

## COMMENTARY

# No price tag on memories at rummage sale

Spring is a time when snow melts, grass turns green and driveways echo with the sounds of bouncing balls and Rollerblades.

But not all driveways are used as playgrounds. For some, the pathway into the garage becomes the gateway into a marketplace filled with goods to draw the most discerning shoppers and the most clever bargainers, seeking the most elusive of treasures.

Get the cars out of the garage and the kids out of

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For The  
Post-Crescent



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the driveway. It's time for a rummage sale.

The word "rummage" implies a search. People have always engaged in "rummag-

ing" for things they needed to survive. But where do you suppose the concept of a "rummage sale" started?

I can almost hear the discussion between two early American settlers.

"Hey, Jedidiah, nice plow."

"Thanks, Samuel. I picked it up at Elijah's barn sale for a half-bushel of corn. He said he only used it one season and then got a bigger one. It's practically new!"

Perhaps the rummage sale started in the Old

World. Imagine the Queen of England waving royally to the huge gathering in the palace driveway and telling them, "Loyal subjects, hel-loooooo. Today only - all tiaras are half-price."

I believe it was in medieval times that the rummage sale idea really began. The castle closets are all jammed with old battle-axes and armor that nobody has fit into in years.

So one day, the items were gathered up and displayed proudly across the drawbridge with labels like,

"Sword - excellent for battle, killing dragons, etc. - liketh new - maketh an offer."

I suspect this was also when men-folk like myself began the time honored tradition of rummage-veto.

"My Queen, how hath my favorite slaying sword foundeth its way to yon bartering table?"

To which the queen would respond, "Uh - dark magic - I supposeth."

I too have witnessed the "magic" that mysteriously

# FOSTER: Memories aren't part of sale

From B-1

transports items I could never bear to part with onto a table in my garage with a little piece of tape that says, "\$1.00."

"Awwwwwww," I moan at my wife, holding up a little blue shirt with three Elmos on it. "This was Daughter No. 2's favorite. I'm keeping it."

My wife sighs heavily as I extract the shirt from the pile, carefully remove the \$1.00 tag and place the shirt delicately in a box next to a little Christmas dress, a sailor skirt with matching white shorts, a pink sleeper with the built-in mittens and feet, and a jungle animal mobile.

Finding several other items I was hesitant to part with, I tried another approach that I like to call EBP: emotion based pricing (also known as the mark-with-a-price-that's-so-outrageous-the-item-is-sure-to-not-be-sold system).

Sadly, I got caught.

"Honey," my wife asks as she holds the beautiful, sparkly green dress with the little snow person that plays Frosty the Snowman when you push his belly, "you really think \$48 is the right price for this?"

Hey, I can't be responsible for shoppers' inability to understand and appreciate my pricing system.

Grudgingly, I mumbled, "Fine!"

I took the dress down. I removed the price. And when my wife went into the house, I quickly placed the dress in the box next to the trio of Elmos.

Don't get me wrong. I'm all for reclaiming space in my home occupied by items that only occupy space in my home. Then again, I have difficulty haggling over the price of my family memories.

But haggling is part of the ritual. Betty Bargains comes along and finds an item she likes — let's say a sundress. She picks it up and shows it to her shopping companion (or

wing-man), saying how perfect it would be for her granddaughter, but that she's just not sure about the color.

She turns to me and says, "There's no price on this. Would you take a dollar for it?"

In my mind, I hear myself explaining to Betty how I would sooner burn the dress and eat the ashes than sell it to her for a dollar.

A tear wells up in my eye as I think of all the fun times both my daughters had in that little dress.

But then, I realize that the memories of my girls' childhoods are not in the clothes they wore or the toys they played with. I'll always have my memories with me, in my heart.

So I smile, turn to Betty, and tell her:

"That dress? It's \$33."

Well, what? It's a really cute dress!

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