



**How to  
Get Rich**

**by Going to**

**Yard & Garage  
Sales**

**Moving & Estate  
Sales**

**Ed Augusts**

**How To Get Rich**  
*By*  
**Going To Garage & Yard Sales,  
Moving Sales, & Estate Sales**

*by* **Ed Augusts**  
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## **PART ONE**

### **GETTING EDUCATED ABOUT COLLECTIBLES “OUT ON THE STREET” A SUCCESS STORY!**

#### **SETTING UP THIS TRUE STORY OF RICHES!**

Let me first tell you what happened in *my* life, so you know that I'm *absolutely serious* about this being one of THE best ways to get rich! I've had two big fortunes in my life; one was earned through real estate; the other was earned through garage, yard sales, moving & estate sales!

In the mid-1980's I found myself in my late thirties, without a job or the immediate prospects for a job, having split up with my wife, having lost a substantial real estate investment (a 23-unit building in California) and really, totally out of money. I had moved cross-country and was forced, now, to live by my wits in the University area of a major city.

I rented a room for \$300 a month in the home of an older Italian couple. I remember that I had enough money left to live for just a

couple of months, after that, I didn't know WHAT I would do! Located just two or three blocks from the subway line, and in a quiet, older part of town, with the university a few blocks away, I knew I'd be okay if I could just get an income stream of some kind going!

Fortunately, as it turned out for me, August was just turning to September and there were lots of yard sales going on. I was bored stiff, not working, and so I started paying some attention to these weekend sales—something I'd never done before while living for most of my life on the West Coast.

One of the first ones I stopped at was being held by a couple in their 30's who were relaxing on patio furniture, wearing sunglasses and shorts and sipping tall, cold drinks. I almost felt embarrassed to stop because I felt they were eyeballing me, checking me out as I looked down at some boxes full of their stuff! I was embarrassed because yard sales had never been “my thing”. I had images of people hawking dusty old junk. That was not anything I'd ever found interesting.

### **SELECT, OLD SCI-FI GOODIES!**

Here was a nifty box full of 1940's and 1950's sci-fi paperbacks! I checked the condition and noted that the spines were not broken, pages were not loose; the covers were still bright and fresh-looking. Someone had taken good care of these old books! There were some authors I vaguely remembered from a sojourn I'd made into science fiction in my high school and college years, but most of these older authors were unknown to me.

The cover illustrations showed Tom Corbett and Captain Midnight-type old style ideas of what rocket ships would look like, and astronaut's suits that looked just like diving bells.

I was sold on the books, for sentimental reasons, but I didn't have any money to speak of with me. As I looked warily, warily, apprehensively from all this fantasy 'loot', I hadn't even gotten a chance to start asking “*Uh, excuse me... how much are these....*” before the man on the chaise-lounge-looking thing piped up:

“10 cents each! Well, *less* if you buy *more* of them!”

Now I was really sold, but had no idea what I was doing, this wasn't the kind of thing I did... prowl through people's left-overs at yard sales! I would rather be having a tool cool drink myself than bending over sorting through boxes. But before 2 minutes went by, I'd scooped up 30 of the thin little sci-fi's and the lady gave me a plastic bag to put them in. I paid \$3.00 and got 50c in change because “I'd bought so

many!” They both said “Thank you!” as I scooted out of there. I didn’t know it yet, but I was literally “*on my way*” toward riches!

The next day was Sunday, but I found a book shop that specialized in used and rare science fiction a bus ride away. I only took about half of the books with me, and left the rest at home because I wanted to take a closer look.

The gaunt young long-haired man behind the counter said, “Yeah, we sometimes buy sci-fi, whatcha got?” So I put the books on the counter and he held each one up to the light and rifled through the pages from cover to cover. “Where did you get THESE?” he asked. I shrugged. “Yard sale!”

“Hmmm. Well, I’ll give you \$20 for the lot!” I only had to think about two seconds before replying, “Okay!”

So, I had spent \$2.50 for 30 books and gotten back \$20.00 for 15 of them! This was pretty good! I was there again the next day, Monday, when he opened at noon.

“Oh!” he said, in some embarrassment, “I didn’t expect to see you back so soon... so you have MORE?” But while he was saying that, I could see a funny thing had taken place. He was in the process of putting little stickers onto the plastic bags that he was putting my Sci-Fi books into! I could see one said \$6.00 and one said \$7.50.

“Yep, these are the last ones I have, but I need to get a bit more for them than last time...” I frowned a knowing frown, and he avoided my glare because he knew I’d caught him pricing-up the books he’d paid \$20.00 for, up to maybe a total of \$80.00 to \$100.00.

“Yeah, okay! But then this is all I want to buy from you for awhile, okay?” I grunted acceptance of his terms. This time he handed me a twenty – and was about to hand me a five to go along with it, but I shuffled and gritted my teeth and exhaled an unhappy sigh, so he quickly replaced the \$5 with a \$10 and made it a total of \$30.00. “Yep, okay!” I said, taking the money, but no longer quite as happy about it as I would have been when I was thinking of how *little* I assumed the books were worth.. not to mention how little I had *paid* for them... Suddenly I realized these books really did have some value!

What was worse, I realized I was in the role of nothing better than a 'middle man'. I had bought them dirt cheap, sold them for a profit, but the big profit would probably be made by the big shot book seller who

knew this line of merchandise inside and out and built-in a huge profit for himself in every single transaction. After all, he wasn't buying from me for his health, or because he felt sorry for me... because at that point, I did look a bit scruffy... but because he could turn around and make a good day's wages out of my couple of dozen hoary old paperbacks!

I discovered in working with old and rare books and collectibles in general over a considerable period of time that there is no way of ever getting the full and complete profit out of anything, nor is there any reason to begrudge someone else taking a profit, either. Very often the person selling books for 10c or a quarter is also making a huge profit – sometimes an *infinite* profit, if he or she inherited or discovered the books and paid nothing!

### **DRAWING “FIRST BLOOD”: \$50.00 for \$2.50**

I did the mental calculations... 30 books bought at a discount for \$2.50. All sold within two days for \$20.00 + \$30.00 = \$50.00 cash. No, he did not pay by check, he paid by cash, too! I liked that. The profit was \$47.50. I had sold the books for EXACTLY 20 TIMES what I had paid for them!

This experience really opened my eyes to a new reality... there was money to be made in old, used books, and maybe other old collectibles of various kinds, as well! For a guy like me, searching for something to do with myself, this was like striking a goldmine in my own backyard! I thanked my lucky stars that I'd been to school and had read enough to at the very least, recognize certain authors, certain *genres* (types) of books, and could concentrate my attention of possibly valuable books instead of heaping-up piles of nearly worthless out-of-date text books and romance novels like some people did! And I figured people would not want ex-library books, or damaged books, or Reader's Digest condensed books... As it turned out, that was just about ALL I needed to know to get the process of becoming wealthy with used collectibles started!

That next Saturday I plowed about a third of this \$50.00 back into more books. I started out good and early, about 7:30 in the morning, and walked up and down nearby streets, looking for “SALE!” signs that would lead me to yard sales or garage sales. I didn't know it yet, but living near a university was a goldmine. I don't think I would have been nearly so successful if I'd started this adventure in a town that didn't have at least a college or two! Universities equals students, teachers, and BOOKS. But this Saturday was not a good one for me:

This time I made some bad investments. I was so excited to be buying books that might turn out to be worth 20X what I paid for them, that I paid 50c each for a bunch of Time-Life illustrated hardcovers and 25c for a pile of old novels. But it was all I could find!

There was nothing in Sci-Fi, and besides, that guy said he didn't want to see me anytime soon, out of embarrassment, I guess... But there were two other used bookshops in the immediate university area, and I didn't even go home, I scooped these books up into plastic bags and took 'em right into the first bookshop that crossed my path!

The lady behind the counter of the first store was an employee "*but not the book buyer.. the book buyer would be in later.*" So I declined her offer to leave the books for him to look at, and went straight to the next bookshop. A lady of about 50 was sitting there, enjoying a cigarette (this was a few years ago when people could smoke wherever they pleased!) and she gave a keen look at my trophies. Then she sighed a faint little sigh.

"Ah! Nothing here, my dear. This is not the kind of books I buy for cash. I will give you \$5.00 in trade for the Time-Life books, though." That's the best I could get from her, and when I went back to the other bookseller later in the day, he wouldn't even give me trade value. So I kept the books until another day, piling them up in a far corner of my rented single room!

Trade Value worked like this: She would give me a slip of paper or business card and write on it "good for \$5.00", and I could look through the store and buy anything I liked that added up to \$5.00. If it went over \$5.00, I'd have to add the difference in cash. It was good to know how this process worked, even if I wasn't going to take advantage of it then and there. *I needed cash.* Trade Value was meaningless to me because all I'd get would be another book or two. In fact, I'd have been trading ten Time-Life books about Indian tribes and Cowboys for no more than 1 or 2 paperbacks of hers. That didn't even seem fair!

### **FAMILY DISPUTE YIELDS 'NAUTICAL' COLLECTION**

But this experience didn't stop me from looking. I didn't even wait until Saturday to make my next purchase! I found an ad in a free Ad weekly and called a lady who said she had lots of old books. I asked and she replied, "Nope! None of them that I know of are *Time-Life* or any other kinds of 'sets'!" " So, an hour later, I was at her house. This was about 10 or 11 in the morning that same Monday. I thought it best

to work fast. The lady was in her late 30's and suffering from a divorce. She was a very unhappy woman. Her husband had plain-old walked right out on her, leaving her and two kids. He'd taken off with a certain friend whom she discovered, a bit too late, was “*nothing but a floozy!*” I sympathized with her as I looked at several large bookcases in her living room filled with books.

“That's Jim's special interest. Anything “Maritime”. I thought he was saving up for a yacht so we could take a cruise across the Pacific, but instead he went to Niagara with that b\* \* \* !”

“You're not going to sell off his books while he's away, are you?”  
“Ha! Watch me!” I felt vaguely uncomfortable at this development, as if I might as well be wearing a *Zorro* mask. Chute, what if the shoe was on the other foot? I wouldn't want someone selling-off MY old books! But there were 2 things going on. One, the woman kept looking at me in an agreeable way... She obviously had high hopes that I would take care of her *problem*, uh, the book, I mean! Two, the books were actually kind of interesting!

There were books about the Monitor and Merrimac, the Tall Ships, the “stern-wheelers” of the Mississippi; ones about the Manila Galleons that sped back and forth across the Pacific; the seven American destroyers that followed each other up onto the cliffs on the Central California coast around 1922; voyages by Magellan and Columbus and obscure voyages

that ended in disaster on the obscure, uncharted West Coast of Australia, for example; a huge “*Book of Ships*” with the imprint of an anchor on the navy blue cover; the complete run of Horatio Hornblower books, in dust jackets, by C.S. Forester; I knew –at sight!-- that those must have *SOME* value! There was also a “rivers” series, a book about each of the major rivers of North America. I was suspicious of sets, but could see these dust-jacketed fine old books were worthy of purchase.

“Turns out you DO have a 'series' here, this one about rivers...”

“Oh, I'm sorry! Well, I can throw those in if you make me a good offer on the rest.”

“I don't have much money. I'm new in town, and trying to get settled down...”

“But can you take everything with you? Can you take everything today?”

“Oh, yes, ma'am!”

“Don't you dare call me 'ma'am', I'm younger than you are!”

“Yes, ma'am! I mean...”

“Tiffany!”

“Sure, Tiffany! Yes, of course I can remove everything today!”  
Though I really didn't know HOW I would do that, it would mean a lot of running around. But I wanted to please Tiffany, and I wanted to get these curious old Nautical books, too!  
“Well then, 50c a book is fine, if you can afford it.”

I really couldn't because there were about 400 books.

“Okay, you owe me. Are you planning to re-sell 'em? Then pay me a little out of what you make when you re-sell them, *just get 'em out of here!*”

Under those instructions, how could I refuse?

The offensive titles, which reminded Tiffany of her missing husband, off enjoying himself with his 'floozy', had to go, and if I hadn't bought them, she would have tossed them out by herself, on her own! I got there just in time!

These books yielded a profit! I discovered another used and rare book store with a long-bearded chap between the University and downtown area. He didn't pay me a whole lot, between \$2.00 and \$3.00 a book for his selection of what I brought him, and I took the rest to Christine, the lady who had offered me 'Trade' just two days earlier. This time she was not so dismissive as I piled up several larger and larger stacks of books on her ashy counter amidst a cloud of smoke... “Oh, my! You're very *nautical* today, aren't you?” she cooed. She gave me a mixture of cash and trade, since I said I did need some cash, at least... it was only \$20.00 cash but \$200.00 in trade value! I was elated because I now had some time on my hands, and I didn't mind plowing through some books at night by the light of a little plastic lamp beside the single bed. I always liked metaphysical books, astrology books and the like, and she had a book about 100 years old by William Lilly, a noted English astrologer of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; some old Manly Palmer Hall books from old Los Angeles; and a set by the teacher and 'guru' Gurdjieff, called “*All and Everything : Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson.*” I never could make heads or tails out of that Gurdjieff series, the book starts with something like a 40-page run-on sentence... and it seemed to me to have been imperfectly translated from Russian. But it looked very snappy on my growing book shelf! There were also a couple of books that interpreted astrological aspects. I am always on the look for that kind of book, since it is the most practical kind of thing for my work in interpreting charts, which I've been doing since college days. I have a cool Yahoo site for that now, called 'Astro\_Psychic'. Anyway, these purchases were smashingly good ideas because I steeped myself in

occultism which at that time very much fascinated me. This knowledge would soon come in handy!

## COULD I SURVIVE ONCE SUMMER ENDS?

Summer was soon drawing to an end, not the lengthy summers of California or the near-endless summers of Arizona, but the all-too-brief summer of the Northeast, where all nature lies frozen and dead by Halloween! I was panicking because the Saturday sales were getting fewer and fewer. Less and less people wanted to sit out on their porch or clap their hands for warmth in their driveway as the mercury plunged.

I was in a strange situation of having bought a ton of books at all the Saturday sales over the past month and a half, but finding many of them just weren't worth selling to the local book dealers. There were some very good books of all kinds which seemed worth some money to me, but NOT to these book dealers. So, there I was with maybe 500 books in my single, rented room! I knew SOME BIG CHANCE would present itself, although I had no clue what it would be, but I knew I wouldn't find it unless I got out and looked around!

One day I took the subway to the east part of town and simply started walking down the main 'drag'. There was a rag-tag collection of various new and used furniture stores, taverns, plumbing supply houses, *cafes*, sandwich shops, cosmetology schools, pizza and Mexican and Greek restaurants and the like... But in the middle of one long block I found a white-fronted building that had the Mystic Eye on a piece of paper, high in a window. I believe that's what the place was called at that point: *The Mystic Eye*. Other sheets of white paper, some with photos and descriptions of various individuals, were also in the windows where somebody walking by could see them. I walked in. There was a gypsy-like black-tressed female of about 25 sitting behind an office desk. She seemed to have the burden of the world on her shoulders, the kind of woman who's been tricked and played by men for many years and now raises a wary eyebrow at the slightest intrusion by a member of the male sex. She was handling a deck of cards and loud New Age music played in the background. At first I thought I had stumbled into a gypsy parlor. She must have been bored because she identified herself as Desiree and let me sit down, and within a few minutes spilled out the whole history of this enterprise.

A construction contractor who was putting-up a cluster of 25-story residential towers a few blocks away, lived more than 100 miles out of town. He rented this little storefront and did "readings" out of it, Monday through Friday, and went home to his wife on the weekends. He didn't make very much, but that was okay because he slept on a

folded-up cot in the back room, she said. The whole situation sounded a bit sad to me. The problem, she said, was that the phone didn't ring, and nobody walked in to ask about getting a reading... I was the first person that had walked through that door in two days, she said! Well, that wasn't *right*, I thought! Wheels went around in my mind. This was a busy street. There was actually quite a bit of foot-traffic. It was on a bus line and a subway line. There were a dozen 25-story buildings within four or five blocks, there was a diverse population here in the immediate area. This place *should* be getting customers!

The wheels kept going around in my mind. I knew astrology to some extent, I'd even written about it 15 years earlier, when I was just finishing college, although a couple of marriages and sudden real estate wealth had taken me far, far away from astrology and the like. I also was not totally untutored in the ways of the Tarot cards, in fact, San Jose State College asked me to read Tarot cards out of a tent at a fair they had back when I was just a sophomore, word had already gotten around about my prowess in that area, so I had already read the Tarot for an endless stream of curious college students, so I knew how to do it, and what to expect.

Well, this poor girl, Desiree, was out of her depth managing this store for the owner, a man let's call... Mr. Vonk. It occurred to me that, at the very least, this was an interesting place. It had a very sparse and empty look, a lot of BOOKS and other collectibles could go in here... Heck, it sure needed *something!*

Five minutes later, Mr. Vonk came home from his day shift at the construction site. He was tired but not totally uncommunicative.

"How'd it go?" he asked Desiree.

"Nothing, just like yesterday," she sighed.

"Oh well!" he answered, cheerfully. Then he felt obliged to say "Hi!" to me because I was sitting right there across from Desiree. He looked at me up and down to see who'd wandered in.

"Mr Vonk? I'm Ed Augusts. I'm an astrologer, and I have some ideas that might make some money for you with this store...." Tanya gave me a very sour look, she hadn't expected this!

"Oh, go on, go on. I'm *Dutch*, you know! We don't mind saving a dollar here and there!" So, the long and short of it was, I volunteered to work for him to bring more business into the store. After all, nothing else was going on, and the colder weather had killed-off most of the handy-dandy yard sales.

I volunteered to show up and work – for FREE – “on spec” to see if I could build up the business, and maybe do some readings at the same

time.

“On spec it is, then! If you want to try!”

“Yes, sir!”

So I returned the next day. Desiree was not pleased to see me, and she turned-up the annoying New Age music, as if to drive me away, but it didn't bother me. I asked for the telephone and a copy of the local white pages. I had been in town long enough to recognize phone numbers that were on the east side of town, and I picked my first number and dialed.

