

Garage Sale Gal **THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC**



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Lynda Hammond

Buying gifts at garage sales ***Lynda Hammond***

Times are tough.

A lot of us are watching our fortunes evaporate as the Dow drops while home foreclosure and unemployment rates climb.

It'll be challenging finding extra money to spend on gifts this holiday season but I may have a solution; shop garage sales. If ever there was a good time to buy presents at a garage sale this is it.

Now, some of you might be choking on your coffee after reading that last line but I'm serious. Sure this could be considered re-gifting at its best—or worst. Many etiquette experts say if we're going to give a second-hand gift the most important thing we should do is to keep it to ourselves. But here's what the Garage Sale Gal says: I say scream it from the roof tops! If we take the time to garage sale, find the perfect gift for someone—brand new still in the original packaging—then we should be proud we've turned a garage sale find into a nice gift for someone. We've saved money, perhaps found something we can't buy in a store anymore—such as a collectible Barbie--- and even kept stuff out of the landfills by taking it off the seller's hands. Here are some ideas if you'd like to join me in shopping for friends and loved ones at garage sales.

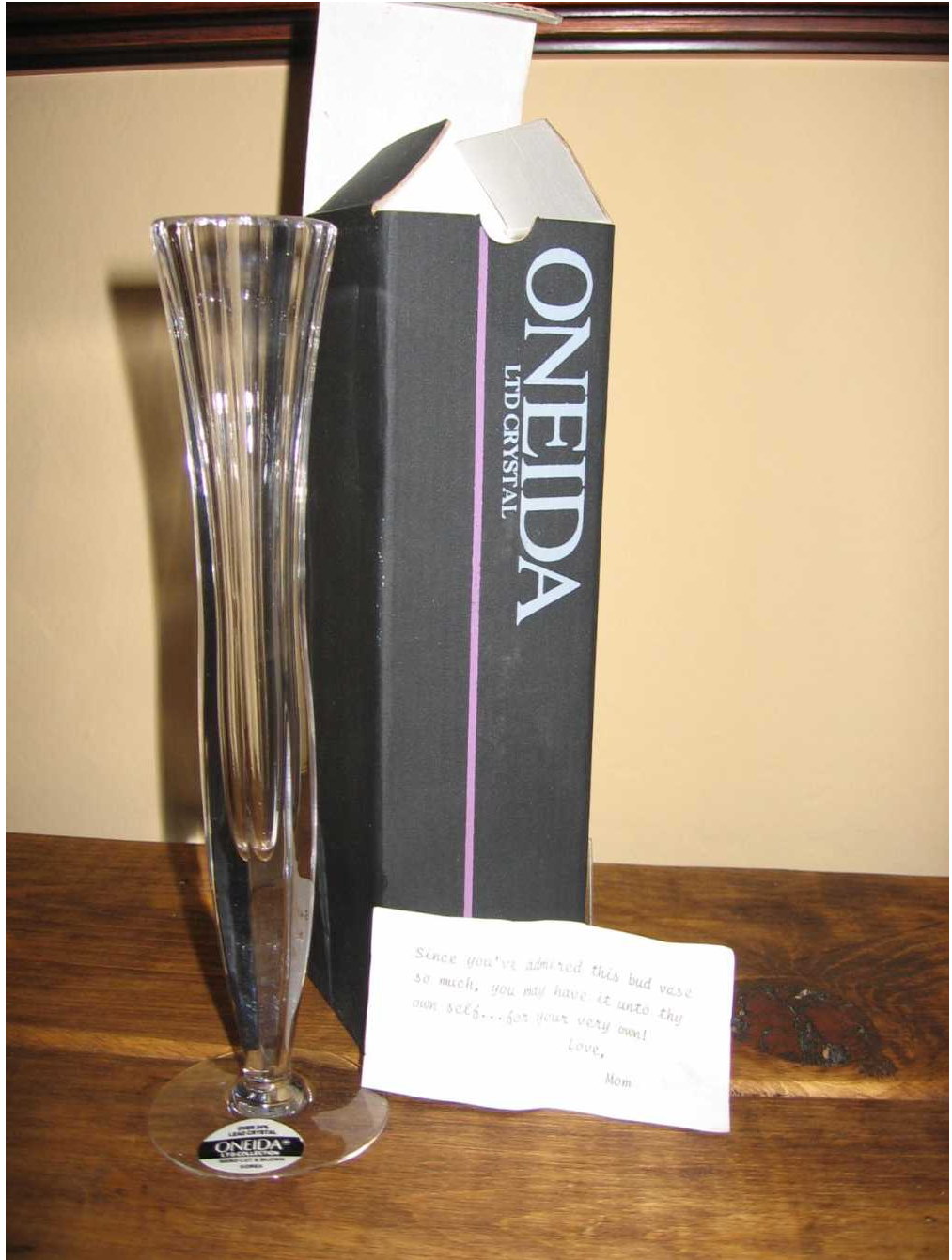
****/Holiday items-*** Look for holiday items at garage sales. I see them all the time. I find Christmas plates, bowls and ornaments—new and in their original boxes. I usually pay \$1 and they make great hostess or party gifts.

****/Original box-*** If you're buying an item that comes in a box, such as a coffee maker or a puzzle, if it's sealed make sure it hasn't been opened at another end and the box is in nice condition. We wouldn't want to give someone a new item in a box that's ripped or dirty.

****/Look carefully-*** Check the item closely. If it appears to be new in the box, ask the seller if you can take it out for close inspection (if the box isn't sealed). I once bought a cake plate, glanced at it inside and believed the seller when she said it was new. But when I got home and took it out of the box I noticed a small crack and even utensil marks on it. I lost \$3 on the deal but I learned a good lesson.

****/Have fun-*** Make a game out of it. This can be really fun and the whole family can get involved. Go garage saling and agree to pay no more than \$5 for a brand new item as a gift for someone. You'll probably need to go to a few garage sales before you discover a treasure but it can be a real hoot.

****/White Elephant gifts-*** If you need a gag gift garage sales are a great place to find them. I once picked up a “leg lamp” (made popular in the classic movie “A Christmas Story”) new in the original box for a buck at a garage sale and gave it as a gag gift. I really had a leg up on the competition!



(picture by Lynda☺) I bought this vase, new in original box, for \$1 at a garage sale in Scottsdale. It even came with a heartfelt note for the recipient (in this case the seller I bought it from—she must have forgotten it was in there). I gave the vase as a housewarming gift to my sister-in-law and immediately told her I bought it at a garage sale. She didn't mind—friends and family understand—hey, I'm the Garage Sale Gal!

MY FAVORITE FIND

Okay, if you take me up on my challenge to shop garage sales for gifts—we'd love to see them. Send us a digital picture. Include your name, email address and phone number and email it to: Lynda@GarageSaleGal.com.

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