

# Auction Of A Lifetime

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*Many people pass down family heirlooms to their descendants. Sometimes these are of sentimental value only; sometimes they have great monetary value as well. Often the heirs are familiar with the object's true worth, but on occasion a person will discover that an old item is worth far more than imagined.*

*In 2012, an impoverished, disabled man began to suspect that there was more to his cherished old blanket than met the eye. Read the incredible story of the discovery that changed his life.*



Loren Krytzer sits on the couch at home—a trailer park in the Antelope Valley region near Los Angeles, California. It's a typical evening. With dread, he picks up one of the envelopes lying on the table. It's from the credit card company. He looks at the bill with a heavy sigh. There's no way he can afford to pay it. If he's lucky, he'll scrape together enough money for the minimum payment.

He switches on the television set to take his mind off his troubles and watches a rerun of a popular program called Antiques Roadshow. For this episode the roadshow is visiting Tucson, Arizona. Locals stream in from all over, bringing lots of old stuff with them, culled from attics, dusty drawers and home display cases in the hopes that they will find out that their cherished antique or family heirloom is worth a lot of money.

From all over North America, the Antiques Roadshow flies in experts in various niche areas of antiques appraisals. Different events are filmed in small cities and towns throughout the United States. Wherever the roadshow comes to town it generates a lot of local attention and excitement. Here, regular people get the chance to have their art, jewelry, memorabilia, old books and other valuables appraised by world-class experts. Although thousands of people visit the roadshow in its various locations each year, only a handful bring in antiques and collectibles valuable enough to attract widespread notice.

This week's episode features an especially interesting find. An older gentleman named Ted has brought in a vintage woolen blanket, and it is now being hung on a frame for display in front of the camera.

Don Ellis, owner of a private New York gallery and pre-eminent dealer of North American tribal art, is standing in front of the blanket with the owner. He is visibly excited as he asks Ted to tell the audience a little about the blanket.

"I don't know an awful lot about it, except that it was given by Kit Carson to the foster father of my grandmother."

"And do you know who made this weaving?"

Do you know what kind of blanket it is?" Ellis prods him.

"It's probably a Navajo, but that's about all I know," says the man simply. He goes on to say that it has never been looked at for appraisal.

"Well, Ted," responds Ellis, "did you notice when you showed this to me that I kind of stopped breathing a little bit?"

"Yeah, you did!"

"I'm still having trouble breathing here, Ted."

"It kind of took me by surprise," Ted admits, "because I didn't think much about it. It's probably a chief's blanket, but...."

"Exactly, and it's not just a chief's blanket. It's the first type of chief's blanket made. These were made in about 1840 to 1860, and it's called a Ute, first-phase wearing blanket. They were made for Ute chiefs. This is Navajo weaving in its purest form. All of these things that we see later with diamonds and all kinds of different patterns come much later than this. This is just pure linear design. This is the beginning of Navajo weaving."

"Wow," breathes Ted.

Wow is right. Ted came in having no idea that his blanket had such a distinguished lineage. But Ted is not the only one wowed by the blanket. As soon as its image appears on his home TV screen, Loren Krytzer notices something funny about that blanket. It... it looks incredibly similar to a blanket that he owns....

Krytzer inches closer to the television as the discussion about the blanket continues.



Partial view of a trailer/mobile home park in Antelope Valley, CA.

"And not only that, the condition of this is unbelievable, unbelievable..." says Don Ellis, enraptured. "It's made from hand-woven wool, but it's so finely done, it's like silk. It would repel water.... And this here is dyed with indigo dyes. It was a very valuable dye at the time. And what's really interesting is right here we have an old repair that was probably done in the 1860s, and it's done with raveled bayeta, which is, in itself, a very important thing in Navajo weaving. So, all involved, it's an extraordinary piece of art. It's extremely rare. It is the most important thing that's come into the Roadshow that I've seen. Do you have a sense at all of what you're looking at here in terms of value?"

"I haven't a clue."

"Uh, are you a wealthy man, Ted?"

"No."

"Well, sir, um, I'm still a little nervous here, I have to tell you." Don Ellis pauses slightly. His excitement is palpable to the audience. He realizes that what he is about to say will completely blow away the unsuspecting owner. As an exclusive rare art dealer, he is used to buying and selling pieces worth huge amounts of money to collectors. Ted, on the other hand, looks like a retired, small-town, blue-collar worker who never had much in his life. With gusto, Ellis continues, "On a really bad day, this textile would be worth \$350,000. On a good day, it's about a half a million dollars."

"Oh, my G-d!"

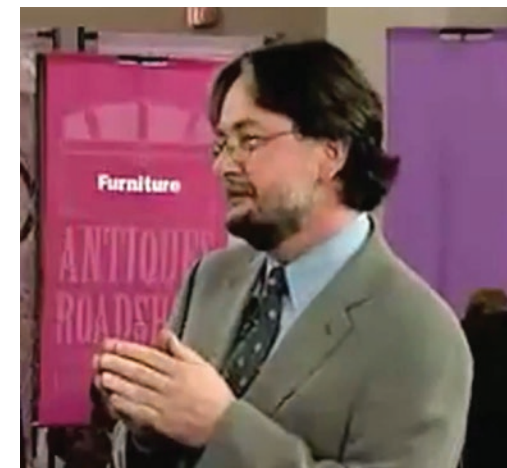
Loren Krytzer is already out of his seat, dashing to find his own Indian blanket. He retrieves it and rushes back to the TV screen. Heart racing, he holds his blanket right up to the screen to compare. There's no denying that it looks just like Ted's.

"I had no idea," Ted says, his voice breaking. "It was lying on the back of a chair."

"Well, sir," proclaims Ellis, "you have a national treasure. When you walked in with this, I just about died. Congratulations!"

"I can't believe this!"

Neither can Krytzer. Surely the blanket he inherited from his grandmother, which has been used casually around the house, is nowhere near the value of the one on TV. He



Antiques appraiser Don Ellis telling Ted that his blanket is very rare and valuable.



Ted's reaction upon hearing it might be worth half-a-million dollars. At right is the edge of his blanket, given by Kit Carson to his family in the mid-1800s.

can't possibly delude himself into believing that. Still, it is definitely more important than he had ever realized. He had just thought he had a "cool" Indian blanket, not something that was really worth any significant sum of money. Now he imagines it might really be worth \$10,000, or even \$15,000....

Krytzer goes by "LT" among his friends. Sometimes they call him "Big LT." That's because he's six feet, seven inches tall. Big LT strikes an imposing figure, but he has fallen on hard times. Several years ago his foot was crushed in an automobile accident. As a result, he developed a metatarsal pressure ulcer. It kept going deeper into his foot until infection was heading into the bone. At that point, LT's doctors said they had to cut his foot off.