“Hello! I'm calling from the *Mystic Eye!* I just wanted YOU to know that we have some very talented people doing 'readings' here, and you are MOST WELCOME to come in, we'd like to meet you, and *help* you! We're located at...” This all came to me out of thin air, but it seemed like the 'way to go'.

The next day when Mr. Vonk came home from his construction job to wile away the evening hours, there was an appointment for him! A rotund lady with eyes as big as saucers had come in and asked for a reading, and Mr. Vonk was the natural one to talk with her, at a little card table behind a partition!

### **I MAKE A BOOK DEAL WITH THE OWNER**

I stuck around and after the reading, I brought up something new. “You know, Mr. Vonk, I've got a lot of old books around the house that I bought this past summer, and they're worth some money! What if I put up some book shelves or bookcases in the front room, there, so people can see them through the window? That will probably bring in more people to have a look around the store, and they might decide to have a reading, too.”

“That's a great idea! You can do that, if you want! But I don't want to pay anything to make it happen, and I think you should pay a share of the money you make with those books!”

This was my 2<sup>nd</sup> brilliant idea at that store: Creating a brand-new INCOME STREAM – and most of it, for myself!

So I offered him a 60/40 split, with me getting the 60, and I would continue helping around the store – for free! Mr. Vonk seemed very pleased at me for working hard to build up his business for a very, very small share of the revenue, and this had an unexpectedly good effect, because it was right after this that Mr. Vonk made me the official manager of the store, with all rights and privileges inherent in that title, and the troupe of psychics and mystics, Wiccans and Druids who came

in every day or two, would have to take orders from me! He told Desiree right up front -- “*you're taking orders from this guy, now!*”

*As he told me a year later, it was because I had volunteered, because I hadn't demanded, because I obviously had HIS financial success in mind, even more than my own, he felt compelled to do likewise, and ultimately, he gave me the store!*

I first put in one long folding table of books (which was in the store already anyway!) so it could be seen through the front window, and everyday I started bringing in more and more of the books I'd stored up during that half-a-summer of yard sales at home. A very, very curious thing happened! Whereas the store with its occult insignias and pages and pages of information about our 'psychics' and 'readers' had sat there for two years, nearly empty, and sometimes a person might wander in every two or three days, *from the moment that I put that table of books in the window*, we had at least one person walk in every hour of the day! Fat ladies with poodles and old grannies in their walkers would come in and ask if we had any romance novels. So I laid in a supply, I actually brought romance novels back to the store on my Saturday outings, since there was a demand! Men in suits wanted books about real estate or the stock market! Moms with kids in strollers wanted books to read to their child.

This success played together just perfectly with my 'cold calling' area residents. Nothing much happened for 24 hours. But after I'd spoken with 200 to 300 adults and gave them that same 'formula' – asked them to come down and visit the store – we started getting more and more visitors.

About 3 night later, when Mr. Vonk came home to his quiet little store, he found there were four people shouldering each other out of the way to look at the table of books and two ladies sitting in easy chairs taking turns waiting to get a tarot card reading with the third woman in their party! Curious book-browsers would soak up the 'occult' quality of the atmosphere while people curious about what we were doing there with psychic readings lingered, trying to decide whether to have a reading that day or come back another time!

I remember hearing of a store in California that had been named “*From Adult to Occult*”, and combined both types of reading and viewing material, and some people feel the two are a compatible mix. I rejected idea in favor of all kinds of books together with psychic readings and astrology instead. “Adult” was wrong for what the store was trying to accomplish. *The secret was* – all kinds of books bring in all kinds of people, and the more people people came in, the more

readings they would decide to have. And the more people that came in for readings, the more books we sold! I *try* to explain this to used book sellers who are on the verge of going out of business, and they just refuse to understand!

How can I paint the picture any more clearly? You DOUBLE-UP what you're selling with some compatible or nearly compatible product or service, is all! And income will swiftly double and triple.

Soon I needed more psychics! An enormously gifted, multi-talented blond came in one day and announced that she was Christmas Angel, that was, she said, her name, and I never doubted it. I tested her out on a couple of women who wanted readings, and they gave her terrific praise – everything she had said was true, and so on! So she became a favorite in the Psychic Center, along with a spiritualist named John Golsby, a numerologist and mystic named Paulette Joseph, a little gypsy girl named Sabrina, an artist whose house was filled with stuffed owls and who was working on completing a new Tarot deck, Claire Brickas, and others. At one point I generated enough business to advertise the fact that we had *“Seven Psychics doing All Kinds of Readings!”*

### **NICE OCCULT, TIBETAN & HIMALAYAN BOOKS!**

The very first week that I brought in the books, I got a phone call from a weary-sounding older man. He had heard we had opened for business from a friend whom I had “COLD CALLED” on the phone, who said we were a local spiritual group which also sold old books...

“Tell me,” he asked. “Would you care to come over and have a look at my book collection? I'm going someplace where I won't need these books anymore, so you might as well have a look at them.” He must have anticipated my next statement, which was my standard warning that I “didn't have very much money to spend on books just yet,” by replying (in advance!) “I need very little compensation, but I do want you to know, these books represent a lifetime of collecting!” Of course, I couldn't say no, even though he lived in the Rexdale area, a good 10 miles away. But I got there as soon as I could. He was a frail man, using a walker, and probably in his 80's. “I started collecting books when I got out of college,” he said, which meant he'd started putting these away about 1925 or 1930 or so! I felt quite honored to be asked into his home to have a look.

“Nobody else would come out,” he said. “Even when I told them how

good the books were, they asked me to bring the books to them!”

The books are a blur in my memory at this late date, but one thing which stood out was an entire shelf of books about the Himalayas, mountaineering in the Himalayas, Nepal, Tibetan exploration, and of course, Tibetan and Indian religion, including Buddhism, the ancient 'Bon' religion, Hinduism, and Yoga. But the mountaineering books included Younghusband, fresh crisp 'as new' first editions in their original frail dust-jackets, by William Savage Landor, a book about French exploration of the Himalayas dating from the 1850's, and a variety of other such treasure-trove!

I can't remember how good some of these books were, because I didn't get to keep them for more than a few days! I had put them up on the top shelf of a new bookcase I constructed by hand in the front room of the Psychic Center, more to get them out of the way, than anything else! In those days there was no ready database of book descriptions and book prices on the Internet, and someone who acquired a hoard of books, like me, would have to go down to the Central Library and research big, huge rows of hardcover “Book Prices Current” and similar titles for hours and hours. Very often if a book was truly scarce, it wouldn't show up until 10 volumes had been rifled through... it was nearly a thankless task, except for the undeniable fact it led to fair and ACCURATE PRICING. But I didn't even get a chance to do that with my Tibetan and Himalayan books because a young, not very tall man, whom I soon learned was a real estate man, had been told of the existence of the books by someone else who'd visited the store that same day... and he coolly approached me and asked how much I wanted for the Tibetan books.

“Which ones would you like?” I asked.

“Oh, all of them! That top shelf...”

So sudden circumstances (a buyer with cash in hand!) forced me to come up with an immediate price. I tried to be cool about it. “Those books there come to... eight hundred fifty-dollars.”

I like \$850.00. Several times now, I've sold one or more books for that exact price... He took out a little pocket calculator and added together some mental figures of his own.

“*Done!*” he said, efficiently, without enthusiasm, shook my hand, and wrote me a check. That's when I learned he was a real estate broker whose office was in the Beaches area, about 3 miles away. So... reluctantly, I could NOT turn down this offer, even though I suspected I was doing exactly what I'd done with the sci-fi shopkeeper a month or two earlier... forced by circumstances (and a nice offer) of being nothing more than a “middle man”.

I sold about a fourth of the books I got from the nice old retiring gentleman for the \$850, and sold the rest over a period of months for \$1,500 or so; thus, the \$100 I spent returned \$2,350 or so. And although I suspected I had sold the Himalayan and Tibetan books much too cheaply, I needed the money! Because now, *not a day went by that I wasn't buying books!*

### **WHAT'S "HOT" IS WHAT SELLS!**

By the way, when I began selling books on E-Bay many years later, it was books from my occult collection that sold with the most consistency. The VERY BEST sellers for me were astrology-related books. Books about aspects, books that describe the houses and signs vividly and thoroughly, but NOT in the extremely basic "Sun Sign" formula. Books that vividly and thoroughly describe the Aspects of the Planets and those which discuss the effects of Transits and Progressions, are always popular.

Certainly there is a minor problem for most book scouts and would-be garage sale millionaires: They don't really know a good astrology book from a bad one. Bad ones would include titles like: "*1978: Your Year Ahead*", (dated, now useless material); "*Linda Goodman's Sun Sign Guide*" in a book club copy without a dust jacket, and so basic as to be nearly unreadable. An *Ephemeris* (planetary position guide) for a single year or a single decade, such as the Rosicrucians put out during the whole 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Some astrological and occult "coffee table books" are mostly fluff with fluffy color illustrations. Just because a book is a foot tall and has pretty pictures and photo doesn't mean a real student of astrology would want it.

Here, the book scout or would-be millionaire tends to suffer only so much as he or she is ignorant of what a good, desirable book is. *The more one knows about books, the better the 'deals' they will be able to make.* THE SAME APPLIES TO ANY TYPE OF COLLECTIBLE ITEM.

Selecting valuable and desirable books and discarding or refusing undesirable, nearly worthless books, is an important survival skill in the used book business. More about this subject later!

As for astrology, give me any 19<sup>th</sup> Century titles, they are usually of more than a little value. I had an obscure title from the 1850's by a Swedish astrologer who'd moved to the U.S.. which was of some value. Contemporary authors like Sakoian & Acker, series of books teaching how to understand astrology and "*do charts*", sell well. Not for rarity

but utility. James Braha's books which describe and try to unify both major systems: Vedic (Hindu) Sidereal Astrology as well as Western Tropical Astrology, are not only popular, they sell well and are worth studying, too. Authors from past decades whose books are still readable and useful include Alan Leo, who produced a whole shelf of astrology books, Llewellyn George, for whom I believe the Llewellyn publishing house was named, Grant Lewi, known as "Scorpio" in the early editions of his noteworthy book, various books, booklets and pamphlets by such characters as Dane Rudhyar are collectible, and reprints, sometimes spiral-bound, of long out-of-print astrology texts from past centuries, hold good value.

Exceptional books about Buddhism and Hinduism and related teachers and gurus sold well for me. Books which combine psychological theories with mysticism, such as some of Jung's volumes, and the Pantheon / Bollingen series, did well. Books about the Rosicrucians and Masons sometimes sold, sometimes did not. Annie Besant, Madame Helene Blavatsky, and Alice Bailey, who produced an endless array of softcover and hardcover volumes, from the 1920's on, are also popular. Blavatsky is noteworthy for several reasons: She was in some respects a rather "shady character", despite this, or perhaps because of it, she co-founded the Theosophy movement; and she used a kind of automatic writing to complete controversial works such as *The Secret Doctrines* and *Isis Unveiled*.

There are collectors for the series of books written by Manly Palmer Hall, who dominated the Los Angeles mystic scene from the mid-1920's to the 1960's. Some of Edgar Cayce's prophetic works and spin-offs by his many followers out in Virginia Beach are collectible.

Some weird religions put-out the occasional book or pamphlet, and one whose writings are extremely rare and quite valuable now are the works of Robert de Grimston for his (now long defunct, I believe!) *Process Church of the Final Judgment* which said God and Satan need to come together, "*God to Judge, Satan to administer the judgment.*" The merest pamphlet by or about the Process Church sells for upwards of \$500 (when and if they can be found), and some, such as de Grimston's "*Exit*" was recently listed in London for more than \$2,900. I fortunately own several of these titles.

Anytime you find an obscure, unusual book about any popular topic, you can make money on it. Perhaps it will be a biography or memoir... or a "*How-To*" about an unusual subject. Books about magic, (stage magic, that is!) are always popular and go quickly. I've seen the slightest, slimmest pamphlets of magic tricks published 50 or 60 years ago sell for more than \$100.00 each. I did so myself on E-Bay.

## OTHER GOOD BOOK GENRES

*Bibles sell well...* if you have a very old Bible in very good condition! The 400-year old English edition which I found in a steamer trunk up in someone's attic was worth at least \$1,000 and possibly \$2,000 or more, I didn't hang on to it long enough to research its value. REMEMBER that when you obtain an assortment of books or any item which you feel might be valuable, LOCK THEM AWAY SOMEWHERE WHERE THEY WILL BE SAFE, and research their value as soon as you possibly can. And don't BRAG to anyone else about the old book or books you got for next to nothing... it will just make people jealous on a deep, deep level, and wish they had your luck, and sometimes even make them goof things up for you or *steal* from you.

I had enough books about the subject of Piracy, Privateers, Buccaneers and the like to put a cluster of them (usually 5, 7, 9 or 12 books) for sale on E-Bay. This caused a duel between several would-be purchasers and led to me getting a good price. That was my preferred method, by the way, of selling on E-Bay. I'd get a number of books by the same author or of the same type and find that I could often get a *bidding war* started! But E-Bay, ultimately, was fluke. Sometimes, at the wrong season of the year – Spring turning into summer, for instance – books would just SIT there, and the cost of auctioning them on E-Bay exceeded the cash coming in from successful sales! So E-Bay is a very *seasonal* program, in my opinion!

Old children's books and old mystery hardcovers from about 40 or 50 years ago did fairly well. If I had to choose, I'd rather get a box full of 50, 60, 70 year old children's books rather than the same age "mysteries". I've been disappointed with mysteries. Only certain authors are in demand, and condition means everything. A mystery (or any hardcover book other than the categories mentioned above) which has blunted corners, torn or missing dust jacket, or is stained, 'ex library' or has what's known as a '*remainder mark*' on the top or bottom edge, loses most of its resale value.

Books which are abundantly marked with library stamps on cover, spine, or title page, etc., are turned down by most book buyers, and are hardly worth a thing these days, they take up space on a shelf, is all! The only conceivable exception would be the ex-library books that date from no later than the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, usually on a non-fiction topic of interest. Books that were held by scholarly libraries 'look better' than public library properties. This is the kind of book, along with most text books that are more than a few years old, that ought to be

put in a barrel and sent to Africa, Russia and Eastern Europe, etc., because they have no value to collectors, but might provide valuable instruction to disadvantaged people who need it.

Speaking of text books... beginner book buyers and book scouts think they've hit upon something good when a garage sale yields them a couple of boxes of old text books from college. Let me assure you that at least 95% of the time, text books from 3 to 50 years old will be worth practically nothing and aren't worth carrying out to the car. An exception might be clever, cutting-edge books from the 1950's, 60's, etc., on computers and related fields, or missile technology, stuff about the atomic bomb and its history, maybe a few other related kinds of books.

But *Poli-Sci, Hist, Eng, Lit, Math, Soc*, etc. etc. are dead as a door-nail. Along with most magazines, most of the cheaper romance novels and "Cold War" spy tales which now seem a bit dated. Any fiction which talks about the "Soviet Union" is a historical artifact, but not a valuable one. Nothing wrong with romance paperbacks if you want to cater to the middle aged ladies by having a couple of thousand *Harlequins* and related books of love or passion with a guy with a hairy chest hugging a woman with torn semi-transparent clothing on the cover: Erotica for housewives!

### **FIRST EDITIONS**

My astrology and metaphysical books went well, but when I tried to assemble lots for E-Bay out of other categories of non-metaphysical books, I had to live through some disappointments. First Editions don't seem to be any big deal on E-Bay, that's for sure. Possibly because even with the comparative rarity and value of a "first", there might be 200 copies of it on ABE or Bookfinder at any given time. I always look for those books which are not well-represented on those databases of bookseller's lists. If I find a book which has only 2 or 3.. up to about 20... copies on-line for sale in the world, then I know I have a good back. Better still, if there are NO other copies on -line at all! That's a wonderful feeling, because then you can name your own price! That's happened to me again & again & again with collectibles, particularly books because they're easier to research than glassware, furniture, ...even stamps!

It usually doesn't matter too much to most people if a book in their hand is a "First Edition" or an Eighth Edition... This fact can be discovered on the copyright page, it will say exactly which edition this is... Or, if not, this usually appears through a clever 'countdown' system: A first edition might be denoted thus:

If you are holding the second edition, the row will simply lack the “1”. I guess this method was discovered as a really lazy way of indicating editions: Just scratch off the lowest number from the end! Anyway, many common books are not very valuable *even if they are* First Editions, so the presence of a 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, or 8<sup>th</sup> edition tells you the book is hardly worth taking home with you.

In my experience, the values and prices of first editions can become a trap. Although a wholesaler might as well obtain as many first editions as possible, I wouldn't suggest building a whole business or business model upon it. I saw that fail in a very nice Bay Area bookstore which consisted almost totally of “*Firsts*”. Wow! What a dumb idea, at least, using the wisdom of retrospect.. Despite the best selection in nine counties, there just wasn't enough specific demand for first editions to keep the store going longer than about a year. And especially when you consider they had an exclusive location and were paying about \$5,000 a month rent. The book store owner, in fact, was soon trying to rent space in his bookcases to other sellers to try to cut down the impact of the high rent he was paying.

Let's face it: Most readers and some collectors just don't see the need to pay five times more for a first edition when a subsequent edition is just as handy and reads just as good! And, you can take it to bed with you and read it happily without worrying about wrinkling the dustjacket or spilling coffee on it.

Above all, don't fall into the trap, as a fledgling in the book world, of paying exorbitant prices for someone else's first editions.

### **“SIGNED” BOOKS**

Books signed by their authors fit this same warning. If you happen to find that a book is signed or a first edition – fine! But no need to pay oodles of extra money for it. If a seller touts that his books are all signed by the authors, I would become very hesitant. Someone with signed books is usually not going to sell to a book scout or wholesaler anyway, they KNOW they have something good and they will usually take it to a reputable store. You may even be buying books with FAKE signatures! WHERE, exactly, did this PERSON obtain all these SIGNED books? This *does* happen... I bought a few boxes which contained more than a dozen paperbacks that had been signed by the same mystery author. But in researching, I discovered the author

used a pen name for this series. Would an author have signed a dozen different paperbacks using the “signature” of his pen name, his *nom de plume*? The signatures all looked identical, and were all done with the same pen. Hmmm! The purchase became a possibly tainted, questionable one for me.

