

Garage Sale Gal **THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC**



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Caring buyer returns Care Bear ***Lynda Hammond***

It was Saturday August 1 when it happened. Chris Holeman made an innocent mistake—something any of us could've done. "When I realized it I just felt sick," Chris tells me.

Here's what happened.

Chris and her husband were having a garage sale at their Phoenix home. "We just had so much stuff everywhere and we knew we had to get rid of it. I was sick of looking at it."

Among the things they were selling was a bunch of stuffed animals. Chris glanced at each one and tossed them in a box to sell at a quarter a piece. "I hesitated when I saw the bear but I threw it in there anyway. It was later in the day when it hit me."

Turns out Chris had inadvertently sold a stuffed bear that had been hand-made by her mother more than 25 years ago. "My mom made it for my daughter who is now 29 years old but I knew (my daughter) would be upset." Chris' daughter, Erica was more distressed by how troubled Chris was over the whole incident. Still, Chris continued to beat herself up over the mistake and knew there was only one thing to do---get the teal-colored bear back.

If it sounds like looking for a needle in a haystack—you're right. Chris had no idea who the buyer was or how to get in touch with her. But she persisted—putting ads in newspapers and on internet classifieds.

Exactly two weeks later-- a break in the case. Chris had the furry bear back in her hands. "I am very happy and feel very lucky. I am also reminded of the good people do... just because."

Here's how the rescue went down. Someone saw the ad on the internet, emailed Chris and told her where she could find her bear—it was up for sale on eBay, an internet auction site. Chris immediately bought the bear in a "buy it now" auction for \$30 plus shipping and handling.

But wait, it doesn't end there.

When Chris explained the situation to the eBay seller (the original buyer of the bear at Chris' garage sale) the two agreed to a meeting—with the stuffed bear as the guest of honor.

Alison Kozel says she was happy to give the bear back. "I didn't realize how important it was to her until I saw her face. Chris looked like the weight of the world had been lifted off of her," Alison told me by phone a day after the reunion. The Chandler resident goes to garage sales looking for toys and other children's things to sell on eBay. When she spotted the bear she

assumed it was a Care Bear—a type of stuffed bear from the 1980s which today is highly collectible.

To show her appreciation, Chris gave Alison a gift certificate to a local store. Oh, and that \$30 price tag? Forget about it! Says Alison: “Oh, I never would’ve charged her for it. I’m just glad it didn’t sell to somebody else.”

Moral of the story: Take a few extra minutes to look at things closely or ask family members about the items you’re selling. It can save us from making a “bear” of a mistake!



(pic provided by Art Holeman) Chris Holeman cradles a stuffed toy bear stitched together years ago by her mother—now 89 years old and living in Michigan. After a wild two weeks the bear is home where he belongs. “I’m elated. I can’t tell you how badly I wanted him back,” Chris tells me.

Talk to the Garage Sale Gal!

Do you have a question or comment about garage or estate bargain sales? Email the Garage Sale Gal: Lynda@GarageSaleGal.com.

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 local TV stations.