

## **Garage Sale Gal**

### **THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC**



**Lynda Hammond**

*It's 1974 and times are tough.*

*Richard Nixon's Presidency hangs by a thread, the U.S. is embroiled in an economic crisis as a gas shortage and rationing sends summer prices at the pump soaring to 55 cents a gallon—that is, if you can find it.*

*Meanwhile, traders on Wall Street panic and stocks lose billions in value.*

And, in Phoenix, Melinda Van de Water experiences her first garage sale.

"I thought it would be nice to get some extra income because money was so tight," says Melinda, who now lives in Gilbert.

She's been garage saling for more than 35 years and boy has she learned a lot. Even on that first day---when she took some of her old clothes to a neighbor's house and together they set up shop. Her friend was selling a variety of items including partly used lotions and perfumes. "I thought that was weird. I mean who the heck would buy anything used like that? But she sold all of it. I was impressed. I was in awe of her." That's when Melinda realized just about anything sells at a garage sale.

At first she just held garage sales—selling stuff the family no longer needed. But things changed in the '80s when she got divorced and moved to an apartment with her two children. That's when she began shopping at sales, too. "I found myself in a situation where I really didn't have anything. So I went to garage sales out of need because I couldn't afford anything else. I bought everything from clothes and shoes to furniture. I furnished my whole apartment with garage sales stuff."

Melinda, 55, remembers the time she was gearing up for a job interview and didn't have anything to wear. But garage sales to the rescue as she recounts one of her favorite escapades. "I went to a sale and I found a dress and a pair of shoes for under \$5. Oh, I really loved those shoes. So I had my outfit."

Two days later she got the job.

Wow! Three decades of garage saling in the Valley. It makes me curious what sales were like back in the "olden days".

#### **Then**

**Not in vogue-** Sales in the '70s were few and far between. It wasn't popular to hold or go to garage sales. "When I first started there weren't that many. People snubbed them," says Melinda.

#### **Now**

**Attitude adjustment-** Garage sales can be found on just about every block these days. Buyers are thrilled with the savings while sellers love the extra money in the pocket!

#### **Then**

**TMI-Too Much Information on signs-**Melinda laughs when she thinks about signs posted for garage sales in the 70s. "They were huge. People put everything on them—their address, zip code, date and time, social security number," she adds jokingly.

#### **Now**

**Shrunken signs-**Signs are much smaller now and typically only include the word "sale" with an arrow. "Mine are

really small. We just use neon poster board with an arrow and that gets the job done.”

***Then***

***Women only***-Melinda says garage saling used to be mostly a “woman’s thing”.

***Now***

***Equal opportunity event***-Although there are no solid statistics to back it up, it appears today there are just as many men involved in sales.



(Caption for picture above) A few people shop at Melinda Van de Water’s sale recently in Gilbert. Melinda, who is a bit camera shy and didn’t want her picture taken, has been garage saling a long time. The single Mother went to garage sales to help make ends meet. “Now that my kids are grown I continue going to garage sales because they’re fun. I feel like now when I sell things I’m helping others who were in my same situation.”

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**[www.GarageSaleGal.com](http://www.GarageSaleGal.com) make sure you visit Lynda's Web site where you can list & look for garage sales on line!**

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

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