Some author's signatures are as light as a feather, like Joyce Carol Oates, and others, a massive intrusion with a felt-tip marker, like Anne Rice's bravura signatures. She must drink a lot of cups of caffeinated beverages before her book signings. It is always a good idea to see 2 or 3 genuine signed copies, or check the signature in an autograph book so that you know for sure whether a book you find was probably really signed by the author or not!

### **BOOK CLUB EDITIONS**

Beware of any Book Club Editions. Dustjackets used to say “*Book Club Edition*” in the lower corner of the front flap. Nowadays, the best way to tell a book club edition that has its dustjacket, is that there is no ORIGINAL PRICE in the top corner of the front flap. That tells you the book wasn't sold in book stores, *i.e.*, arrived in the mail as a B.C.E (Book Club Edition). You don't have space to store book club editions because they are the last books of all that anyone will buy. With the possible exception of a B.C. Edition of Stephen King's “*Carrie*” which I got \$20.00 for, mainly because the First Edition of this, his first book, was prohibitively expensive! But most book clubs, even in nice dust jackets, will tend to disappoint. Unless you live in a corner of the world that jumps up and down for American book club editions, such as Eastern Slovakia and the smaller islands of the Fiji archipelago, they will most likely linger and get dusty!

And that leads me to another point: It is only those book people who have lots and lots of room to safely store their books who will be able to *really* make money, and here's why: Books take up space. Their individual prices may average out to low figure. So a person has to have a lot of books to generate enough sales to pay the bills. But storing those books costs money! I suggest that a cost-cutting method of storing and stashing one's books is imperative for survival to either a bookseller or a book scout or a collector! There is most certainly a “critical mass”, a quantity of books, which is needed to generate enough sales to provide an income and then, wealth and fortune. Those people who can find the cheapest place to put their books safely, places they can enjoy ready access to their merchandise, but not if they have to pay a fortune in storage charges, will prevail in the end over those who have to pay big money every month in rent or storage fees! MY personal solution at the start of my collectibles career, was to

realize that I could talk a store owner into letting me sell my books – at a cut! -- out of HIS store! Go thou and do likewise rather than PAY \$\$ \$ to hide your books away in a rusty, leaky old storage locker somewhere!

### **MAKE \$1,000's FROM OLD RECORD ALBUMS!**

There are LP's (33-1/3 rpm) and little “45's” and big clunky old 78's that weigh a ton and you can play the whole side in 5 minutes or less. But big assortments of these albums STILL turn up in families that collected them during the previous 80 years or so, up till 1990 or whenever cassettes and CD's really took over. It is STILL possible to make a wad of dough through record albums! Despite their being heavy and clunky, they are sometimes scarce and valuable to the right buyer. Whenever I was at a garage sale or moving sale, I always found the time to kneel in front of a box of old record albums and go through them. Very often all they'd have would be Hawaiian and Italian and Mexican songs played by some ethnic band or other. But then, sandwiched in among these, would be a little 'run' of old Beatles or Elvis or various rhythm-and-blues albums.

### **\$20,000 IN MINT CONDITION!**

There was a sad day when I really needed to make some money, and I was wracking my brain at what to do. I noticed that there was a big old piece of carpet covering a few old boxes in the carport. I lifted the carpet and found it had kept the boxes under it safe and dry for the four years that I'd lived in that house. Yes, for four years, these boxes had been out in the elements! I opened the tops, scooting some shiny black widow spiders out of the way (they never bite!), and found records that I had neglected to bring into the house. In one box I found an: *“Introducing the Beatles”* and after checking around and e-mailing a couple of Beatles record experts, they both agreed I had the very Very best “first” version of this album and cover, and a look at the current price guide said \$20,000 in mint condition. Unfortunately mine wasn't in mint condition, and this fact seriously eroded the price, but it was still worth quite a bit, even though it could have been ruined, out in the 'elements'. But wasn't. It was still worth a cool \$1,200. So, that's an example of how even a dealer and a collector can screw-up, get confused, and overlook a prize that puts other collectibles in the shade!

When I opened my second store (which I ran at the same time as my first store), I put out a box full of old records. I immediately noticed the box of records attracted daily attention. So I brought over MORE records, BOUGHT more records on Saturday visits to garage and moving sales, and soon had 10 boxes of records, sorted according to

type. Blues and R&B and Golden Age Rock sold the best at that particular store. Hula and Mariachi music sold the worst! At one point I stopped to realize that fully *a third of my income* at that store was being generated by record sales! And I'd paid NO attention to L.P's at all, my even having them for sale was little more than an accident. The same thing could be said for old picture postcards, as well. No doubt there are many things I COULD have sold that I didn't, like games, toys, and various kinds of knick-knacks. You will no doubt find yourself buying (and selling!) what YOU feel comfy buying and selling!

So, don't be shy about grabbing metaphysical books on a wholesale level on your Saturday excursions, if you are lucky enough to find some! Even here, there are exceptions. A lot of fluff and nonsense was printed in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century based on "channeled entities". Starting with the Roberts' "Seth" book series, we soon had "Michael", and then a whole shelf-full of books which don't pass the credibility test – not in my "book", anyway. My point is that *channeled* books are usually NOT good sellers. They didn't sell in my book shops and they didn't sell very well on E-Bay, either!

### **BIGGEST SECRET? SATURDAY MORNING !**

The secret of my success was NOT having the psychics or doing my own astrology chart interpretations or even having the book store at all! What propelled me into the profit zone was going out on Saturday mornings, good and early, and any other time I could, to look at people's books and other collectibles, because sometimes I found record albums or old picture post-cards or even prints and framed paintings! I also discovered certain areas were very productive of good items, so I'd go out to 'case' a neighborhood of older, well-built homes, perhaps where some scholarly people may have lived in recent years, and see in anyone was having a garage sale that particular day!

### **RANKING: YARD, GARAGE, MOVING & ESTATE!**

GARAGE sales are preferable to YARD SALES because collectibles don't do well on lawns in misty or humid conditions. So I would pick a garage sale over a yard sale – if I had to choose! Avoid yard sales advertising lots of 'kids' stuff' and clothes; there are very rarely good collectibles at such a sale.

MOVING SALES are preferable to GARAGE SALES, however, because when a person or family is moving, they have a built-in incentive to sell-sell-sell! They will often decide at the last moment:

*“Gee, we can't take all those heavy books and record albums with us! Let's try to get whatever we can for them on Saturday!”*

ESTATE SALES fall in between in terms of quality. Only if the description of the items ravishes me to the point where I HAVE to go there, I will usually miss the average run of estate sales. Also because even though yard, garage and moving sales are held by the people who own the items, Estate Sales are often “administered” by stuffy, over-dressed old coots who take their work much too seriously and are not authorized to bargain over prices. Yet even at Estate Sales, even on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of Estate Sales, I've scored some of my biggest prizes!

### **NEWSPAPER CLASSIFIEDS TO DROOL OVER!**

My Standard Operating Procedure on Saturday mornings was as follows: I would go across the street to *Mr. Tasty* and Joe would fry me a couple of eggs with a side of sausage or bacon, and I'd have my first of three cups of regular coffee... as I opened the Star or the Sun or whichever newspaper had the most Saturday 'garage sale' listings... I would have a fine-point felt tip marker handy and I'd scan all the sales that were within 10 miles of my location, and look for just one thing—the word “BOOKS”. When I saw this word, I would carefully draw a square around the edges of the garage sale ad. After that, I'd more carefully evaluate each and every ad that I'd picked out. I discarded ads that read as follows:

“Kids stuff, toys, baby things, furniture, books.”

That's because I very soon learned that NOBODY who had a couple of young kids was ALSO selling old, valuable books. I don't know why, but it just NEVER happened! If I came across the following kind of ad, on the other hand:

“Meissen, Wedgwood, carnival glass. Ansel Adams framed photos and Salvador Dali prints. Other antiques and books. “

I discarded this kind of ad as not worth going to, also because the seller was *always* a professional and the books, like the perfectly-described antiques, were *always* priced at full retail, --sometimes more! An exception might be those times when the seller misspelled enough words in their ad (*Wedgewood* instead of the correct *Wedgwood*, or *Miessen* instead of *Meissen*, for example!), to make me realize they probably WERE NOT professional antique merchants.

## **BIBLIOMANIAC'S MILLION DOLLAR BOOK HORDE!**

But then one Saturday morning as Gus and Joe were joking with me about one of the female psychics they both had a crush on, I spotted a tiny little ad:

“Emptying house of books, books & more books, \$5 a box.”

I didn't even hear the end of their joke, I folded up the newspaper and left in a hurry! I found a house that had a big dumpster in the street in front of the sidewalk, and the dumpster was half full of OLD books! These had been in the dumpster a few days and were soggy from recent rains. They included some books that were at least 100 years old that someone had decided to just dump outside as if they were junk. So, I entered with a mixture of excitement --- and dread! Two or three book men had gotten there just ahead of me and were ransacking the front room, which had dozens and dozens of boxes piled up on the floor, and nearly full bookshelves on all the walls. Each was marking off a little bit of 'turf' and emptying someone else's boxes to make room for his OWN \$5.00 selection of books... I didn't wish to compete with these excited gentlemen, so I went back farther into the house. I encountered one of the heirs of this house. “Yeah, Grandpa was addicted to books. We just want to get everything out of here so we can sell the house!” They spoke from a hiding place in the kitchen. I could see all the kitchen cupboards were full of books. There was a walk-in closet that should have held shoes or brooms or something, but it was full of books instead. Up on the second floor, one room with solid bookcases all around, held nothing but old Central and Northern European books... French, German, Scandinavian, and similar books, all in fine-tooled bindings. Not a single English language book was in this room, however. But almost every book had a brilliant gilded leather or calf cover.

Across the hall was the office of the man who had owned this house. His presence was still palpable here. I think I was the first person to enter that room with old books on his mind. This was the room with the 19<sup>th</sup> Century books about hieroglyphics and the scarce imprints about amulets and talismans. Authors like: Budge. And A. E. Waite. Books that had been researched carefully during the 1880's from old manuscripts at the Bodleian Library at the British Museum. The old yellow-backed copy of “*Dracula*” from the 1890's was here, and much, much more! Twenty minutes later I came down the stairs laboring under the weight of two heavy boxes. This was before the days of cell phones so I asked to use a phone to call a cab – or would they please call a cab for me? I had arrived on the bus with about \$100 in my

pocket, and went home on a \$8.00 cab ride with \$70 still in my pocket, but six full boxes of old books in the back seat and trunk that turned out to be worth about \$4,000.

It was the very next day... a Sunday... that I was walking with Christmas Angel, (later known as Christmas Henderson) down an east side street. I couldn't help stopping at a place where a young couple were selling-off some old books. There was a two volume set on Antarctic exploration by Shackleton from the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and a full box of tiny little volumes of Shakespeare in delicate little tissue-like jackets. These dated from the 1920's, I believe.

*"Why* are you selling these wonderful old books?" Christmas asked, feeling, by their "vibes" that they were of some value.

"Oh, they were Dad's and we just want to get rid of 'em, they're no good to us!" This was a common theme that came up again and again in my years as a book scout, book buyer, and book seller... People very often became "DON'T WANTERS" They had been left the unenviable (to them!) task of disposing of Grandma's or Grandpa's or Uncle's collection of old books. I get the feeling that their ancestor had been quite a reader and scholar. But these members of the next generation had it "up to here" with Grandma's books, early on, perhaps, they had rebelled –big time!-- against many of the ways of their elders, and that included NOT being a reader, NOT loving or needing books, and believe me, they wanted nothing more than to see the last of them go down the steps and down the street, and memories of perhaps a bad (or neglected?) childhood along with them!

### **ONE SECRET IS: FINDING "DON'T WANTERS!"**

If anyone now asks what is one of THE SECRETS of getting rich by going to garage, yard, moving and estate sales, it is: Look for sales being held by "DON'T WANTERS!" They will sometimes pay you to take away the great big assortment of books that make them feel so anxious and unhappy!

About that house with the dumpster in front, and a house filled with valuable books inside.... "Grandpa" there had been an OBSESSED book lover. He'd been a regular BOOKAHOLIC. He had gone from being a bookaholic to being a BOOK MANIAC. People get that way, I almost got that way, 10 years later, as I began to put away more and more and more old books! It is a vice when carried to such extremes, and it is the heirs and younger relatives who keenly feel that the "old man" has gone screwier than Mr. Phillips' screwdriver. The old guy

buys old books, but doesn't help his kids with their college tuition or after baby comes home from the hospital... all he wants is more books!

Suddenly, one day, the BOOK MANIAC dies a tragic and lonely death, because he probably doesn't have a friend in the world by this point. And he can't take his books with him, they end up, along with his body, in the hands of his heirs and assignees. They probably do what THIS family did: They order a great big metal dumpster from the city and gleefully start tossing the old books into the dumpster! A day goes by. A couple of days go by. Someone, a neighbor perhaps, or other bystander, volunteers: "*Gee, those books are old! Those books might be WORTH something!*" Are you sure you don't want to call up a book guy, or somebody?" No, they don't call. Or maybe they do, but they call one of the 90% of dealers who stubbornly refuse to come out to someone's house to look at old books and stuff... and thus, by their blind laziness, miss out on one of the hugest hoards of RARITIES to turn up in the Metro area in the last 20 years! The other two bookmen I saw in that house on that day risked dying an early death because by the time I got there they were HYPERVENTILATING, they were almost ready to faint from both the excitement and the exertion of holding on to "their boxes" of selected books.

This was one case in which the heirs mistakenly wanted to empty the house of the "junk", i.e., old books, so they could get the house in shape to sell it right away and split the profits of the sale! What they SHOULD have done is gotten a book man to evaluate their inherited book horde. This was most definitely a case of the BOOKS IN THE HOUSE were worth AT LEAST TWICE or THREE TIMES what the REAL ESTATE WAS WORTH!! You may think this happens very rarely, but I tell you, it is not a rare occurrence at all. People are forever getting old, moving into nursing homes, dying in their sleep or on the open road, all of which leave behind them an assortment of wide-eyed "DON'T WANTERS!" You can make \$100,000 a year from people just like that, if you can get there before the next person does!

### **PERFECT INCOME STREAM**

It didn't get much better than this, as more and more books flowed into what HAD been just a little occult shop a few months earlier. This was "on the hoof", I was learning rapidly, but every situation was in some ways, new. It was exciting as hell! I had a special situation carved out for myself, particularly as book income came in at the same time commissions from the readings my psychics were doing, at the same time. Most days I would make \$50 to \$100 as my share of the

readings, \$50 or \$100 or more from book sales, and I'd do a couple of readings myself for \$35 to \$50 to \$100. As the manager of the place, I had a 'mystic mystique' that meant I could ask more for my own readings, people saw me as a serious person, and therefore a believable 'reader'. I doled-out readings to whom I felt were appropriate for which client, and kept some of the most interesting people, usually ladies, for astrology readings for myself. I also kept \$10 to \$15 from each psychic as the store's share of each \$30 to \$45 reading they did. This was very fair at the time; since that time, owners of stores take closer to 50% as their share, maybe because expenses and rents have gone up and readings have gone down, mainly because there is a serious lack of talented, legitimate psychics and astrologers, a fact which came to light with incredible ferocity and severe damage during the 800 and 900% "telephone psychic" craze of the 1990's, once Americans figured out they were being "took" by inexperienced, untalented hordes of losers looking to cash-in at a skill of which they knew nothing. "Readings" have never recovered from the devastation these phonies caused, especially the ones that advertised far and wide on national TV.

If you are curious and want to find out more about how I ran a psychic center with seven psychic, as well as a book store, look for another E-Book of mine which goes more into the psychic and occult end of things and less into old books and yard sales. That e-book will be called: *"How to Get Rich with an Occult or Psychic Shop or Business"*. Now, back to the subject at hand...

### **MOVERS BRING IN A WHOLE LOAD!**

One weekend things got very busy at my little book store. First, I'd gone to look at books in the morning and the floor near my desk was packed with books.

Then, in the early afternoon, a couple of "Moving and Storage" men came in and asked if I ever bought books. "Yep," I replied, and waved my hand in all directions, "that's how I got all of these!" "Good! We'll be right back!" It turned out there were three of these gents, and they carried in a series of white boxes, not the average book boxes but much larger packing boxes. Movers have more muscles and stamina than I have, that's for sure! But then, my girlfriend's teenage daughter can outlift me. When they'd put six big boxes on the floor in front of me, and I came over to look inside. The boxes contained art books, each one different, big thick illustrated books in dustjackets, fresh and nice, with a lot of Abrams editions, and on art movements, (Impressionists, Fauvists, Surrealists, Medieval Art, Post-Impressionists) and individual artists, (O'Keefe, Manet, Monet, Matisse, Rembrandt, Van Gogh,

Picasso. ) There were lots of very nice books of gallery holdings and special exhibits, as well. Their next question was, "What will you give us for 'em?" "There's 3 of you?" I asked. "Yes." So I thought a moment. Before I could speak one of them spoke up... (You've probably heard the rule... "He who speaks first is lost!") What he said was: "We moved these books, but the guy didn't pay. We don't want that much, really... just to get rid of 'em!" But I could see they were serious workmen, so I offered \$150. Della, my secretary at that time, asked "What made you pick \$150?" "I just wanted it to be a number they could divide easily into three, one for each of them!"

But my day wasn't finished yet! Just when I was hustling the last of these big thick art books out of the way, a nice older black lady came in and stood before me. "Do you buy books?" she asked. "Yes, ma'am, that's how I got.... all of these!"

