

## Sex and Atlantic City: Local couple looks to sell a piece of TV history

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It might take some effort for a "Sex and the City" fan to picture their favorite characters gossiping in the booth that Bob and Loretta Pickus have in their Northfield home. It's not inside a swanky New York restaurant and there aren't four Cosmopolitans resting neatly on a table.

Instead, the blue and gold velvet booth where Carrie, Miranda, Samantha and Charlotte once sat for their trip to Atlantic City is now pushed against a bright pink wall and rests underneath the low ceilings in their basement.

But the signatures are all there: Kim Cattrall and Kristen Davis signed on one end and Sarah Jessica Parker and recent New York gubernatorial candidate Cynthia Nixon on the other.

"We so much enjoyed the festive atmosphere and the sweetness of the people here," Nixon wrote.

The booth was built as a set piece for the popular HBO show when it filmed inside the Taj Mahal for the 2001 episode "Luck Be an Old Lady" set in Atlantic City, and has sat inside the couple's basement for 17 years.

Loretta Pickus was working as the Vice President of Legal Affairs at the Trump Taj Mahal at the time and a fan of the show and applied to be an extra in the episode when she found out filming would take place in the casino.

If viewers watch the opening restaurant scene closely-- while the camera pans across the famous foursome joking about Miranda's baby weight and gifting Charolette with the card game "Old Maid" for her 36th birthday-- they can see Loretta sitting in the neighboring booth with her back to the actresses.

"That's her big claim to fame, is that her shoulder was on television," her husband Bob said.

According to Loretta, the episode filmed for three days and the crew used actual dealers and servers to shoot the scene at the Indian-themed restaurant.

"It was exciting to be near the celebrities and to see how they actually shoot for TV," she said.

NJ Motion Picture and Television Commission Associate Director David Schoner Jr., who was the state's Production Coordinator in 2001, said that because there were not many people creating original television content, "Sex and the City" was considered a cultural phenomenon in its time.

"It was a big deal to have them come into the state," he said.

According to Schroner, people were following the character's emotional journeys just as much as they were following the trends of what the characters they were wearing.

"Part of that cultural phenomenon is these women were portraying four very strong women and different things they were going through," Schroner said.

Schroner said that it ushered in economic and image benefits when the typically New-York-City-centric show decided to film in Atlantic City.

"That's press you can't buy. You can't buy that press because its on the cutting edge of what's going on," he said.

The couple came to own the booth after a group of friends saw that it was up for auction and decided to bid on it as a surprise. Bob said that not many bidders had been submitting bids because of the booth's size.

"They called and said, 'I'm having something delivered. You need room,'" Bob said. "This truck pulled up, these guys came in and put it all together and its been sitting here and been enjoyed for quite a while now."

Although it has served as a small place for the couple and their son to sit and relax , Bob and Loretta are now making plans to move to a smaller home without a basement.

They offered the piece of TV history to some local charities, but they declined because of the booth's size. Still, the couple hasn't given up hope that they can sell the booth.

"If somebody out there has space I think it would be interesting and fun," Bob said.

Noel Stevenson, who is the Director of Marketing Servies a Caesars entertainment and is a long-time fan of the show, said that she thinks its message of empowerment is timeless.

"This is one of the most iconic tv series of all time especially when we talk about women and I think the fact that they shot one of the episodes here in Atlantic City I mean that history is always great," Stevenson said.

While it does bring back memories of the bygone casino and her time on the show, Lorretta hopes that it will find a new owner.

"It will have a good home, somewhere people will enjoy it," she said.