

## ***Garage Sale Gal*** **THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC**



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***Garage Sale shopper smart with buys (and returns!)***

***Lynda Hammond***

It's a sweltering summer morning in Little Rock, Ark. and Dawn Cowling is visiting her sister for a few weeks. On the agenda on this Saturday is garage saling. They've found a few things already but Dawn is about to hit pay dirt. They walk up to yet another sale which doesn't look promising since they see a bunch of junk. But sometimes an initial impression can be deceiving. Yep, there can be real gems hidden amongst all the rusted tools and broken furniture. That's when Dawn spots it—a shirt from a national chain store. "I bought it to wear but I didn't like the way it looked on me when I tried it on. And I thought 'Oh, shoot. I just wasted three dollars'."

But Dawn didn't waste her money. In fact, she'll turn that one buy into several.

Here's what she does: The shirt still had the original price tag of \$129 attached. When she got back home to Mesa she thought she'd try returning it to the department store. "I thought I'd take a chance. You know all they could say was 'no'." The store did take it back but with no receipt she got only the sale price in the form of store credit --\$70! So, she bought two lamps and several blouses (all on sale) in exchange for that \$3 garage sale find!

What a deal!

But it gets better.

Dawn's best find ever at a garage sale turned out to be "Destiny"—literally. She found a pure bred female Shitzu for \$100 at a sale in Glendale. She bred her dog-- named Destiny-- and sold the puppies for \$500 each. With the income she bought a refrigerator, installed new granite countertops in her kitchen and got braces for one of her children--all because she bought a hundred dollar dog. "We made so much money off of her. But we love her so much, too. She goes everywhere with us. So, Destiny was my best buy ever."

Garage saling is a way of life for the mother of four who moved to the Valley eleven years ago from Indiana. She had garage sale before but admits she didn't get hooked until she sampled the sales here. "My friend went garage saling every Saturday and she invited me to go along and I have been doing it ever since."

Dawn says she never misses a Saturday. No matter where she is—whether on vacation or visiting family—if it's Saturday, she's garage saling. She's decorated her house with garage sale finds including a beautiful armoire in her master bedroom she bought for \$100, an ornate headboard for \$35 and a huge fake palm tree for just \$10. Friends and family like her garage sale style so much they ask her to decorate their homes. "Garage saling is something I really enjoy whether it's for me or someone else. It's just such a thrill to get a deal."

So for Dawn, garage sales are a great way to buy, sell and decorate--a good idea in a bad economy.



(Photo: Lynda Hammond) Meet Mesa resident Dawn Cowling—quite the resourceful garage sale shopper. Everything in this picture she bought at a garage sale; the huge mirror, \$90; the piano, \$300; the two lamps on the piano, less than \$3; and even the dog, Destiny, a pure bred Shitzu, \$100. “I call my house the garage sale house. Almost everything in here is from a garage sale. It’s so easy to decorate with things from garage sales so I don’t bother with stores much.”

### MY FAVORITE FIND

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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](mailto:Lynda@GarageSaleGal.com). Watch for the story of *your* treasure in this column!

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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](mailto:Lynda@GarageSaleGal.com). Lynda also does garage sale segments on 3-TV's Good Morning Arizona.*

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