

7/6/2000

## Garage Saling 101

By Kathi Gunio

They call Janice Simchik the "diva of garage sales." At least her many friends and acquaintances do. For years now, Simchik has been helping others organize and run their garage sales; from pricing items to picking charities to which the leftover items will go.

"This is our third one," said JoAnn Butler, Simchik's long-time friend. "She's come all the way from Syracuse (where Simchik now lives) to help me with this garage sale."

After all, having a garage sale is not an easy undertaking. Clearing out those closets and attics (the number one reason people have garage sales) to making a few bucks (the result of the first reason) takes some finessing, and it helps to have an expert lead the way, just like all those colorful garage sale signs.

If you're going to a garage sale, knowing for what and where you're going to is key. Because whether you start out on Thursday (steadfastly becoming a popular kick-off day), or Friday (usually the first day of the weekend sales) or Saturday (good for one-day only sales), you need to be prepared. Yes, before you embark on this endeavor, you need to strap on your fanny pack (what serious garage sale-goers wear), have plenty of small bills on hand (garage sale holders hate to make change for a \$20), and most importantly, make a map.

"That's the first thing I do," said Carol Jimerson, an avid garage saler. Jimerson, who has twelve children between herself and her husband, goes to garage sales every week. "I look in the newspaper for the garage sales I want to go to, then I map out my route. I try to hit as many as possible," Jimerson said. That can be quite a few, depending upon whether or not you're an "early bird" (garage sale term for those who venture out even before the advertised starting times).

You might also want to make a list of what you're looking to buy, as this helps deter impulse buying. Jimerson equips herself with a list each week, and her children provide her with updates. Besides bargains, Jimerson says she looking for "Everything."

During this garage sale excursion, Jimerson's daughter, Tracy Wowk is accompanying her. Tracy is looking to find Little Tykes, Playskool, or Fisher Price toys for her three-year-old daughter and the babyon-the-way.

But so are a lot of other people. Anything made by Little Tykes, Playskool or Fisher Price goes fast. Brand new these name-brand toys, such as slides, car coupes, picnic tables, and playhouses can cost anywhere from \$45 to \$199. The average garage sale recycle price: \$7 to \$35. Aside from antiques, furniture, and baby clothes, they are the most sought-after items at garage sales.

Wowk has already found herself a Little Tikes play slide, although she wistfully says, "What I'd really like to find is one of those green turtle sandboxes with the top." And like true garage salers, Wowk and her mother will keep looking.

When you find what it is your looking for, or just something you like (and who doesn't?) at a garage sale, it's expected you will bargain its cost. No self-respecting garage saler will pay full asking price. If it says \$30, they'll take \$25; \$12, they'll take \$10. And if it's priced 10 for \$1.50, they'll go ten for a buck. Why? It's all a part of the art of garage saling.

"I got three shirts and a sweater for a \$1.75," says Mandy Carter who was visiting Rochester to attend the graduation of her cousin, Gillian Williams, from Fairport High School. The girls, along with Mandy's sister Stephanie, and Gillian's mother Lin Williams, began garage saling after they went out for an early lunch. It's 3:45 PM, and they still haven't made it home.

"I enjoy the bargaining, it's too fun!" says Lyn Williams who found a bargain of six beautiful wineglasses for \$3. "I just love going out and finding things." In fact, that's what many people like about garage saling: The thrill of the hunt. "It's like an adrenalin rush," says Stephanie.

And to get your adrenalin rush, you've got to beat the rush.

"We had people here so early this morning! They were here before we were open," said Julie Danker who was holding her first garage sale. "It was so chaotic!" It was all a new experience for Danker who agreed to have a garage sale in conjunction with her neighbor. "It's a lot of work," Danker said, "but it's worked out good. We've sold an awful lot."

In fact most people who hold garage sales say they average a couple hundred dollars to several hundred dollars after a one-day garage sale. Those who brave a second day may make anywhere from another hundred dollars to just another ten dollars-or less.

Cliff Cody experienced that second day slump. His moving sale, which showcased everything from snakeskin boots to a computer table, didn't see quite as many customers the second day as the first day. "It's a little more quiet today. Yesterday morning we were slammed. They just kept coming and coming," he recalled.

Not surprisingly. Moving sales usually mean there's more of a variety, and probably even more items since people might be literally clearing out their attics, basements and closets. Multiple family sales are good, but it can mean that one family has several items, and another family has one or two to contribute. Neighborhood and Street sales usually generate traffic jams and lots of customers because they are able to "hit" multiple sales in the same area. These sales are considered garage sale heaven. Most start at 9 AM, and are over at 4 PM.

"And when it's over," begins garage saler, Bill Sunter, "it's over. Take down the signs."

Though there are some intersections in the town of Perinton where signs are prohibited, there are no steadfast zoning regulations as to when, where, or how long garage sale signs can and should be up. But week-old signs on street signs and utility poles can be considered unsightly to the community. To garage salers, they're simply annoying.

“Those brightly colored pieces of paper are what we look for,” said Sunter who was on the hunt for old picture frames. “They should only be up for the intended time for the intended purpose. After that, there’s no reason they should remain up.”

But any seasoned garage saler would not just rely on signs. After strapping on their fanny pack, they’d make a map.