

Garage Sale Gal **THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC**



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Lynda Hammond

Golf Balls, Gold Balls

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The man I'm about to tell you about contacted me several months ago with his story. It is such an amazing tale that I've procrastinated in writing this column—figuring my words could never do it justice. But I'll try anyway—and be prepared to be amazed!

Steve Gould was garage saling in the Valley last fall when he picked up a few things to sell on the auction site, eBay. The items included three sleeves, or boxes, each containing three Ping golf balls for a total of \$1.50. "I thought if I was lucky, I might get \$20. But I didn't have much enthusiasm for them. I even put them in my garage and forgot all about them for awhile."

But the Gilbert resident dusted them off, put them up for bids and got the surprise of a life time.

Before we go on here's some background on how eBay works. A seller lists or auctions off an item typically for seven days while buyers or bidders enter the price they're willing to pay. Sellers set the starting price but the sky is the limit as the bidding progresses. After an item runs its course one of three things can happen: the item doesn't sell; or only one bid is received and the item sells for the initial starting price; or it goes higher in price with multiple (two or more) bidders.

Steve listed the Ping golf balls at a starting price of \$9.99. Within minutes he knew these weren't just any golf balls. Bidders began offering money if Steve would end the auction early. One bidder offered \$300, another \$1000. Steve turned down the offers explaining he planned on seeing the auction through to the end.

So Steve starts doing some research online and finds out the golf balls are, indeed, extremely rare. Turns out they were a special order placed by an Arizona church back in 1976. The balls were half purple and half gold and were made by Ping before the company even began producing golf balls to sell at the retail level. The balls had never been used.

Steve watched the auction all week long.

Finally, with mere seconds left in the auction the price had been pushed up to \$777.65 by bidders. "By this time I'm thinking I should've taken one of those other offers." But in the world of online auctions a lot can happen in the last few moments and that certainly was the case with this auction.

In just 16 seconds, 26 more bids would come in propelling the ending price for those nine golf balls to...drum roll please: \$2,413.88! "When I saw the winning bid I thought I was going to faint. My jaw dropped and I was looking at the screen going "no way, no way". I couldn't believe what they sold for."

Wow!

Two friends pooled their money to come up with that winning bid. No word on what they're going to do with the golf balls—hopefully, though, they aren't heading to the driving range!

Steve left the banking industry three years ago to sell full time on eBay and so far, it seems to be working out for

him. In fact, I think he can take that to the...bank!
And so can you if you find the right treasure at a garage sale!



(pic provided by Steve Gould) At first glance, these may look like just ordinary golf balls but to Steve Gould they're "gold" balls. "It makes me realize I'm on the right track. I'm doing the right thing. I'm kicking butt," Gould tells me about the rare find he sold in an online auction.

Talk to the Garage Sale Gal!

Do you have a question or comment about garage or estate bargain sales? Email the Garage Sale Gal:
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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. Lynda also does garage sale segments on 3-TV's Good Morning Arizona.

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