She turned toward the door, put her hand up to the side of her mouth and shouted as loudly as she could:

*"Okay, boys!"*

Within minutes, 4 teenage boys were bringing in boxes and bags of books. Each one put down his load in the center of the room, then went outside to get more. They brought them in like this for quite a while. Della went over to the window. *"My God! They've got a truck out there!"* Finally the woman reappeared, smiled, (as if she knew she'd just played a big cosmic joke on me!) and said, *"you can HAVE these!"* and before I could offer her any money, she turned and left.

So, even though I'd brought home more than a hundred books in my Saturday morning travels, and the Movers had brought in six boxes containing more than 100 art books, the prize that day went to this family and their 300+ novels and next books, none of which was really valuable, but I had started putting a table outside to attract more people, and these were perfect "50c each, 3-for-a-Dollar books". I earned an infinite return on these books since the woman donated them.

### **A FOUR HUNDRED YEAR OLD BIBLE**

When I visited one house, the residents were elated because they'd found an old steamer trunk in the attic and pried it open and found a Bible, printed in English, with a full page portrait of Queen Elizabeth as the frontis, and a selection of psalms to be sung with accompanying notes and chords, in the back. I pointed out the covers were missing and the book was in bad shape, because at first they thought it might be worth thousands of dollars. I bought it and some other items for \$200 cash, they were easy to carry. There is a tragedy connected with this

Bible, however. I put it aside to research it and my assistant at the time thought incorrectly that I planned to throw it out, so he gave the book as a free “prize” to one of my most frequent book buyers. “What made you think I wanted to give it away?” I asked him, rather indignantly! “Omigosh, Ed!” he said, and tried to catch the lady to get it back, but she was gone. We had her phone number but she absolutely refused to return the book. I estimated later than the Baskerville Bible, or whatever it was, was worth between \$1,000 and \$2,000 even without its original covers. That was the biggest, best book that ever “GOT AWAY” from me, once I had it in my grasp. It was my fault, however.

(1) I didn't express clearly to my employees *what* my thoughts and intentions were concerning the book,(2) I didn't put the Bible in a private and safe place where only I would see it (3) I hesitated starting to research this Bible for several days.

### **ABRAHAM LINCOLN RARITY!**

I could probably have become quite a bit wealthier because of something else that was in the same steamer trunk as the Baskerville Bible: A large, highly-decorated picture album from the 1850's or 1860's. I judge the age of the album by the fact that none of the photos inside were more recent than the end of the Civil War. There was one photo that stood out from the others: Abraham Lincoln seated in a chair, with his wife and two boys around him. I had never seen that photo of President Lincoln before and it crossed my mind that it might be valuable.

I stupidly called Chris, the bookseller friend whom I mentioned much earlier, the one who gave me \$200 in trade in one of my first 'deals', and bragged a bit of my curious find, and she said “*I know someone who might be interested!*” A few hours later an extremely persuasive specialist in antique photographs pulled up to the store and I dutifully led this small, swarthy European man down to the basement. He carefully held and looked at each of the lovely photos in the album, and examined the album, as well.

“You know, I don't offer you a price, sir. I ask that you give me the price you want, and I will tell you yes – or no!” This was different than what I was used to, and I was momentarily flustered. I hadn't researched any of the photos yet. Remember—there was no Internet and even if I'd reference books about old books, I wouldn't have had any about photos from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century! “So, I ask you... name your price!” For some strange reason that I cannot tell you, his manner, his approach, totally unnerved me. For some crazy reason I

felt that I needed to be generous and magnanimous and display a cavalier attitude toward the old photos. “Oh, I don't know... fifty dollars is enough, I guess!” After all, I didn't want to *ROB* him, and he seemed to want them *SO* much!

He looked at me as if he'd been suddenly struck by an ice-cream headache. “Fifty dollars?” he winced. “Are you sure?” Before I could exclaim, “I was just kidding, I meant five thousand dollars...” “Alright, fifty dollars!” he exclaimed. So he made me out a check for fifty dollars and I never forgave Chris for sending that gentleman over to me. She acted as if she'd done me some kind of favor, too. To this day I have no idea about that obscure Lincoln photograph and its possible value but it was probably a lot more than \$50.00. But, I was feeling generous and gracious. I had been doing very, very well, lately, and I didn't mind passing some of it on to others. Remember... nobody sells for true top value. Everyone is a middle-man in the end!

### **A BRIEF REFLECTION ON THE OCCULT**

Since I now was in charge of a psychic center, a kind of glorified occult shop, I couldn't fill the *whole* thing up with books, or with 'readers' either, I needed some other items. So one day in late 1986 or early 1987 I started running a little Classified, with words something to this effect, in the daily paper:

“Quaint and Curious Occult and Mystical Statues, Carvings, Knick-Knacks, Books, Talismans & Amulets, Crystals and Stones, Srying Mirrors, Ouijas and Other Talking Boards, any Haunted *Object d'art*, etc., wanted for Psychic Center. Please call Ed Augusts at ----- or come by -----.”

First, I had tested two daily papers to find which one gave me the best response for my book and psychic reading ads, and used that one and discarded the rest. I only placed one display ad in many years and found it didn't generate a single phone call, so I was finished with display ads and concentrated on the classifieds, which I knew got me lots of calls and visits. I recommend you do the same! Don't let anyone talk you into placing a display ad in a newspaper or worse, a magazine! Word of mouth beats advertising anyway.

No sooner had I placed that ad, than I had a mysterious traveler, just back from Nepal, bring me a bizarre “haunted” necklace that had been made from dozens of rounded pieces of bones, each taken from a different dead body. As I closed my eyes and held the object in my hand, per his instructions, I could see individual scenes of death,

dismemberment, distress, drowning, etc. He didn't tell me to look for these, and he didn't say it was made from a number of different dead bodies – it was implicit in the object. It was an unavoidable conclusion based on the way the object “took over your mind” as you grasped each individual bead. It was a “black rosary”, truly a 'haunted' object. He also had several silver objects, including curiously decorated cup and a dagger. He wanted me to consider buying all these trophies, but he was asking a princely sum. Christmas Angel came up from her lair, drawn by the 'vibes' and took me aside after gazing at him and his object d'art for a few seconds. “*Ed, get rid of that guy!*” she said. Some people simply have 'bad vibes'.

Much to everyone's surprise, it turned out that just down at the end of the block lived a female teenager who believed she was possessed by the devil. She came in one afternoon and I had a long conversation with her and it seemed appropriate that I attempted to exorcise the vile, croaking demon. She spoke in a very thick and heavy voice, definitely a man's voice, it not an actual demon; more suitable for a truck driver than a thin little 90 pound waif of a girl. After the procedure a few people clapped and she shook her head repeatedly, as if coming out of a daze. She left and returned an hour later, carrying a little crystal ball with a swirling pattern of green in the center and asked me to take it for helping get rid of the demon that was possessing her. Over the years I piled-up trophies and prizes like that. Within a few years I had crystal balls in three sizes, the largest, about 9 inches in diameter. I was also given decks of Tarot cards by my admirers, and so were some of my psychics.

At one time I was taken to a house that had a haunted bed... The bed was solid black and covered with carvings of fauns, satyrs, imps, cherubs, witches and devils. I'd never seen anything like it. The odd thing about this bed was that it made creaking noises, even when nobody was closer than 10 feet away. I was offered the object for a very reasonable price, but I didn't want the bed because it looked like it would be impossible to lug home, and I wasn't sure I ever wanted to lay on such a thing anyway.

People did start bringing me their used Ouija boards and other paraphernalia which they thought was haunted or possessed by demons. They would either give me the object for free, or at a very low price such as \$1.00. I then sold it within a week or two by featuring it in the store and asking about 5 to 10 times what I'd paid. This strategy never failed. By the way, I never found any object which really did seem haunted or possessed, and usually sold the object on to the next happy owner, even without a good pedigree.

The technique I've shown of just GOING OUT AND LOOKING AT OLD BOOKS at various kinds of homes, sales, and other venues, WORKS. You just have to stop wondering and being skeptical, and DO IT. PUT IT INTO PRACTICE!!

### **SUNDAY ESTATE SALE? – CAN BE THE BEST DAY!**

Sundays at an Estate Sale are not a good day to find anything of value, everybody knows that! And it seemed that Sunday in the fall of 1997 would be a futile venture for me, as well. I had followed my lady friend Nikki and her friend Stacy into an estate sale just off Hamilton Avenue in the Willow Glen area of San Jose. It was a typical 30-year old home, nothing special about it, and the ladies who ran the sale were like old Ironclads from revolutionary times, they weren't taking any nonsense, they had firm prices. Of course, ALL the GOOD STUFF was gone – it had to be – hundreds and hundreds of buyers and lookers had poured in on Friday, the first day of the sale, and Saturday, the second day... now it was the third day. Prices had been reduced a little but it was obvious to me that there was nothing of the slightest worth here. There was nothing but a few Readers' Digest condensed books, some National Geographic magazines and thin little religious booklets for children, and a couple of bound notebooks.... I opened one of these and hurriedly took it to the front counter. "It says 10c for books today, is that right?" "Yes," the woman answered with a puzzled sound to her voice. I showed her the book I'd found. "10c please!" I gave her the dime.

I want the reader to see what can be found on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of a well-attended Estate Sale held by a knowledgeable 'crack' team of professional Estate Sale ladies.

### **OLD SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITION TO ALASKA & SIBERIA**

This was the hand-written Journal in which the author, a college graduate and adventurer, made notes about the day-by-day sea voyage he took in the summer of 1883 on a scientific expedition to Alaska and Siberia. The voyage left from San Francisco in June and returned in September or October. Along the way, the young man noted every phase of shipboard life, the methods of hunting used by the Alaskan natives he met in his travels, a description of the unusual scientific contraptions they set-up to record things like air pressure, wind and temperature, and many other bits of lore, including a description of the ships in the harbor, the freeze that damaged the ships overnight, and other curious details of travel to Alaska and Siberia in the early 1880's.

As an epilogue he had arranged columns of various Eskimaux and also Siberian words and their translation into English, and their meaning. Included was a small item from a Midwestern newspaper which spoke of his graduation from college and his intention to travel up to the arctic that summer.

I sold the book for less than it was worth. I got something between \$800 and \$850 for it on ABE (the Advanced Book Exchange), from a dealer in the Princeton University area, and the last time I looked, cannot trace its movements since. He may have sold it right into an academic library... perhaps Princeton itself. He was quite happy, almost too cheerful about this book, and I later came in for LOTS of harassment from other booksellers on the ABE Forum who implied that I had been extremely stupid to sell it for such a cheap price – it might have been worth another “zero” onto its price. I think they were mostly tasting some “sour grapes” on not finding such a prize on their own... But, yes, yes, perhaps they were right.. But remember! I paid 10c for it on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of a big Estate Sale... I realized it might be something valuable, and rescued it from the dust-bin to which I'm sure it would have been tossed by the end of THAT DAY if I, or someone just like me, hadn't spotted it!

That bargain is about “average” for someone who is “REALLY” into old books and attending lots and lots of weekend sales. BY “average” I mean, that kind of profit --- 10c into \$800 = 800 thousand percent – is not exceptional when dealing with ignorant people and “DON'T WANTERS”, and there are plenty of people in each category!

### **A YARD SALE -- THAT LED INTO THE HOUSE!**

You should not falter in going into Estate Sales on Fridays, Saturdays, OR Sundays, and neither should you avoid what might be a very average little yard sale... as I found out at a little sale held by a little old man at a ranch style house right on Homestead Avenue where Santa Clara turns into Cupertino, in the summer of 1997.

Lady Friend Nikki and I were cruising home from a day of something up the Peninsula when we spotted a couple of sales. “Doesn't look like much,” I said, “Oh, well, let's see what they've got!” she replied. But it really turned out to be just a single old man sitting comfortably.

I don't know why, because I don't usually ask this question at yard sales, but for SOME REASON today, disappointed that there was nothing of interest in front of us, I asked: “Sir, do you have any OLD BOOKS?”

“*Ha!*” he replied with a laugh. “Sure, they're all inside!” He led the way and we followed through the front door into the house. There were old hardcovers in lines and lines on the carpeted floor, and bookcases and boxes full of more. “Pick whatever you want, you can have 'em for a dime a piece, .. or less if you find a *lot* of stuff!” He had the Johnson Flood, the San Francisco Earthquake, a series of different anti-clerical 19<sup>th</sup> Century books, a nice illustrated hardcover about the 1915 Panama Pacific Exposition, illustrated books of flowers, fish, and birds, nothing much after 1930; a hardcover book about a certain exotic flower that blooms only in Majorca, illustrated throughout; several books of old San Jose and Santa Clara Valley history, including the whole illustrated comic series by Ralph Rambo from about 1960, including his book about Santa Clara Valley outhouses; a book about the mountain lion which killed a couple of students on a Sunday School day trip in the 1890's until it was shot by a hunter – the hunter's naked baby was on the back cover smiling on the back of the hide of (what had been a rabid) mountain lion... This, just as every nice collection I've ever seen, was unique. No two big collections are ever the same... This was a wonderful day! We paid the nice old gent MORE than he asked, we insisted on that, and took home a thousand dollars of books for a small fraction of that amount.

Nothing has changed since I performed these wonders at yard sales and estate sales and the like... I did not do significantly better in 1985 than I did in 1997, and even today, ten or twelve years later, there are always opportunities to buy not just old books, but all kinds of old collectibles, cheaply.

### **EVEN FLEA MARKETS & COMICS CAN PAY OFF!**

In the early 1970's when my first wife and I lived in San Francisco, we somehow happened to stop at a flea market in the Daly City area, just south of town. I spotted someone with a collection of silver dollars and someone else with a collection of Uncle Scrooge, a Walt Disney comic book series. Karen hated the idea of spending good money to buy silver dollars, even though the dollars were only \$2.00 each... But she saw that as an incredible waste of time and money. I did get SOME of these silver dollars, but later sold them. I've never been personally able to make much out of old stamps and coins and the like, though I know others have had better experiences. But what she DID let me buy was the run of Uncle Scrooge! I bought it with my own money, and I was very happy I did. It started with Uncle Scrooge #1, #2, #3, #4, and then skipped around the other first 15 or 18 numbers, all from the 1950's and very early 1960's. The price in the upper corner of these comics was

still 10c apiece, in the very last copies from the 1960's, it had gone to 12 or 15c. I had to pay quite a bit to get these comics, I paid \$50 cash money! That seemed to be a HUGE sum in the early 1970's! But I later sold them for about \$400, and if I'd had the ability to hold on to them even longer, I could have offered them on E-Bay or in one of my own storefronts for close to retail, which was about \$2,000 the last time I looked!

I had one more eventful run-in with old comics. A gentleman advertised that he had a "*Witch's Trunk full of old books about witchcraft.*" Well! Who could resist that? I went straight over to his house! There was indeed a perfume-scented witch's trunk, I believe these were his late wife's or divorced wife's books... I bought them all, they were rich with books on aphrodisiacs, sex magic, love potions, healing touches and herbs, a photo album of witch's 'familiars', several big thick astrology books, etc., Yes I bought them all! But then I noticed the room was filled with comic books.

"Eh, I got into this 'deal', and next thing I know I have about 10 big long boxes of comics – and I'm not a comics guy! You want to take them off my hands along with the witchy books? Let's talk!" So I brought home all the comics as well. I gave him part cash, part trade value, and he seemed OK with that.

### **BEWARE! RARITIES ATTRACT YOUNG THIEVES**

Trades usually work better for people who walk INTO the store, not people you visit out in the field! Anyway, I was sorting out the comics and had one big box that I hadn't gotten to, at all. It was filled with mint condition "X"-Man Comics from the 1970's and 1980's or so, an entire RUN of them, much more than 100 comics! It was just my luck that a cluster of 12 and 13-year olds walked into my store that same day. They took one good look at those X-Man comics. "WOW!" was what I heard. They shook their heads over it. "D'ya have ANY idea what you've GOT there with those?" one redheaded and freckled kid asked me. "I'm researching that right now. I'll know in a few days." The boys stalked out of there together, muttering under their breath. That night my store was broken into! It was the ONLY time in FIVE years that it suffered that fate! The youthful predators, because that's whom I think broke in, came through the back window which wasn't protected by anything except some chicken wire and a shaky pane of glass. The thief sold the whole box of X-Man Comics, and rifled the quarters out of a change drawer in my desk. He or they didn't touch ANYTHING else in the store, not even some very valuable things scattered in plain sight. All they really wanted was the valuable comics! I learned a lesson

from that, and never again carried comics in my store. I just didn't need to be broken into again by teenagers, not if I could help it! If I had secured and hidden those comics better, and sold them either as a set or one-by-one out of the box, I'd have made thousands of dollars. But I didn't know that because, just like the Tibetan and Himalaya books... just like the Abraham Lincoln photo and the 400 year old Bible... I lost, sold, or had 'em stolen out of my hands before I could even research what they were worth! If I had to "do it all over again" I would maintain the most EXCELLENT database containing values of all books, all collectibles... and DILIGENTLY apply myself to using it, so that I never again could possibly "rip myself off". I figure the loss to me in things I sold without adequate research amounted to more than \$20,000+ over just a few years! YOU maybe LUCKIER, and you live in the Age of the Internet, so my problem should NEVER affect anyone reading this story!

### **IS "TRADING" LIMITED TO DEALERS?**

I must admit, a lone eagle soars very high, and can spot some real 'gems' of the book world, and that's what a 'scout' or other 'lone practitioner' can do. But to have a big volume of book sales going, and especially to attract the biggest selection of new material all the time, it is good to have an actual walk-in store. It is not just that people walk in to buy books off the shelf. Sometimes they don't! Stores often go under. Sometimes a well-meaning but sadly unlucky denizen of his own book imagination opens a used and rare book store, and six weeks later Barnes & Noble or Borders moves into a spot, one mall away!

