the treasures and the memories which are nestled in its woods. "He comes in his old hat and glasses," says Lois. "He comes here all day and just walks around. This is his relaxation." Old Desotos and Chevys await him here, along with tinier treasures.

"Louie always said when you're in a junkyard, you always walk with your head down," says Lois. Over the years, the Beaulieus have discovered such sparkling surprises as rings and other jewelry on the ground. She notes that, "Just after a rain, everything begins to surface." "This is my old Kaiser," Lois says as she walks past a car from the 1930s stashed in her special family keepers lot. "I'm one of the few junkyards left that has old stuff." The Kaiser rests beside a group of oldies — a Studebaker, a Desoto. "That's when you had real chrome," says Lois, pointing to the shiny original chrome on one of the cars. "It doesn't rust." Today's cars all look alike to her. But there was a time when each car brand was distinctive. "Each one had its own particular feature back then," she says, walking past a Dodge Wayfarer.

Lois points to a section of the yard filled with more recently abandoned cars. She hauls in at least six a month from store parking lots in Portsmouth. Often, these cars are eerily filled with clothing and other items, left there by owners who just up and walked away. "I don't know what they're going to do with all this stuff when the junkyards go out," she says.

It hasn't been easy running a junkyard all these years but it has been rewarding to Lois, who says, "We built the business so that we could be here as a family." Her husband worked here until his death. "Louie always said, I'll just keep going. I'd rather wear out than rust out."

And while he has left her for a while, gone to the other side of eternity, Lois says his presence is everywhere throughout the junkyard. "He's here," she says, looking all around. "He's still here ... all over. I feel him."