

Garage Sale Gal

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC



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Lynda Hammond

A sign of tough economic times-Residents belongings sold at garage sale

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Everything Michelle Ney owned was sold recently at a garage sale or thrown away. No, Michelle wasn't making a break for it or starting over with a clean slate. In fact, she wasn't even the one that had the sale. "I'm devastated. Everything I own is gone." Michelle says her former landlord loaded up her belongings and sold them at a recent garage sale.

She'd been living in a rented home in Maricopa but could no longer afford it so she moved her family to her parent's home in Phoenix. She admits she was officially evicted for running behind on her rent payments but she still trusted her landlord to put her items in storage. "I wasn't worried because he was always friendly. He told me he'd send me a final bill for the moving and storage."

Instead, three weeks later her fiancé, Adam Sersow (who also lived in the rented home), was looking at *Craigslist*, an on line classifieds web site, when he saw a list of their items being sold at a garage sale in Ahwatukee. "I'd been keeping my eye out for our stuff because the landlord wouldn't tell us what storage unit our things were in. And it just seemed suspicious," Adam says.

Bunk beds, leather couches, TVs, bikes, toys, household goods, clothes and even the bassinet for her three month old baby are just some of the things that were sold. "It's very weird that they got rid of it at a garage sale. I mean it amazes me how cold they were about it. So heartless. I don't see how (the landlord) can sit there and watch people taking my stuff."

That's one side of the story.

I wanted to get the landlord's version of events but he didn't return my calls. But according to the Arizona Residential Landlord and Tenant Act, a landlord can sell a renter's belongings 21 days after the eviction *if* there's been no contact by the tenant. Kevin Jones, a constable for the San Marcos Courts (Chandler), who is busy these days—in fact he just served 83 evictions in four days--- tells me landlords often sell a renters' furnishings at garage sales to recoup money they're owed for past due rent and other expenses. "That property becomes abandoned. If the renter doesn't come back to get their stuff back then the landlord can sell it to retrieve his losses," says Jones. Michelle insists she tried contacting the landlord but her requests to retrieve her items went unanswered.

Meanwhile, Michelle is trying to get at least some of her things back. She took out her own ad on *Craigslist* hoping to get in touch with some of the buyers. The ad read in part: "*Items that were sold at an Ahwatukee sale May 3 and 4 were (mine). I am asking you to please find it in your heart to allow my children and (me) a chance to get some of our belongings back.*"

Michelle says what stings the most about the situation are the items she'll never be able to replace—her kid's pictures, baby books and the gifts they made for her. "I just cried. I can't believe it. It's gone to perfect strangers that we don't even know."

To help the family

*Michelle needs children's clothing for her daughter, Madison, 7, son, Tyler, 9 and her infant, Chloe, 3 months.

*If you'd like to help Michelle and her family with donations you can email me at Lynda@GarageSaleGal.com



(Photo: provided by Michelle Ney) This is Michelle Ney and her fiancé, Adam Sersow during happier times last Christmas. The couple and their new 3-month old baby as well as Michelle's two other children lost all their belongings when they were sold at a garage sale. They say their former landlord sold everything after they were evicted.

MY FAVORITE FIND

Do you have a garage sale find you love? Something that makes you smile when you look at it? Share it with us. Send us your picture. Include your name, email address and phone number and email it to: Lynda@GarageSaleGal.com. Watch for the story of *your* treasure in this column!

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.