But there is one EXCEPTIONALLY EFFECTIVE way that book stores can stay in business for year after year... and that is by offering to take (and make) TRADES on books. You will see right away, this is 'doable' for a book store. It is not so 'doable' for a private individual who has a few hundred or a few thousand books in his garage or bedroom! Yet TRADES are where the biggest profit comes to the book-man and book-woman! SELLING BOOKS is like silver coins, TRADING BOOKS is like gold, nice big coins made out of heavy, bright gold! Let me tell you why by giving you a "running example" from my own experience in two California bookstores that I either owned outright (Book Bazaar) or partnered in (Mystic Books). Here's an example of what happens!

### **HOW TRADING USED BOOKS WORKS!**

On Friday, Sam Schmedlik comes in with 4 boxes of books to sell. I

look at them. They aren't quite what I want. I tell him I can give him \$5 cash or \$15 in trade for about HALF of the books and offer to give him back the rest. He is somewhat discouraged, he takes the \$5 cash and abandons the rest of the books that I would rather he take somewhere else. "Can you take the rest? I don't want to take them anywhere else!" "Sure", I reply, "I'll find a good home for 'em!"

So I price-up the 4 boxes of books over the next hour or two; they are Martial Arts such as "*Ninja Secrets of Invisibility*" and "*Death Touch*" and some I've never seen before. And home repair books, and a few decent fiction first editions. I price each of the books in the 2 boxes I wanted to take, and find it comes to \$85.00 in my 'retail' prices. I then size-up the 2 boxes left over as 50c / 3-for-\$1 books and eventually sell most of them on this basis, yielding me another \$10 in cash.

Two hours later, Taffy Nijinsky and her husband Daffy come in, and bring 4 bags of science fiction paperbacks and creepy recent horror fictions. Good! I needed some new ones! I let them browse around while I evaluate what they've brought me, but it doesn't take long, I know book sellers do NOT want to wait an uncomfortably long time while a dealer does a great big detailed evaluation! They are 10X friendlier and happier the faster I can make 'em "the deal". So I offer 50c in trade per book, that comes to \$20.00 total trade value for about 40 books, or half of that in cash, \$10.00. If I get 'em at trade, I am "in" at 50c a book, without that being "real money" at all, and if they choose cash, they get half as much, 25c a book. They take TRADE this time, and that suits me just fine, I save the cash. They look all over the store and find Ninja, Ju-Jitsu and other Martial Arts books which I got off Mr. Schmedlik a few hours earlier! They use up the full \$20.00 in trade value, buying 4 books at \$5 each, and are very contented and leave with beaming faces.

So, since Taffy and Daffy chose the Martial Arts books, which cost me a small part of \$5.00 in cash, less than a *dollar* for these 4 books, actually, since I bought \$85.00 worth, I have obtained their sci-fi and horror paperbacks, all 4 bags of them, for less than a dollar, or (divided into 40 books), two-&-a-half cents each!

The next day Mr. Lugubrious waddles into the premises, intent upon looking at recent sci-fi and horror paperbacks. Let's say he buys ALL the 40 books Taffy and Daffy brought me, and which I have priced at \$3.00 each, which comes to \$120.00, but he has also brought me a 1539 example by Erasmus of Rotterdam of a work of philosophy, bound in calf, a bit ruffled and rumpled looking, but still a very nice little book. So I make the ultimate sacrifice and give him ALL the \$120.00 in sci-fi's and horrors in exchange for this one ancient book!

Lugubrious is happy, and slowly sails back to the other side of town.

Now, I look at Bookfinder.com or perhaps ABEBooks.com and find this very same 1539 volume by Erasmus of Rotterdam sells, in this condition, which isn't very good, for about \$600 to \$750. So, to recap: In essence, that is, practically speaking, I bought the 4 bags of sci-fi and horror for less than One Dollar (2-1/2 cents apiece), and traded the lot of 'em to Mr. Swan for his \$600 to \$750 book. I don't have the sci-fi's or horrors anymore and hope someone else will soon bring me another bundle, and in fact, they are sure to do that, within a week or two, meanwhile there's lots of OTHER new goodies in my store to sell, because I am BUYING AND TRADING BOOKS EVERY SINGLE DAY now, I have to do this (and you OUGHT to do this!) to stay in business!

But the last few days have been good, because I cumulatively added:  $\$85.00 + \$10.00 + \$120.00 + \$600\text{-to-}\$750 = \$815.00$  to  $\$965.00$  in value by paying out just \$5.00 cash. SO! HOW DOES THAT SOUND? A book seller simply MUST practice the fine art of Trading Books. If he does NOT, he will probably be out of business before his lease is up. If he DOES, he may experience the wonderful exhilaration of accumulating more and more and more fine books, selling more, too, because the larger the selection, the more people will buy... and he will sometimes go weeks and weeks without paying a penny to buy a book, he will glide along on his ability to make profitable, mutually advantageous, trades. YES, these trades have mutual advantage. Because if you have 20 books about chess but don't play chess, they are worthless to you. You will be very happy to trade them for 10 books on some other topic closer to your own special interests. Meanwhile, there is someone else out there who craves chess books. I had a "chess nut" when I was co-owned Mystic Books in Mountain View. He would call twice a day to ask if any new chess books had come in. He would have mortgaged his child to get a row of chess books except nature in her wisdom prevented him from marriage or parenthood. For every type of books, records, knick-knacks, posters, post cards, comics, etc., there are ready and willing buyers, but others who are "DON'T WANTERS". We've spoken of them before! Walking the tightrope between buyers and sellers and between aficionados of various genres, is what really makes the used & rare book business work – along with excellent customer service, and good knowledge of books and other collectibles, or at least the ability to quickly obtain facts.

### **TRADES, OUT OF YOUR HOME ?**

As a "working out of your own house" book seller, it would truly

BEHOOVE you to figure a way you, too, could get such a broad selection of books that you could offer TRADES to the book lovers, “don't wanters” and others, who visit your home! Theoretically, there is NO REASON WHY YOU COULDN'T, except that private individuals who buy and sell books, are used to DEALERS offering book-trades, NOT private individuals! But once you get past that mental hang-up, you might do very, Very well with such a method. I would ask only that anyone who wishes to TRADE books at home realize that trades DO NOT generate cash, so you might have to have SOME CASH inflow somewhere from somebody. Maybe you could trade trade trade – and then sooner or later, SELL –sell-- SELL.... because a “Cash Out” HAS to occur at SOME point, unless you want to end up with a million books and no money, like some of my friends!

### **IN COLLECTIBLES: KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!**

There is no hard and fast rule which says an absolute novice in antiques, knick-knacks, comics, old books, record albums, or any other kind of collectible, can't start with very limited knowledge of one of these sub-hobbies and be an instant success! But logic and experience tell us chances of success are between ten times and a hundred times greater if the would-be “Saturday garage sale money maker” had a good working knowledge of at least one or two specialties he's going to be likely to see at these garage and moving sales. Here's what such a would-be get-rich quick collectibles guy should be able to do:

--- Being able to quickly get past worthless stuff to find where the real profit-possibilities are at such a sale.

--- Have the ability to browse quickly and then leave to go on to the next sale, because hanging around a useless sale does not lead to success.

--- Being able to thumb through a box of old record albums and select the types of music, the groups, the songs, which are likely to be worth something.

--- Having the ability to know what general type of book you are looking at, recognizing a certain range of famous authors, and knowing a book club edition, an ex-library book, a text book, and telling worthless from worthwhile magazines or comics, postcards, prints, certain kinds of crafts, jewelry, paintings, etc

## **PRICING THINGS WHILE “ON THE RUN”**

You might do well to have a cellphone link to a friend in a book shop or antique store, or just a sweetheart back home. If you had a laptop that picks up WI-FI from thin air, you could grab the range of prices of various collectibles and book titles, etc., from on-line data sources or make a quick trip home if you go bargain hunting near your home or other place you have your computer.

But if high-tech won't work in your case, you will need some books in the back seat of your car, just in case you find something very interesting but which you don't feel you're qualified to price. You could easily have 20 pounds of books in the car: They might include a copy of a few Scott's Stamp Catalogs, the Red Book of U.S. Coins, a recent Comic Book catalog, a few old hardbound copies of *Bookman's Price Guide* or *Book Prices Current*, a record album price book like *Goldmine*, and a few antique price guides including antique furniture, glass, jewelry, ceramics, silver, and so on! KNOW what the price of silver and gold are right now, so that if you see something which is sterling or gold (by the karat), you'll know what a fair price is.

## **“GARBAGE WEEK” -- REVEALS A TREAT!**

My friend Nikki and her friend Stacy used to scurry around Santa Clara like starving weasels during annual “*Junk Week*”. This was the one time during the whole year that the City brought out the big trucks that could haul away old refrigerators, wrecked old cars, piles and piles of garden debris, palm fronds, sack fulls of Playboy and Penthouse magazines discovered by furious Moms... and gosh knows what else! So it was no real surprise when I was at home one afternoon and got a cellphone call from Nikki.

“You'd better get up to Benton Street just east of Monroe right now! Somebody's left a ton of books out on the street, and they look like YOUR kind of books!”

“I'm *there!*” I replied, and in less than 5 minutes, I *was!*

It was, as Robert Crumb might say, “*All very interesting, to be sure!*” (Now, THERE was a collector... of old LP's and 78's!)

Nikki was right, of course; these WERE my kind of books! Some simple old sod with an unknown agenda, perhaps a gloomy old “*Don't Want'er!*” of the first caliber, had put about a hundred old books about

India, Hinduism and Buddhism, including various Gurus, Masters, Yoga, etc., out in the gutter of his house where they could all have been sideswiped by a teenager's passing Chevy, or ransacked by 10 year olds. As it was they were carted away by a 49 year old – me!

This was my first acquaintance with the hardcovers., in fine dustjackets, of 4 different Evans-Wentz Tibetan studies. Translations had been accomplished by Guru Sandup, I believe he was called, mentioned by Alexandra David-Neel in her fabulous 1920's book, "*Magic and Mystery in Tibet.*" This was the first time I'd seen huge thousand-page long texts by Sri Aurobindo, and piles of books by Sri (later Osho) Rajneesh. It was this horde that produced four early soft cover tracts of Rajneesh that were printed in India in the 1970's, when he couldn't really speak or write much English yet, and I believe he used a translator. Maybe he *always* used a translator, but his later books sure were a lot of fun, with their wild humor.

### **'HOBSON-JOBSON' INDEED!**

A very strange 2-volume set, in green dust jackets turned up in this same lot, books which were themselves covered with clear plastic, (the best way to preserve a good book—ah! But then WHY throw it AWAY? One asks! It was by *the Black Ya Ya School*, or similar title – I've forgotten the exact title! There was also a Footprint of Buddha, a huge Hindi dictionary called "*Nexus Plexus*" or "*Hocus Pocus*" or something just like that... Oh, I'm sorry! I remember now: It was called "*Hobson Jobson*!" I seem to recall it was about *Anglicisms* that had entered Hindi. In sum, an anonymous donor had dumped about \$2,000 in rare South Asian books into the gutter in front of his home, and by coming along at just the right time, I snapped-up every last one of them! When I saw Nikki and Stacy later that night, I took them both out to dinner!

### **A FORTUNE IN OLD POST CARDS**

I didn't think a fortune could be made in nothing more than old post cards until a lawyer visited my West End store in 1989 or so. He said he was representing an elderly female client who had a large collection of old post cards on her hands! How much would I pay for them?

I said I'd have to have a look, postcards weren't my specialty. He said he'd bring them by. A few days later, he did. There were more than six thousand picture postcards that had been stamped and mailed between

about 1895 and 1920, there was literally nothing after 1920. There were a couple of albums of special stamps, such as one that showed English stage actresses from the turn-of-the-century. I wasn't very excited about them when I first heard about them, but now that I saw them, I felt differently. I knew from previous visits to post card tables at Stamp and Coin shows that picture postcards could be valuable.

“As I said, this isn't my specialty, and I just know if these have much value. So the best I can do is \$600.” He looked me in the eye. “Is that a serious offer?” he asked. “That's the best offer I can make.” He immediately got on his cell phone, speaking quietly to the old lady, the purported owner of this lot. He smiled for the first time. “She says that's fine!” So I made out the check for \$600 and he piled up the long, narrow boxes of postcards on my desk and left.

Now came a bit of a chore, but a delightful task if you love geography, travel, and history! If not, this may not be the business for you! There were dozens and in some cases hundreds of cards about various railroad lines, trains, and railroad stations, even little whistle-stops that had long ceased to exist on railroad lines that were also gone. There were dozens and dozens of different lighthouses, and dozens of different bars, restaurants, car lots, factories, pet food plants, lakes, streams, barns and outhouses, from one end of the continent to the other.

The Royal families of several European nations were featured, and some of these were in raised '3-D' effect. There were German and Austrian and Belgian and French and English and Swedish and Italian and Spanish and Portuguese and Danish and Russian and Greek, Cyprian, Turkish, Palestinian, and South African postcards, all bearing stamps from those countries. Scenes of soldiers going off to war, b&w photos of battle ships and cruisers, sentimental old valentines cards and –something not seen too often nowadays – Halloween cards.

The Christmas cards were all rather special, they had been chosen for the unique touch! The messages on the back were in various hands, and mostly in English, and some of the tales and anecdotes were quite touching or humorous. The St. Patrick's cards were in green.

It was a real chore to sort these cards out, because they weren't sorted when I got 'em. I put two high school girls to work sorting them out after school, as well as Della, my faithful secretary. In the end I was able to start selling postcards. I sold them out of both stores. People pored & pored over them for hours at a time, and I discovered that

I'd gotten a whole new set of customers now – postcard collectors! I got back my investment within a month or two, and then kept selling at least a hundred dollars a week – all profit! -- from that time on, and when I left the business I still had thousands of postcards left.

I took some with me to California and sold just the English stage actress postcards, with a few others, for \$1,000 through a private sale arranged by a stamp store in Santa Clara. All in all, it wasn't the best deal by any means during my years as a bookstore owner, but I still got back at least 10X on my investment. You can too, if you can get a worthwhile collectible at “the right price” --sub-wholesale is what I'm always looking for! --and go through whatever it is you have to do to market it as close to full retail as you can!

### **WHAT IS BOOK WEALTH? 10+ YEARS OF RICHES!**

I should mention here that very often I didn't sell off a rare book hoard overnight. In fact, these *Indian* books took *forever* to sell! I found them in 1997, and I sold the last one in 2007, a full ten years later! The same can be said of the Oakland-Berkeley Horde... I overpaid for that one! I paid about \$2,000 cash. But it took me at least three years to break-even, and then my profit came in the 5 or 6 years after that, every year I made a couple of thousand dollars off that same haul of books.

But now imagine that you get hold of a DOZEN book hoards over a dozen years, or maybe you will be extremely lucky, and pushy, and get TWO DOZEN in the same time... and you sell maybe 10% of the books each year for the next 10 years... you are underwriting – guaranteeing -- a nice little income for the entire 10 years to come! That could be significant for someone who is middle aged now, but may be ready to exit the workforce and take it easy a few years later.

The book bandit, the lucky book buyer, like Johnny Depp in “*The Ninth Gate*” who lassos in all these book hoards, is guaranteeing himself a living wage just off his collectibles alone, unless the unthinkable happens and every trace of book culture and learning and academic and literary love of old books is lost for all time under the sands of the rising seas of a dismal new age. But usually a horde of collectibles, even when they're not sold immediately, may generate all

the income you might need, even when there is NO other income coming in.

## **PART TWO**

### **THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SUB-WHOLESALE BUYING OPPORTUNITIES THAT CAN MAKE YOU RICH!**

#### **GARAGE SALES**

These take place in homes with garages or carports although often the sale items spill out onto the driveway and front porch. In some parts of the country, there are literally NO garages, only carports, so the term “garage sale” is hardly even used. These may or may not be good opportunities. Beware of sales that happen again and again at the same address. If that's the case, then look elsewhere, for these 'repeat sales' are never places to find any *real* valuables, since most of the time it is the same old 'leftovers' the family is attempting to sell. Garage sales are better than yard sales, however, but not as good as moving sales.

#### **YARD SALES**

Yard sales are inferior to garage sales because the stuff is out there literally in the yard or on the lawn, or up and down the driveway; the moisture gets into the stuff in the morning, then the sun beats down all afternoon, taking value right out of various collectibles. The WORST yard sales are the ones that advertise children's clothes and toys because I have yet to see a sale like that had much in the way of collectibles. Families with a cluster of young children rarely have valuable collectibles to offer. The kids might have broken them all by now, anyway! Ya gotta love the families that advertise a yard sale with the words: “*Baby Sale! Everything goes!*” I always half-expect there will be a baby for sale.

#### **MOVING SALES**

Moving sales are better than either Yard or Garage Sales, and just about 'tied' with Estate Sales for the best chance of striking it rich on a Saturday morning that you will probably ever have! For one thing, the people putting on the moving sale are motivated sellers – they HAVE

to sell – they are moving out of town, or across town, or combining families – and so they will often let various items go very cheaply. If YOU want to make money, you have to BUY at the RIGHT PRICE!! Don't overpay or you may not get your investment back no matter what you do. In Moving Sales, YOU HAVE ALL THE ADVANTAGES ON YOUR SIDE! Please note: Moving sales often start on a Friday and end on a Sunday, or in the case of someone who has to leave the premises or is due to be in another city, the sale could happen on a Wednesday or a Thursday! You will do much, much better if you show up at ANY sale on the FIRST day of the sale, in fact, the first HOUR of the sale, than at any other time. I can't tell you how many times I've regretted being ten minutes late for a sale... only to find my 'competition' took ALL the good stuff in that short time!

### ESTATE SALES

Estate Sales and Moving Sales are just about “tied” as far as their natural advantages for money-making individuals like you. The point of an estate sale is that someone has died or gone into a nursing home or hospital, and the person's effects, often in much the way he or she left them, are all for sale. That is the GOOD part. The BAD part is that, unlike garage, yard, and moving sales, Estate Sales are often operated by a team of unpleasant, overly-official middle-aged ladies who sometimes make it hard to get a bargain. Often, they are not allowed to negotiate or make any kind of quantity deals. There is usually a three-tiered sales agenda. On the first day of the sale, usually but not always a Friday, items have a certain price, the highest price of the sale. Hardcover books might be \$3.00 to \$5.00 each and paperbacks \$1.00. DVD's might be \$5.00 each. Postcards and comics might be \$1.00 each.

