



## Lessons from a Yard Sale

It is a Sunday evening and I am basking in relief that my driveway is completely empty, except for one chair with a 'sold' sign on it. Thankfully, this is all that remains from the week-end garage sale that was literally years in the making.

Since we moved into our current home eight years ago, we have raised two kids and sent them to college, started two new businesses and sold one, and helped to relocate three sets of family members to the community. All events bring change; all changes bring baggage. And, it seems, all that baggage ends up in our garage!

As is often said about double sinks, I attribute my relatively long marriage to the fact that my husband and I have separate garages: I use the attached garage for my car and staging inventory, and he uses the larger one in the back for his truck, toys, and whatever else we need to store. This extra storage building became an example of the basic principle: if there is space, it will be filled.

Through the years, we acquired bikes of many sizes, skis of all types and from all eras, and terrariums, dolls, clothing, cast off appliances and outdated technology. We stored things for our businesses, our family and friends. I saved furniture for the kids. However, nothing was actually ever removed from the garage in question. As a result, the chi was stagnant; and the feng shui, extremely bad.

So, with the family members now settled and the kids relatively independent, it was time to let some things go. As we all know, letting go can be a difficult task. Sometimes professional organizers are needed to encourage us to reduce our collection of stuff, and organize what remains. In this case, we didn't have an organizer; we had a garage sale.

Preparing for the sale required informing all involved parties of the date months in advance, which eventually resulted in several last minute drop offs and pick ups. Ads were placed and signs made. One full day was spent pulling everything out of the garage, and another sifting through and learning details about the various items of family members. With enough prep time, this possibly could have become a cooperative family bonding activity, but the clock was ticking.

As a redesigner, I had every intention of using my display, organizing and merchandising talents to create an optimal shopping environment, but with the constant additions, purchases and price reductions, I decided I better relax and go with the flow.

Despite my 'no early birds' notation in the newspaper ad, our first customer was in the yard before the coffee was brewed. Among other things, I learned that Saturday mornings are the busiest, shoppers are generally very amiable and one man's junk is definitely another man's treasure. Sunday afternoon we split the profits, donated the leftovers, took a dump run and exhaled a slow, deep breath.

I think I can feel the chi starting to flow!

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*A weekly columnist for the [Calaveras Enterprise](#), Linda Lawrence is the owner of HouseCalls for Redesign, and was trained and certified by IRIS (Interior Redesign Industry Specialists). She has lived in Murphys for nearly 20 years and specializes in one-day home makeovers, using your existing furnishings, art and accessories. Contact her at [housecalls4redesign@comcast.net](mailto:housecalls4redesign@comcast.net) or at 728-2732, or visit her website at [housecalls4redesign.com](http://housecalls4redesign.com).*