

Garage Sales

I have a neighbor who has a garage sale every year. She methodically stores stuff for the sale all year long—and then she organizes her sale and executes it. My neighbor makes some extra cash and in addition, gets rid of her excess stuff. Brilliant! I also have friends who host garage sales every few years and actually enjoy the process as much as sale day itself. For other folks, and I will go ahead and lump myself into this category, the thought of having a garage sale is more likely to cause the onset of a good case of hives.

I have had exactly two garage sales (or as my husband refers to as Tag sales) in my adult life. The first one was 13 years ago. We had just moved into this home. To add to that scene, I had just given birth to our third baby—at that point, we had a 3-year old, a 2-year old, and a newborn. Even within my sleep-deprived, somewhat foggy existence, I could see our family desperately two things: to de-junk, and money—not necessarily in that order.

Despite being fairly organized, I found the whole garage-sale experience exhausting. I vowed never to have another one.

As with anything involving children, never say never. When my neighborhood decided to have a multi-family garage sale, and since our home desperately needed a good de-junking, I decided to participate. After all, everybody else was doing it. I cleaned out our attic (which had not really been clean since we moved in), the basement storage closet, and every closet in the house. I was focused on my task, frantically pulling things out from under beds, wondering silently how we had possibly acquired all that stuff. After clearing out the garage, borrowing tables and dusting everything off, the real fun began—pricing. Now if you want to talk about a humbling experience, pricing your stuff is definitely something to contend with. You find yourself racking your brain if the lamp aunt Ethel gave you when you got married should go for a \$1.00 or \$1.50. And what about those candle holders? I probably paid \$20.00, and they look brand new. Could I ask \$3.00 for the set?

As you continue pricing your stuff, an odd metamorphosis occurs. You begin conversing with yourself about how nice your stuff is and that garage sale customers would actually be quite lucky to go home with any of it. This thought is particularly pronounced if you are selling an item you still like, but can no longer use.

Case in point was my old coffee table. Rustic on purpose, not merely because of my sons' Hot Wheels cars, I really liked that table. I probably

paid \$100.00 for it, five or six years ago. Due to some remodeling, it no longer worked in the room. I put a price of \$35.00 on it. More than fair, I reasoned.

At the actual sale, the things I thought would never sell, were eagerly snatched up. No, not for full price, but hey, it *is* a garage sale. I watched as people walked past my coffee table, hardly giving it a second glance. I pushed it out onto the driveway, in plain view. Still, nobody even so much as glanced at it. I slashed the price to \$30.00, then on down to \$25.00. No takers. No offers. Was this some kind of “Candid Camera Outing,” I wondered?

Then, I did something no reasonable garage-sale-giver would ever do. I became inwardly angry toward my customers. What was wrong with that coffee table anyway? Were these people garage sale snobs? I started noticing other items that weren’t selling—things for as little as a quarter were being passed by. My stuff was not even worth a quarter?

When the two long days finally ended, I loaded up my car and happily gave the remaining goods to charity. But not my valuable coffee table. My sister-in-law bought it, insisting I accept \$40.00 for it—obviously more than it was worth. In truth, I think she was tired of listening to my complaints about the whole experience.

Once again I have vowed to attend, not host garage sales. And from now on, when I am at a garage sale, I am going to tell the host what good bargains they have—I may even begin paying full price.