If you come back the next day, the prices are down by about 50%. And if you come back the third day of the sale (usually, but not always, a Sunday), books might all be 25 to 50c, postcards and comics might be 10 to 25c, the point by then is to sell the leftovers for whatever price and leave the place as empty as possible! Just like moving sales, it behooves the serious shopper to arrive early, and maybe bring a friend. Estate Sales in good neighborhoods often attract a lot of people, so don't be surprised if there's a line at the door.

The terrible, awful, horrible thing about these lines at estate sales is that usually only SOME of the people in line get let into the house, and the rest of the people have to stand around like dolts for 20 minutes. By the time they get into the house, the autographed Arthur Conan Doyles and Impressionist paintings have been tucked under people's arms and have

already left the premises. Sometimes you can see beaming buyers displaying the loot they got as they leave the house...before many people in the line even get in! This waiting has an additional negative effect, it keeps you from getting to the NEXT SALE!! It can ruin a morning, in fact. So I would usually choose to go to a moving sale instead of an estate sale – UNLESS – an ad had appeared that said exactly what was going to be on sale at the Estate Sale, and then, if it was my kind of item, I might not be able to resist going – but I would get there early enough that I would NOT have to be turned away at the door while one cluster of hungry shoppers and 'scouts' tore up the place looking for the really good stuff!

### **RUMMAGE SALES AND CHURCH SALES**

These are often “one day” events, since churches will have them on Saturday only, and then everyone goes to church on Sunday! This schedule is reversed for sales held by Jewish temples! Rummages can be good, if there is a lot of NEW material up for sale, and it is hard to tell what might have been donated to the church since their last sale was held! Sometimes I've been to a rummage sale 2 years in a row and found the stock was almost identical, meaning the church or other organization is trying to sell-off the same old stuff!

Sometimes sales held by private organizations like “*Friends of the Earth*”, “*Chihuahua Lovers*”, “*Biker's Club*”, etc., can be excellent, but it depends on who brings what, and if they want to get rich, or if they want to sell at a reasonable price. At times the rummage organization is really trying to make some money, so there may not be any bargains to be found.

### **CHARITY STORES**

I have given up searching for collectibles in charity stores. Without pointing any fingers, I need only mention that scandals have occurred in recent years in which managers and district managers of charity stores have colluded with antique dealers, rare book sellers, etc., to privately offer and privately sell ALL and ANY old, valuable items that are donated or are obtained as estates from deceased former owners. The quality of these collections is often excellent and valuable, and the way to KNOW 100% FOR SURE that your charity stores in your area are “keeping the really good stuff” and selling it separately, is to just go into the charity store and look around in any section that has the kinds of collectibles you want. If you go to the BOOK section, for instance, you will see lots & lots of romance novels, undistinguished hardcover fiction, uninteresting non-fiction, text books, worn-out children's

paperbacks, very ordinary magazines, and the like.

WHERE did ALL the COLLECTIBLE books go that people donated to the charities? Well, in the San Jose, California area about 10 years ago, or so, the valuable items were all siphoned off and kept by a ring of managers, or sold for cash, and a ton of money was found in the home freezer, etc. The charities were being embezzled by their own employees – up to and including managers and district managers! So, I ask you! Take ONE TRIP to each one of your local charity stores and see if there's anything good at all. If you fail to find anything of value, then you know the *crème-de-la-creme* has been siphoned off, perhaps into the hands of rich dealers. Then you can cross that store off your list, and never have to ever go there again!

### AUCTIONS & 'STORAGE' AUCTIONS

Yes, it is possible to obtain excellent, high value items at auctions, just don't get into a BIDDING WAR and end-up paying full retail value for the items! A bad auction to go to is one in which there are 30, 40, 50 or more people, waiting to bid. That could be a big waste of time, as prices go up, and values go down. Small, unheralded “rainy day” auctions might work, though. The best auctions are those in which you can carefully examine the merchandise and the contents of boxes well before the auction takes place. If an auction house is known for their furniture, jewelry, etc., you may be able to get whole boxes of art books, etc., very cheaply, since this is NOT what people go there to get !

Storage Locker Auctions can be very scary, because often nobody is allowed in the unit, the contents of which are going to be auctioned off, so nobody can even see what's in a box! And to make it worse, most often the WHOLE STORAGE LOCKER is offered for sale in ONE BID, so you have to buy the WHOLE CONTENTS. To make matters worse, the rule is, you have to empty the locker by the end of the day or within a day or two, depending on where the auction takes place. So! Imagine with me... you are standing almost in the doorway of a storage locker that has about 50 or 60 closed-up packing boxes. You can't even HEFT a box to see how heavy it is, and they certainly won't let you look INSIDE the box!

So, what are the boxes worth to you? \$1 each? Somebody is sure to outbid you. \$3 each? You might be paying too much, especially if it turns out they're all filled with OLD TELEPHONE BOOKS or READERS' DIGEST, or 1980's--2000's MAGAZINES. And no matter what's in the box, you have to remove it within hours, or a couple of

days... and if you don't, there are penalties!

Imagine clearing out a locker filled with 75 boxes of *totally worthless junk* that's not even worth the labor of putting into a dumpster, if you had a dumpster big enough. I notice most storage companies LOCK their dumpsters because they do NOT want their clients dumping unwanted stuff into THEIR dumpsters! It is a hard-to-win scenario. Only if you have an inkling, a rumor of a report that there are *autographed Hemingway First Editions* in there, or the like, would I get myself tempted by showing up at such a sale.

My former wife, two friends & I showed up at a Bekins auction some years ago. I ended up with a box for \$6 that was filled with several hundred eyeglass frames, and my buddy paid \$5 and got a box filled with whips, chains, and a customer list that had belonged to some 'Madam.' Our wives were outraged and we never went back to another sale!

### **ANTIQUE SHOWS**

The most ridiculous thing I've ever heard is people going to antique shows looking for "bargains". In my experience, even in the most out-of-the-way hamlet, antique shows are peopled with professionals who know how to squeeze every bit of money out of a collectible. Let me prove this to you. There was a series on BBC recently in which a couple of guys or girls "off the street", none to smart, most of them, just everyday folks, were give a hundred pounds each and taken to an antique show or fair, and told to buy items they might sell at a profit – at an auction!

Well, even with experts advising and interceding, trying to help them find something decent to buy, it was found that 80% to 90% of the time, *no matter what* they bought at the antique shows, LOST MONEY when offered-up at auctions. What the producers of the BBC program had overlooked was the basic fact that Antique Shows are put on by people squeezing as much money as possible out of their collectibles, whereas an Auction is a place where people look for bargains and will absolutely NOT pay "top retail dollar". So... my advice? Avoid antique shows if you want to find cheap collectibles. You just won't find any!

### **DOOR-TO-DOOR, PHONE & INTERNET**

Why wait for someone to put something out for sale? Go to their house instead! This doesn't necessarily mean "cold calling", knocking on the

doors of unsuspecting householders! This might mean spreading some one-page flyers in a nice neighborhood of older homes and saying you will be in town the following week purchasing stamp collections, Kewpie dolls and teddy bears, comics, or paperback books, etc. They can call you at a number given on the sheet if they have something, or tell them to leave any unwanted books in boxes or bags on their porch on Monday so & so, for pick-up! And then go out, door to door, or have some teenagers go out with you (or for you!) and see if anyone's thoughtfully left you any valuables! It may seem a bit far fetched, but it DOES work! If you put the image of a smiling door or a family picture or something on the flyer, people may feel confident enough to give you their items. You will do ten times MORE business if you say you are PAYING CASH for items, that way they get the stuff together for you, and you can choose what to buy and what not to buy, and how much to offer. You may make some people angry or disappointed if they thought their coverless Zane Gray western romance was worth \$100 or more, but you are teaching them the value of things.

Phoning people in a town or neighborhood with a good, clever, warm-hearted story... no scams, now! You don't want to be evicted from that town after midnight, do you? Just tell them the truth, you're a collector and you're paying cash for old \_\_ whatever it is you want! Don't be too specific, if you say you are collecting ships in a bottle or snuff boxes or DC comics, you will get a much, much smaller response than if you say "old collections of things". One line I used to use, was: "Do you have any old books you're not reading anymore?" Because most everyone has books they're not reading anymore! Follow my instructions and you will do far, far better than average and soon the only problem you will have is STORAGE SPACE to put your burgeoning horde of old, valuable collectibles!

### CONCLUSION

I had the pleasure a few years ago of realizing that the total value of my book horde was worth about TWICE what my house was worth! That is a good feeling to have... a feeling of comparative security! That means a lot in today's world!

If you accumulate a treasure trove worth, say, \$1,000,000, and sell it over a 10 year period for \$100,000 per year, that's not bad, is it? And if you paid only *a few thousand dollars*, that's right, \$2,000 or \$3,000 to build up that \$1,000,000 value, then you've really done alright! In fact, it is hard to imagine a better way to

'mint' money, and right at home, unless you have a press that turns

molten gold into solid gold coins!

*All The Best Luck* to you in using my techniques and strategies to become rich in old books and other collectibles!

### -- PART THREE --

#### **You Don't Want to Buy Wholesale -- You Want to Buy SUB-Wholesale!**

Wholesale, as you probably know, is usually 40 to 60% of retail. When *Borders Books* or *Barnes & Noble* stocks a book for sale, the publisher sells it to them at, say, a 40% discount, then the bookstore offers it for 100% of suggested retail price. This price is generally pre-printed on the upper corner of the dust jacket's front 'flap', so there is no question what the suggested price is. This gives the retailer a bit of wiggle-room in case they want to sell more copies by making a small reduction. These mega-stores can eke out a nice profit by selling lots of copies of lots of different titles, but they are huge attractive warehouses with similarly huge operating expenses, lots of employees, sitting on expensive real estate, burning up enough electricity in one day to operate an ordinary house for six months, so they'd better make money, and they are at risk because they only have the 'window of profit' which stands between wholesale and retail. What's worse for them is that very seldom, except when they order big 'job lots' of mega-copies of certain popular titles at a very low print-per-copy price, they cannot take advantage of Sub-Wholesale Purchasing.

But...guess what? You can!

#### **Defining What *Sub-Wholesale* Is**

A mark-up of **40 to 60%** defines the classic case of a wholesale purchase followed by a retail sale. Any item that can be marked-up in price **no less than 200%** compared to the price you bought it for, and preferably higher, is how I define a **sub-wholesale** purchase.

This means that, let's say you discover, very happily, that a box you

bought “sight unseen” at a 'Van and Storage' auction for \$5.00 contains 100 eyeglass frames, and you sell the whole box for \$50.00 to a local optometrist, and thus your \$5.00 has gone up **10X** or **1000 percent**. Or, you discover that the chinchilla you bought for \$25.00 is pregnant, and you soon have four chinchillas, and two years later, twelve chinchillas, almost enough for somebody to wonder if they shouldn't try to make a fur coat for their sweetheart! But instead, you sell all 12 chinchillas for \$50.00 each, a total of \$600.00. So, in two years, your \$25.00 investment has risen to \$600.00, **24X** your original cost. **That's 2400 percent.** (Of course in this case, the cost of feeding, caring for, and housing the little guys has to be deducted from the gross profit, but you'd still have a tidy sum).

It doesn't get much better than that, does it? Well, actually, *yes it does*, as I have proven again and again in my own purchases and sales.

### **The Best I Ever Did...**

One day I my ladyfriend Nikki and her girlfriend Stacy were going to various estate sales in the West San Jose, Campbell, and Willow Glen areas of the Santa Clara Valley. I was in a separate vehicle but caught up with them in an average suburb just outside Willow Glen. “There's an estate sale down that street,” Stacy said. “It's the third day, but I saw a few books and things.” I would ordinarily not go to the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of an estate sale, moving, or garage sale, simply because all the really good stuff is gone by the end of the first day—everyone knows that! Surely by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> day. Here I was, I couldn't believe it, going to a flippin' Sunday edition of an estate sale that started on Friday morning! I must have been crazy! But I persevered and braved the crowd, which was big, even on the third day, probably because it was off-season and there wasn't a tremendous variety of sales to visit. I walked around trying to spot the books Stacy had mentioned, but found a pitiful handful of old paperback children's books, some folded-up maps that used to be inside recent National Geographic magazines, and a bound journal, the kind people write budgets, diets, shopping lists and other such nonsense in. I picked up and quickly thumbed through the journal.

What I saw inside the covers made me put the book under my arm and walk over to the table where a solid middle-aged woman hunkered over an adding machine. “Just this,” I muttered. The woman looked at me as if I was some kind of idiot.

“10 cents”, she said.

Yes, during the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of this sale, the prices had plunged from \$1.00 or \$2.00 a book the first day, to 50c to \$1.00 the second day, to 10c for “any book” the third day. They had done an awesome job, because this was one of the only books remaining! But what surprised me was that no one out of hundreds of people who had gone throughout the house, examining every nook and cranny, every item, had recognized this little journal had something to say for itself..

### **The Joy of a Valuable Discovery!**

It was the hand-written journal, kept by a young college graduate who'd become a sailor, recording the voyage of an American scientific expedition up the West Coast from San Francisco to Alaska and Siberia in the summer of 1883. An old, folded, yellow-colored press clipping from the previous year, 1882, was tucked between several interior pages. It mentioned this same gentleman's graduation from an Ivy League university and the fact he was planning to make some voyages the following year. The journal was his day-to-day account of leaving San Francisco in June, sailing up to Alaska, and then a path of discovery and adventure in Alaska and then Siberia. He explained the hunting methods and exploits of the local native tribes, and he appended a glossary at the end, written in columns, giving “Eskimaux”, English, and Siberian words for various plants, animals, and objects.

It looked like a good book to me, so I put it up for sale on ABE, the Advanced Book Exchange, and had a buyer from a university-area bookstore within a couple of weeks who offered me about \$850.00 for the book. I've forgotten if it was \$840 or \$860, but it was somewhere close to \$850. total. It was hard to assess the actual value of this historical and scientific item, but I figured I'd only paid 10c for the item, so I gladly sold it for the \$850.00.

That was one of my best **sub-wholesale** purchases EVER because it led to a sale that netted me an **eight hundred thousand percent (800,000%) profit**. HOW did I come up with those percentages? Well, if you buy something for 10c and sell it for \$1.00 you've made a 10X markup, or 1,000%. So, if you sell something for (\$850), that's a  $1,000\% \times 850 = 850,000\%$  profit! *Got it? Good!*

You may think my situation was very special, and it was. Yet the truth is, situations just like that occur every single day in this country... you just have to look for them, and then recognize them when you're looking at them! Perhaps a thousand buyers went through that ranch-

style home on the Friday and Saturday and Sunday morning before I got to the house. But none of them spotted this little gem, all of them, for reason or reasons unknown, skipped right over it. They made assumptions that because it was on a “10c table” it must not be worth looking at! I made no such assumptions, so I walked away with the prize... But so can you!

### **Be Sincere, Prayerful and Honest in Your Quest!**

I'm a firm believer in good karma and bad karma... I've seen it work too many times not to believe in it! Simply put: What goes around, comes around. Ye shall reap as ye sow. Idiots say things like: “No good deed goes unpunished!” Life is a continuing lesson in the fact that good deeds are remembered, and so are bad ones. Good things happen for those who apply themselves diligently, and honestly, in their quest. “*God helps those who help themselves*”, is another way of saying this age-old cosmic truth!

One day when I had lived several years in Henderson, Nevada, I was out of cash and Mom was sick in bed, I didn't even have the cash to move around town and get groceries because the car was stuck in the carport. Our nearest relative was 600 miles away and they frankly didn't seem to care very much what happened to either of us. I went out to the car and rummaged through the car and trunk, looking for spare change. Then I remembered, I'd done this a week ago. So I didn't find a single penny in that car, not even after rummaging through everything in the trunk!

So I had a rare prayerful moment, I welled up with tears, and I actually LOOKED UP TOWARD HEAVEN and said, “Please, Lord! Can you help me?” As I lowered my wet eyes back to earth, I noticed the old piece of carpet that was in the far corner of the carport, it was laid on top of something. I was suddenly curious at what was under this odd piece of left-over carpeting. I lifted it and peered underneath. A couple of shiny, well-fed black widow spiders stared back at me from around the edges of four packing boxes, white boxes with tops that had been left out here at the end of my moving to Nevada from California a few years earlier. I didn't think I'd find anything of particular value, because these boxes had been there for more than three years, subject to heat, cold, and dampness. But I was wrong! The carpet had perfectly preserved everything under them, and a couple of boards under the boxes had saved them from any dampness. Two of the boxes were junk, one was knick-knacks, and the fourth box was old record albums, LP's from long ago. I carefully approached the box and separated it from the others and brushed aside some cobwebs, and shifted the

contents around to discourage any black widows, then grabbed the box and hefted it (record albums are heavy!) and took it inside the house. These were records my ex-wife and I had put away around 1974, and she'd never returned for them or mentioned them again, and I had forgotten about their existence. Now, here it was, almost 30 years later, and here were these old records, intact.

### **An Astonishing Discovery – Sent From Heaven!**

One of the first record albums that I took out and examined was *“Introducing the Beatles”*, I immediately got on-line and *Googled-up* this album title, skipped the 'discographies' which told all about the nature of the album and the making of the album and its individual songs, and went straight for listings of value.

I immediately found out that there were a number of different 'variants' of this album, both for the cover and the vinyl itself. For example, later versions had a slightly different line-up of songs. Later versions had the album contents, etc. on the back of the album cover, but the first version had 12 little 'thumbnail' photos of other Capitol album covers, with no mention of the Beatles at all! I carefully noted which 'points' my album had!

