

Garage Sale Gal

Thief steals bag but not spirit

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Lynda Hammond

It was a purse.

An imitation Louis Vuitton designer bag tucked among the items Jenny Hines was selling at her recent garage sale in Mesa. “It was my daughter’s purse. We had a \$15 price tag on it and if we didn’t sell it we were going to keep it.”

But unfortunately a thief got it. That’s right someone snatched up the bag without paying for it. That’s a tough pill to swallow but it’s even worse when the money raised from the sale is going to charity. “I’m pretty mad. It was a fundraiser. So, I’m frustrated.”

If you’ve ever had a garage sale chances are you’ve had something stolen. Unfortunately, it happens often. In fact, at my last garage sale someone swiped a large vase but I didn’t even know about it until later in the day. It was a different story for Jenny. She saw everything. When the lady took the purse other garage sale buyers that were gathered at the sale alerted Jenny. “She was getting in her car and I yelled ‘Hey I want my purse back’ and she just looked at me and shrugged like she didn’t know what I was talking about.” In the heat of the moment Jenny took it a bit further by pounding on the thief’s car window and yelling at her while the vehicle was moving. Jenny says her adrenaline was flowing and she doesn’t—for a moment-- regret chasing after the thief. “The woman needed to know what she did was wrong and know that she got caught.”

I talked to Sgt. Scott Martin with the Mesa Police Department. He has some advice for Jenny and any of us who witnesses a theft. “Never attempt to grab anybody. You don’t know who you’re dealing with—whether they have a weapon or if someone else is in the car with them. It’s not worth it.”

Here are a few more of Sgt. Martin’s tips on keeping you and your items safe at garage sales.

1/Keep garage door closed- If you have items in the garage you’re not selling, such as golf clubs, keep them out of sight.

2/Display pricey items closer to the house- If you have more expensive things for sale keep them

closer to where you're sitting so you can keep an eye on them.

3/Sorry, no checks- Don't accept a check. Sgt. Martin says bogus checks are very common. So don't fall victim to a bad check scheme.

4/Get a buddy- Never garage sale alone. Invite a friend or neighbor over for company and support.

While Jenny is disappointed about the theft--thankfully-- she's not jaded against all garage salers. "One man bought a necklace for \$1 but he gave me a ten dollar bill since it's for charity..so he made up for (the theft)." Jenny was still able to raise about \$220 for a Christian-based girl's home in Tucson.

So there's a happy ending to Jenny's story. But remember danger lurks everywhere even at garage sale. So, be on your guard, be smart and stay safe.



(PHOTO BY LYNDA HAMMOND): Jenny Hines, 31, describes the events that unfolded after a woman stole a purse at her garage sale recently in Mesa. Other garage salers saw it all happen. They promised to get the "suspect's" license plate if they saw her down the road at another garage sale. So far, no luck.

MY FAVORITE FIND

Do you have a garage sale find you love? Something that makes you smile when you look at it? Share it with us. Send us your picture. Include your name, email address and phone number and email it to: Lynda@GarageSaleGal.com. Watch for the story of *your* treasure in this column!

Lynda Hammond is a former television anchor who left the anchor desk for the love of garage sales. Contact her at Lynda@GarageSaleGal.com. Lynda also does garage sale segments on 3-TV's Good Morning Arizona.

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