

# A tiny trip for a big brass bed

By BRUCE BLACKADAR

*Lay, lady, lay . . . Lay across my big brass bed* — Bob Dylan.

Does everyone want one of those handsomely cumbersome things or does it just seem that way?

Brass beds were nowhere a decade ago.

They had as much cachet in those days of waterbeds and sleek Swedish streamlined queen-sized zebra-striped sleepers and Hugh Hefner's circular, space-age gem as zoot suits. But now . . . well, you've got antique freaks combing country rummage sales somewhere in the back 40 looking for old brass bed parts and wily farmers searching through their cobwebbed barns for brass tubing and zealous detectives browsing in old houses in Newfoundland.

They stopped making the beds 50 years ago. But they were made so sturdily, that even now it's not uncommon to get your greedy hands on one of them (if you're willing to pay sometimes up to \$1,500) that is more than 100 years young.

But goodness you have to really hunt for them.

You have to be like Victor and Janet Cronshaw, who are really into the game up in their store in Maple.

They got a king-sized jump on most of the rest of us several years ago when Vic noticed this . . . discrepancy . . . in the price range for the bed. The couple opened their store in May (they used to run the business from their home) — and the trade is going just fine, thank you. Janet, who met Vic and married him when she went to buy a bed from him, figures that last year she and her husband, who used to be a cabinet-maker, zipped around to 100 sales and auctions looking for the elusive — and dwindling — brass beds. "We buy anything we can get our hands on," she says. "We used to be choosier, but not anymore. It's an 'in' thing now. People are starting to appreciate the older things. The farmers aren't letting them go cheap anymore. They know what's happening."

Prices for the beds have doubled in one year. They're going to be even higher soon. You can still get a double bed at the Cronshaws' old orange brick store (it used to be a funeral home) for \$425. But that won't last long.

Strangely enough, the couple don't have a brass bed of their own now. They sold the one they used to have ("My god, it was comfortable!" Janet says).

So they're like a lot of people now: Looking around for the 'perfect' bed.