I checked and double checked, and even when I felt pretty sure about what I had, I e-mailed two different Beatles record album experts, one in Los Angeles, the other in New York, describing the album as minutely as I could. This version showed all four Beatles on the front cover, and, although this wasn't part of the official description, I noticed the photo was trimmed in such a way that you can just see the last digit of Paul McCartney's thumb sticking up at the bottom edge of the photo.. I thought this was funny. Another copy of a later version of this album that I also had, has the Paul McCartney photo trimmed differently.

Both experts subsequently e-mailed me back, saying, more or less the same thing: *“Yes, if you have the one with the 12 other Capitol albums pictured on the back of the album cover, and if the record includes the song: 'such-and-such', (I forget now, which one it was!) then you have the first version. You should insure it and send it to me, I'd like to see it and make you an offer,”* etc. I looked in the record album Price Guide I had, which was actually a few years old. This particular version of *“Introducing the Beatles”*, if in mint condition, was listed as being worth **\$20,000.00**. Wow! **Twenty thousand dollars!** An

hour earlier I had felt like the poorest man in the world and begging for help from heaven. Can you imagine how I felt at *that* moment?

So, within an HOUR of fervently praying for my deliverance from financial danger, I was rewarded with the discovery of something SO precious as to stagger belief, yet something I already owned and didn't even *know* I owned. Or, I had *plumb forgotten* that I ever owned it! I'd certainly lost track of it, yet there it had been, in the corner of my carport, for more than 3 years! By the way, the record itself was not anywhere near mint condition, so the value was less than the price guide indicated. The record album cover was in 'fine' condition, there wasn't a mark on it, but the record itself had been carelessly used and scratched, which is a common condition to find old record albums in. Fortunately the jacket or cover itself had great value, aside from just the record, and this was enough to immediately get me out of the trouble I was in! I don't think I would have discovered the album in time for it to help me, if I hadn't been standing in the carport when I made that prayer! So... this is certainly a practical answer "YES" to the question "does prayer help?" And it also points up how "*being in the right place at the right time*" helps anyone to discover something valuable!

Of course you can sincerely pray for help from above, I know from several other events in my life that prayer helps. But to make sure you maximize your many, nearly *constant* opportunities for success, you should always try to "**be in the right place at the right time**", and since we're talking about rarities among collectibles, that means, put yourself where you might discover a true rarity. Get yourself to the point where you're not just going to yard sales, garage sales, moving and Estate Sales, Charity Stores, Auctions, Flea Markets, etc., but where you find a way of getting in "*on a ground floor level*" to be THE FIRST to select the most valuable gems from the fertile soil of a big assortment of items. Doing this effectively will make you rich!

Often this means being the first person that comes out to someone's house when '*grandpa*' has passed away and left a house full of antiques, knick-knacks, old postcards, old books, stamps, magazines – whatever! -- it's "all good". The heirs want this 'stuff' disposed of as soon as possible and want to get as good a price for it as they can. Maybe they are busy people who are not inclined to go through 10,000 items and try to evaluate their value, if any. Or, they know they're not experts and want someone who knows more about this stuff than they do. Another real possibility which I have seen again & again, is they are "Don't Wanters" and are in a tremendous hurry to "get rid of all the junk" so they can clean-up the house and put it on the market, sell it, and divide

a few hundred thousand dollars between them. What they often fail to perceive is that “grandpa” may have known what he was doing, and the stuff in the house he left behind may be worth two or three times what the real estate is worth! This is where you come in – if you're both lucky enough, and smart enough, to get yourself into this enviable situation of having the “first look” at a potential treasure-trove.

### **“Lucky” Enough versus “Smart” Enough!**

You must admit, there is “Lucky” and there is “Smart”. Smart is good. Lucky is better! To find the hidden gems, you need either one or the other, but having BOTH makes you a SURE winner! Let me explain. Cheryl Smith want to buy and sell knick-knacks from home. She knows she will save lots of money by not having to pay for any kind of store, and figures she'll make plenty of money on the Internet from buyers around the world. That's certainly one way to go about it, and people just like her sure made E-Bay rich! Let's say Cheryl starts out with a collection she's built up over 25 years, including the heirlooms from two sets of grandparents! She start out with 1,000 knick knacks that are worth an average of \$40 each, and at first she does pretty well. But after a year, she's down to 700 knick knacks and they're getting “shop-worn”, people have seen them described again and again. They are getting harder and harder to sell at the same rate, and for the same kind of profit. Then she's on E-Bay auctions one summer – one of those long hot summers! -- and there are no takers! I swear, every potential 'bidder' in the world has suddenly gone 'up to the Lake' and even auctions on mighty E-Bay become futile. She is spending \$4 or \$5 for every auction, but only one in three auctions sells at all, and these for low prices.

Now she gets a phone call from Emma Emmett who heard about her. “Grandma Emmett has gone into a nursing home and the house is full of knick-knacks! Can you come over and have a look?” Unfortunately for both parties, Cheryl is near the end of her knick-knack 'rope', she's in no mood to be buying anything, she wants to sell-sell-sell, and here's someone offering to sell her even more stuff... she turns her down!

Pretty soon Cheryl, like many others, with heavy shipping fees for the things she recently sold, but no new cash coming in from successful auctions, becomes hugely disappointed, gets a regular job again and puts the knick-knack business on the back shelf! What's worse, the BEST of her BEST knick-knacks are gone, and she has left the ones that were not worth the most to the buyers out there on the Internet. This puts her in a sour mood generally, and she may have lost all faith in E-Bay and the Internet. What she NEEDED was a 'shot in the arm' or

a kick in the pants, at some point, such as she'd have gotten if she could have updated and improved her inventory somewhere along the line, to get fresh items up for sale, and not to let her things get shop-worn. But she was dealing out of her home or apartment, not getting any new stuff (she thought she had more than enough!) and concentrating on selling her existing products! So, what went wrong? She still puzzles over that today, working in as a temp all day for just over minimum wage!

Meanwhile Dee Dee Short on the other side of town had only 500 knick knacks, when she got into business, but she started a little store. She went out on weekends looking for additional items (following my suggestion in my E-Book: *"How to Get Rich by Going to Garage Sales, Yard Sales, Estate and Moving Sales."*) And everywhere she stopped, even if the sale was a waste of time, without so much as a broken plastic kazoo to take home, she left a business card or a little flyer, looked the householder straight in the eye and smiled, shook hands if it seemed appropriate. The flyer said she BOUGHT--SOLD-- & TRADED knick-knacks. The same kinds of knick-knacks her friend over yonder, Cheryl Smith, was selling. All during the next week, a few people, every day or two, drifted into Dee Dee's store. A friend of someone she'd left a flyer came in, looked around, and returned that afternoon with a box full of knick-knacks and let

Dee Dee select which ones she wanted, and at a very reasonable price.

The very next day, a lady called Dee Dee on the phone. Her name was Emma Emmett. "Grandma Emmett has had to go into a nursing home. She collected knick-knacks all her life, the house is so full of them, I don't know where to start! I just HAVE to get rid of some! Could you come over and have a look, please?" Dee Dee was glad to accept. She came out to the house. In the backseat of her car she had several reference books, each for a different kind of collectible. These were tools of the trade for her!

When she arrived, the first thing Emma said was, "thank you for coming out! I called several other antique and knick-knack people and they all asked me to bring my things in to show them, you were the only one who agreed to come out to the house!" So they were both pleased at that. Dee Dee had a quick look and identified some old teddy bears and dolls that she was SURE had value, as well as some Wedgwood and attractive circus glassware that Grandma Emmett had collected. "I don't want to 'cherry-pick' and just take a little of this, and leave the rest, although I know others do that.. I will give you \$500 for everything, and take it all off your hands, so you don't have to worry about what to do with left-over items. I can have it all out of here right

away, if you like!” “\$500 is a little less than I had hoped for.” “We can also do this. I can buy about half of it for \$250 cash, and take the rest on consignment, and we split the profits when it sells.” “That's too complicated and would take a while, so can you go \$600?” “How about \$550?” So the deal was made for all the knick-knacks for \$550. Dee Dee wrote her a check, and since she owned and operated an actual store, this method of payment was satisfactory to Emma. If someone who didn't have a store had offered her a personal or even a company *check*, she might have well-advised to insist on getting cash, instead. The 'moment' might have been lost. By the time the dealer returns, the seller might have locked up the house and driven away, or just changed their mind. Some smart dealers who don't tremble in fear of their personal safety, bring cash, since the sight of cash will make many sellers say the magic word, “*Sold!*” I know that's worked for me in the past!

Dee Dee spends hours carefully wrapping object d'art in the pages of newspapers and putting these into packing boxes with handles and taking them, a dozen boxes at a time, back to her store. She is almost wondering if all this effort is worth it, until she settles down behind her laptop and hits-up some toy and teddy bear databases. Emma would have been better off to accept Dee Dee's consignment arrangement, because there are many thousands of dollars' worth of toys, dolls, and teddy bears represented in this collection! Dee Dee researches the items scrupulously and prices them fairly – not asking the highest prices, nor ready to give them away for the very lowest prices, either – and finds, by the time she's finished an inventory of the Emmett collection, that she's obtained items worth more than \$15,000 in retail value. At this point, if she was at a time in life where she was desperate for funds, she could mark all these items for less than what anybody else was offering theirs for sale, both on the Internet, and in her store, and she would quickly recover every cent she'd paid, and lots more on top of that. But she is not anxious to immediately get her investment back or to turn a fast profit, so she lists it for a total of about \$12,000, only 20% under its full retail value. It takes her 6 months to do it, but she sells almost all of it, thus her \$550 turns into nearly \$12,000, more than 20X what she paid. This is considered taking merchandise from **sub-wholesale** all the way up to **full retail**. This is the kind of money-maker that, repeated often enough, with good enough merchandise, will make a person rich! Dee Dee Short was able to do what Cheryl Smith could not. Cheryl was offered this same collection at a critical point of her business career, but she turned down even going out to LOOK at the offered collectibles. This was VERY WRONG of her, and yet, my experience on both sides of the fence as both a buyer and a seller has made me aware that only ONE DEALER IN TEN will actually visit someone's home to look at even a GOOD-

sounding collection.

Dee Dee Short started out with only HALF as many collectibles, worth approximately half as much, as Cheryl Smith did. Yet a year later, Cheryl Smith was out of business but Dee Dee Short was going strong! Strangely, Dee Dee opened a store and was paying a thousand dollars more every month to keep the doors open and the lights on in that store, and yet she STILL did better than Cheryl. The main differences were, Dee Dee was willing to visit people's homes and make bids, on a rock-bottom-basis, when he realized she was dealing with a "DON'T WANTER" who controlled a valuable collection. Let me put in a word here for taking a profit! Even though Dee Dee had a good idea that Emma's antiques were worth more than \$5,000, perhaps \$10,000 or more, she didn't wring her hands about feeling she needed to make Emma the prime beneficiary of all this wealth. She didn't insist that Emma take an extra thousand dollars or two thousand dollars. Why? Because Emma was a DON'T WANTER!! She was perfectly happy to dispose of the collection of knick-knacks for \$550, and that was the agreed-upon price.

### **Questions of 'What's a Fair Price'**

It is absolutely relevant to ask and worry about what's "fair" in the sub-wholesale, wholesale, and retail marketplace. People who sold you a box of old books for \$5.00, may be appalled to learn, at some later time, that one of those books turned out to be worth \$500. But finding bargains at a sub-wholesale level is what keeps the store owner in business. When I had a used & rare book store.. it wasn't the price I sold my books at that made me money, it was the price I had to PAY to GET the books I sold. This is the reason why so many independent NEW BOOK STORES have gone out of business. They had to pay slightly more to get smaller assortments of books from the big New York City publishers than the folks who run Borders and Barnes & Noble. Just a few percentage points can drive someone out of business. A used & rare collectibles seller has the same problem. That person who paid \$5.00 and found a \$500 book at the bottom of the box... If they had paid \$20.00 for every box of books that came in the door, they'd have been out of business very quickly. \$5.00 might have been paying too much, in fact, because what if that exceptional \$500.00 book had NOT been there? That's what justifies low prices on the sub-wholesale end: It costs money to run a business and keep the lights turned on! Besides. If the person with the \$500.00 book had the slightest knowledge of books, they might have realized that this particular book needed a bit of research before it was included in a box

and submitted to the local bookseller!

Dee Dee didn't wring her hands in anxiety over *“not having enough money right now to pay what all these wonderful antiques are worth!”* like I myself did once (and once only!) many years ago when I got into the used & rare collectibles business. She didn't kill the sale by making Emma stop and think about how valuable this stuff she wanted only to get rid of, might really be worth!

So, you must keep in mind, even if you have the heart of **Mother Theresa** and the soul of **St Francis of Assisi**, you are under no obligation to go out of business next year because you didn't try to make a decent profit out of a really GOOD deal you could have made, this year!

### **Suggested “Guilty Conscience” Compromise**

When I found my \$850.00 journal that was priced at 10c, there was nobody to feel cheated. It was the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of a big Estate Sale. Someone screwed-up by not properly evaluating the material. Gosh knows what else sold at what price before I got to that sale! But whoever had owned it, had left his property and affairs to heirs or had hired Estate Sales agents, etc., so there was nobody to feel used and abused when I realized a book they'd priced at 10 cents was a huge bargain. But in the day-to-day business of collectibles, you may encounter situations where it is possible that 'hard feelings' could be generated. These situations should be avoided at all times, and one should be just as 'fair and square' as they can possibly be.

But, do you know what? If I come up to a garage sale and the man sitting there tells me, *“any book, 25c”*, and if I find an early 18<sup>th</sup> Century calf-bound book of philosophy, I will first look around to see if there are any more books like that for sale, then I will hold the book in one hand as I slip a Washington commemorative quarter into the seller's hand with the other, “one book, is all”, I'll say tersely, almost like I'm angry because I couldn't find anything good, and walk away without so much as bidding him adieu. What I WON'T do is be the one to exclaim: “Um, excuse me, sir! This book you have marked for 25c was published in London in 1726 and appears to be a hitherto unknown book on philosophy and mathematics by Sir Isaac Newton. It has gilt on the covers and spine, and is signed on the title page by the author. This book is probably worth more than one million dollars. I suggest you take this book into the house and hide it under the bed until you

have a better idea what you're doing!"

By the way, I was at a sale on The Alameda on the border between Santa Clara and San Jose about 10 years ago where books were clearly priced: "Hardcovers, \$1.00". I immediately spied a bookcase that had just a handful, 9 or 10, old leather-bound hardcovers, beautifully printed and from the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, I took one look and realized INSTANTLY these books were worth \$50 to \$100 or more apiece, I saw this quality of leather so very, very rarely! I didn't even OPEN the books up. I literally grabbed an armful of these books, a "test purchase", to see if I could accomplish a sale and then come back from the car and buy more, and was fishing money out of my pocket with my other hand, when an older, very distressed gentleman approached,

*"No, no, no! Oh, my God! My merciful Jesus! These are not part of the sale!"* And he actually reached out and took the pile of books right out of my arms.

*"Hannah! How did these books get out here?"*

"I don't know dear, I thought you said you were selling all your books for \$1.00." Needless to say, I agreed with Hannah! I was hoping deep down that she would prevail. But at the very same time I knew that NO POWER ON EARTH except maybe a billy club or a taser would get a book devotee to agree to part with 18<sup>th</sup> Century leather-bounds for \$1.00 each---even if that WAS what was on the sign! I left, nursing my wounds, vowing to find some bargains somewhere else, and that is exactly what I ended up doing!

Here's something a person who is striving to find valuable items on a sub-wholesale basis can do, in those cases where the seller casts a wary eye on the proceedings, perhaps feeling instinctively, that his loot has value and doesn't want to let it go for a mere farthing or two. You could say, "I'll buy these items, and research them, and if I find that anything here is worth more than \$20 (or whatever value you set), I'll offer to give it back to you for whatever you paid for it." I would not do this myself, and I feel it does defeat the whole purpose of trying to get rich, or at least pay the bills. But if you feel like you are **channeling Mother Theresa**, or that you are the **new incarnation** of St. Francis of Assisi, and wish to do only benevolent things to those who wish to inflict their collectibles upon you, by all means, make any deals or promises you feel compelled to make. May it buy extra 'good karma' for you, even if it doesn't help you get rich beyond your wildest dreams!

## **Put On Your Traveling Shoes – You're Going to Visit Some Homes!**

Remember, the other lesson here for you, is, if you want to be burdened with a ton of valuable collectibles worth their weight in silver and gold, if you want your friends to ask, “WHERE did you get this FABULOUS treasure?” YOU MUST VISIT PEOPLE'S HOMES, there is no other way to go about it! You can't climb in through their windows at night, that wouldn't be very sporting, and it sets-up a wave of “bad karma” coming back at you, like I mentioned earlier! And you can't send “scouts” to do your bidding, either, they will end-up siphoning off the REALLY good stuff for themselves. No, if you want to get the valuable items, you HAVE to go get them! Besides, after a few years of working with these collectibles, no-one will know them as well as you do, you will be “The Expert” in your own or your neighborhood, people will trust you and seek you out... this will add more and more value to your business!

### **Trades Must Be Done Out of a Storefront!**

This being the neighborhood expert, particularly if you are thoughtful enough and smart enough to open an actual storefront, will almost help make you rich. Because with a storefront people will bring you their stuff! And, you can do TRADES. Believe me when I tell you, trades in things like old books and various other collectibles, are simply NOT POSSIBLE to do out of private homes, they HAVE to be done at stores. Why is that? It is because when Joe Smith, having separated and divorced and moving out of town, leaving his ex-wife Cheryl Smith behind, wants to see if 2 boxes of knick-knacks or old books are worth selling, will stop by a store and bring in the boxes to get a price. He will NOT stop at someone's private home!

## **PART FOUR**

### **Learning To Recognize A Hidden Gem!**

1. **Do be able, and willing, to read.** I'm not joking! Many individuals are averse to reading. But the ability to read has always, and will always, distinguish rich from poor, winner from loser! In this case, 'reading' starts with having a good look at the classified ads for

Saturday sales in either a regular newspaper or an on-line source of classifieds such as Craigslist, but it also applies to every other way in which reading is important: Such as in understanding the dates and editions on the copyright page of a book, the labels and markings on boxes, ceramics, and the particular markings on a stamp or a coin which shows when and where it was made. It is almost unbelievable how many people can't be bothered having a quick look at these little details which may make the difference between something that's ordinary and something that's precious.

**2. Identify where to go and how to get there!** The ad will say, "Main St. and Midland", or (like this past weekend) "One block west of John Muir School off Pima Street." But the important part is, if you saw the ad in a regular newspaper, circling it carefully along with any other similar good-looking ads, and taking that page of the paper with you in your travels on Saturday morning. Or, if you saw it on an on-line source, copying-out or printing off the appropriate descriptions and addresses. By all means, while you're on-line, use Google Maps or Yahoo Maps or whatever other map program you want to figure out exactly where you're going, and avoid disappointment of THINKING you knew where Pima Street was, but finding out you didn't by ending up at the wrong location!

**3. Get there early!** Although bargains can be had at any hour of the day, and your personal good fortune will bring them to you at the most unexpected times, it is axiomatic that the "early bird DOES catch the worm!", and if you want THE PRIZE, you need to get there EARLY. Do not let mates, kids, bosses, or anybody else stop you from getting to that good-sounding sale. There have been more occasions than I can count where I was told, "Oh! You JUST MISSED those collectibles, somebody was here 5 minutes ago and bought every last one!"

**4. Have the willingness to go out there & make a fortune.** I know some people who know antiques, and others who know books, and others who know sci-fi and comics, and so on. There are lots of experts and armchair experts out there, but all too often, they make the mistake of staying in their armchair! Almost nobody has the spark of unquenchable curiosity or wholehearted gusto to go out on Saturday mornings looking for all those quintessential bargains that are out there! I know this, because I probably asked them already if they want to go out looking for stuff, and they said 'No, thanks, but bring one back for me, would you?' If a passing motorist tossed a few \$100 bills at you, and they landed on the ground 10 feet from your, you might be

interested enough to take a few steps to go over and see what they were, and maybe retrieving them, wouldn't you? But people don't realize that when someone is a "DON'T WANTER!" they are throwing \$100 bills away, left and right, but they don't know it or at that point, they don't care, they just want to get rid of stuff. It is YOUR chance to make money in this situation. *Do not* hesitate to do so!

5. **Do have the most basic knowledge.** I walked into a used book shop once that was being run by people who were, literally, illiterate. It was frightening to see them price valuable and interesting hardcover books at cheaper prices than for mass market romance novels and spy thrillers! It was hard to tell them anything because they didn't want to admit they couldn't tell the letter "V" (for valuable) from the letter "J" (for junk!) The only letter of the alphabet they seemed to recognize was "\$" for money, and that wasn't even a letter of the alphabet. They were in business about a month and a half, then closed up shop over a three day weekend, and were gone. They had learned, much to their surprise, that the book business involved knowing how to read.

But all of us suffer from the lack of the most basic knowledge. All of us! If there's a blackout, I have a dickens of a time programming my VCR, TV, or Microwave oven so they stop flashing '888' or "12:00". And all of us have things we can and can't do as well or better than other people. But at some point a person has to realize, if they want to buy and sell collectibles, they have to learn about the subject.

6. **Bring along a database or at least a guide book.** Nobody can remember everything. Everyone has to sometimes take a guess! Don't be afraid to reach back and estimate a ballpark value. You can put someone off if they want to buy, but you can't put off a willing seller, you need to come to a price, or they will sell to someone else instead.. If you get it wrong, and pay a bit too much, you'll sure know better next time! But the ideal situation is if you can bring along some Scott's stamp books, or the Red Book of coins, or a couple of book auction "prices realized" books, or the like. Some day we may all be able to pluck WI-FI right out of the air, but in the meantime, there are little hand-held devices that will look up ISBN numbers on Amazon. I've seen guys with these hand-helds looking desperately at book after book, texting-in the ISBN numbers and getting data on whether that certain book is richly represented on Amazon, or only has a few copies "out there". If it is uncommon on Amazon, they may buy a copy. One day ever better ways may be devised. I personally don't think much of the hand-held / Amazon system, since the older, most valuable books

you're likely to find at a sale, won't even HAVE ISBN numbers . So it is the height of foolishness, in my opinion, to go clicking these little devices all day looking for a few recent books that are not exceptionally common, when that same person could be concentrating on finding old and possibly VERY valuable material, instead. I quibbled with one of them, but they'd learned to do this via some "E-Book" or other, so all I could do was shake my head and watch them waste hours "click click clicking" while the best books went to those buyers who opened the book to the title and copyright pages and sought-out older first editions, instead.

**7. Brush-up on a wide variety of collectibles:** When you drive up to the next Estate Sale or Moving Sale, most of the time you won't know what you're going to find there. If you are an expert at stamps and coins, what will you do if all they have at a particular sale is old record albums and books, or vice-versa? The more you LEARN about a wide variety of items, the more ADEPT you will be at discerning value and discovering situations in which people are truly offering you "something for nothing", or next to nothing! You will be a HERO if you learn enough to detect a rarity in just one or two different kinds of collectibles than you know already!

## A. BOOKS

**(1) How to recognize a notable or scholarly book.** A book published by a college or university is often scholarly. A treatise on an obscure subject may well be scholarly whereas a more general subject, may not. Books that were text books for someone's college or high school courses are not of much if any value, especially if the material is too old to be useful to today's students, yet not old enough to be of interest for that fact alone 100 year old textbooks may be of some value and interest. Browse the info on the cover, back cover, and flaps of the dust jacket to get a 'feel' for the quality and possible value of this book. . Check the copyright page, the page usually just past the title page itself, and see if it says "First Edition", "First Printing", or has a row of numbers that start with either 1 or 0, but NOT 2, 3, 4, or any other number. The 0 or 1 means it is probably a first edition and therefore has a bit more value, no matter what, than subsequent ones.

### **(2) Detect reprints from originals.**

Look at the publisher. Grosset & Dunlap reprinted the books of other publishers in large editions that were therefore, not of nearly so much interest or value. People always appreciate getting early editions by

original publishers whenever possible. Dover and Crown indicate more recent imprints, sometimes in special arrangements for mass-marketers like Barnes & Noble or Borders, etc. Crown and Dover books don't need to be tossed aside, but odds are, they are not of great value. Sometimes the small print will actually tell you that a certain book originally was published by, Unwin or Bodley Head or some other publisher in 1918, or whenever, and there may even be a whole chronology of publishing dates and editions. Usually the more editions a book has gone through, the less value it has. If a book has seen eight or twelve or fourteen printings, you can miss buying that particular book and not worry about having passed up some kind of rarity.

**(3) Recognize and discard nearly worthless text books.** Text books very often have a glossy and durable 'library'-type binding. They usually stand out as obviously being text-books, but without the merits of a scholarly, collectible text. Sometimes they will be stamped on the inside front cover with information about State Text Books or something similar, this means it might have been a high school text book., and is definitely not worthy of your attention, not unless it is at least 50+ years old. 100 years old is better! The farther back you go, the more valuable a text book becomes. Text books from the days of the Pilgrims and Puritans are now worth thousands of dollars, but such books turn up very rarely. There are certain publishers which account for most of the textbooks that are published, and you will soon recognize these on sight and discard their products as probably beneath being worthy of notice!**(4) Recognize and pass by those Book Club editions.** Book Club editions came out in literally millions of copies from about the 1930's on. They were printed on cheap paper and bound in cheap, pulp-like boards. You will get to a point of recognizing a book club edition on sight from 3 feet away, without it needing to have distinguishing dust-jacket flaps to tell you for sure that it's a book club edition. Those are the flaps which, usually at the bottom front, state: "Book Club Edition". There is no "First Edition" claim on the copyright page of a B.C. Edition. (These are also sometimes abbreviated: "BCE"s.). Be careful if you stumble onto a big hoard of book club editions, they do travel in packs, you know, like wild animals. If you see one, there might be 500 of them. Don't fall under the spell of their pretty dustjackets and think you will get your money back quickly if you pay \$1.00 each for them, it will be a very difficult task. Book Club editions usually are the last to sell, so you might have them on your hands for a long, long time, pretty dustjackets or not! Book Club books that don't have their dust covers anymore, or have torn jackets, or are in any way damaged, might as well be put in a barrel and sent to Bosnia or the Ukraine or Timbuktu where somebody might be happy to own one. Don't YOU end up owning bunches and bunches of Book Club editions!

There is one interesting peculiarity on Book Club editions of a certain age, and I mean those that are 30, 40, 50, 60 years old... and it is wise to know this following fact, because it will then be INCREDIBLY SIMPLE to DETECT A NEARLY-WORTHLESS Book Club edition IF the book doesn't have a dustjacket. Near the bottom right hand corner of the back cover there should be a little 'dimple', an impression that looks as if somebody took a sharp object and carefully indented the book about a sixteenth of an inch – or less. Anyway! That dimple, if present, unmasks the identity of such a book as a BOOK CLUB EDITION! If you have such books, without dustjackets, you might as well toss use 'em for kindling, or put them in a barrel and send 'em to the Ukraine.

To be fair, there are several OTHER “Book Clubs” which don't destroy the value of the book. One is any kind of “Mystery Book Club”, and the other is, any kind of “Science Fiction Book Club”. If you get some titles from these, then you needn't pass 'em up or toss 'em out, you may have a decent book after all, but you will have to look it up to make sure!

There is one oddball situation you may fall into if you're not careful! Some dustjackets for the past 20 years or so, proudly state: *“Selected to Be a Book Club 'Book of the Month' “* or similar wording. THAT DOES NOT MEAN THE BOOK YOU ARE LOOKING AT IS A BOOK CLUB, it means that the book received such good reviews and notices prior to publication, and/or the AUTHOR is a prize-winning or best-selling author, and so the book was picked-up by Book Club to be a Book of the Month, etc. before it even hit the streets! But the book you're holding may very well actually be a First Edition, so don't 'turf' it, just yet!

**(5) Recognize GENRES.** It is an acquired skill to be able to tell a book's genre from 5 feet away, I know I've learned how to do it! You just have to examine enough different kinds of books until you get this skill. Suffice it to say, there are books that can be categorized under HISTORY and others under HISTORICAL FICTION, and it ought to be obvious which is which. Here is a hint, though! Any book which you open which contains on-going conversations, with lines and paragraphs starting with quote marks ( “), is FICTION. Books of sheer description, rather than dialog, are more likely NON-FICTION. There is one genre for TRUE CRIME and another for MYSTERIES, DETECTIVE FICTION, etc. A dustjacket which describes a real crime, a REAL victim, and the hunt for a killer, etc., is probably a TRUE CRIME. Anything else is FICTION, and probably either a MYSTERY like books by or about: Hercule Poirot or Agatha Christie or Nero Wolfe, or Sherlock Holmes, Sue Grafton, etc. MYSTERY and

DETECTIVE FICTION sometimes overlap. THRILLER gets in there, sometimes too. There's thrillers, and there's horrors, and usually the covers will tell you which is which. You would never mix up a book by Stephen King with one by Agatha Christie, for instance.

**(6) Recognize FIRST EDITIONS.** On the other side of the title page, is the copyright page. This usually will contain the ISBN number and other data about the book and the edition. Often it will simply state: First Edition or sometimes First Printing. Both mean the same thing. Sometimes a book will say “Third Printing of the First Edition”, or some such nonsense. Even though it still says 'first edition', believe me, it is no longer the “first”, it is the third printing!

Since the 1970's or so, publishers have come up with a clever way to indicate editions or printings: They use a string of numbers. The string of numbers is sequential, but it could start with 1, or 9, or 0... But what you are hoping for, is for the numbers to start with #0 or #1, NOT with #2, 3, 4, or any other number except 0 or 1. If the string of numbers starts with 5 and ends with a 9 or 0, such as:

“ 5 6 7 8 9 0 “

then, God help you, you have a 5<sup>th</sup> printing. It must look like this:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 or: 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

for you to be sure you have a first printing. Even THEN you hope to see words to that effect, as well. The most confusing situation presents itself in those cases when a publisher decides to be crafty – or dense – and asserts “First Edition” and then 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9, that means you have the Second Printing of the First Edition, but honestly, what you've got is the Second Edition. Very rarely will a book say what edition it is and ALSO have a string of numbers, usually there is either one or the other, but not both.

Fifty to eighty years ago, some publishers put a single letter on this page, such as --A-- , and this indicated a First Edition. There are many variations because there were many publishers; distinguishing all the rules for telling how various publishers treated their first edition notices is more than I can give you in this limited amount of space. But following my advice will take care of at least 90% of your books.

**(7) Distinguish SIGNED (AUTOGRAPHED) books from SIGNED BY OWNER books.** Very often we open the cover of any old book and see something like 'John Smith III, 122 Western Turnpike, Turnip Springs, Arkansas.' Or, "To My Dear Nephew Peter, from Aunt Petunia". Although any information may turn out to be useful, or sometimes at least a bit humorous, let it be known, this kind of blather and egotism by owners and donors of books detracts from the value of the book. Collectors (any kind of buyers, really!) prefer books that are NOT inscribed with the names, addresses, or phone numbers of former owners. It is a sad thing to see someone write "PROPERTY OF...so-and-so" on an otherwise fine old book. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, books that have been signed by the author of that book. These autographs often, but not always, make its value higher, and sometimes much higher. A Name signed on the actual TITLE PAGE is nearly always that of the author, 99% of all other people would not dream of signing a book on its title page, unless they just came over from Finland or something... I actually saw that happen, by the way... the Finns can be dangerous around the printed word... But ALWAYS match-up the signature, if you can make it out, with the author's name itself. It may not be the author, it may be the illustrator. It may even be the author's wife or husband, or the publisher, handing out copies to his friends for Christmas or something!

Autographed books are cool! Some authors, however, signed MANY books at various book signings, tours, etc., so that almost all copies you find are signed, whereas others signed very very few. You will find 100 copies of books signed by Anne Rice for every one you find signed by Stephen King, or that's the way it looks to me, since I've handled so many of the one, and so few of the other!

There is the danger of sometimes running into fake author signatures. It is an undeniable temptation for someone to 'fake' an autograph, although the person who does it had better know EXACTLY what the REAL autograph of said celebrity author looks like. Sometimes the signature is "too good". Some people can sense a fake autograph with the book closed and 10 feet away, I'm like that sometimes! All I can say is, if someone wants to sell you a book privately, but makes a big deal about the author's signature and wants an exorbitant amount of money for it, you might want to pass up the deal, it might very well be bogus – unless he has some kind of evidence, such a photo of him together with the author, etc., that can establish a relationship and would justify believing the signature, papers, etc., genuine.

**(8) When and why to know the big & small publishers.** Random House, Knopf, Doubleday, Crown, Grosset & Dunlap, Dutton, Century, Collins, Houghton Mifflin, are examples of big publishers. As you get into this business you see so many books from the major names in publishing over the past 100+ years, that you expect to see them. What you don't expect to see is small, obscure publishing houses, that may have come out with a shorter list of books over a short period of time, and these books are almost sure to have been published in smaller editions. There is relatively little value in recent books published by big publishing houses. I am going to underscore that so it stands out, because it is an important thing to know! If you go over a database like ABE.books, and you look up your recent Knopf or Crown books, you may well find 100 or 200 or 300 copies “out there” being sold right now by hopeful booksellers. If so, you will see that many are offering them for \$1.00 or close to \$1.00 each, that's because if there are 200+ copies out there, the only way to have a hope of selling a copy is to offer it at a very low price. Just like 50 other people are doing. But this doesn't pay. What pays is to acquire obscure by interesting books by smaller publishing houses. They can be specialty publishers or regional or university publishers, or foreign publishers, it doesn't matter, what matters is when you look at what others have up for sale right now, and seeing: Ahhhhh! Only 4 other copies “out there” and prices range from \$20 to \$100, so that IS a book worth having, and possibly selling, after all.

**(9) Recognizing “Association Value”.** A book may not be all THAT valuable, but if it belonged to someone who had a relationship with the author or the book itself, or if it contains souvenirs of or about that writer, or subject, it may have great value. I had a book about Kellogg, the cereal maker, of Battle Creek, Michigan, dating from about 1900 or so. Inside the front cover was attached a small b&w photo taken by Kellogg's cousin or niece or something, showing him and other family members relaxing on a porch. There was a hand-written description about this. The book would have been worth \$10, but because of the association value of the photo and holography (handwritten text), it was worth more than \$100 via E-Bay. Often the association value comes out when you analyze who inscribed what & to whom... the book “HOWL!” by Alan Ginsburg, signed by the publisher, City Light's owner Lawrence Ferlinghetti to his friend Jack Kerouac, would have considerable association value, even if the book itself wasn't even a First Edition. If there was a little note, such as: “Hope you get a 'Howl' out of this, and bring me that new manuscript!” it would be worth even

more. Often value is determined by popularity. A book signed by, or having association value regarding, Ernest Hemingway or Henry Miller will be of more value than a second-tier, lesser-known author, Elizabeth Bishop, or Shirley MacClane, let's say, and hers will be infinitely more valuable than some obscure first-time co-author of a self-help or New Age book. It is important to have and use common sense in these kinds of things!

## B. AUTOGRAPHED MATERIALS

**(1) Just recognize them – many people don't!** It is very, very true that autographs are often passed over, even by bookstore employees. Three weeks ago I did a quick browse of the HORROR section at a place called Bookman's in Tucson, and opened a copy of "*Lasher*" and found the unmistakable signature of Anne Rice on the front end paper. To be honest, that's JUST what I was looking for! Some clerk had taken in this book and not paid the slightest attention to this big, bold signature! (HOW can a person MISS something like THAT?!) It was priced at \$8.00 so I grabbed it, knowing I could make more than that, even on-line. A week later, I went back and did another look-see... and this time, found "*Tales of the Body Thief*", a year older and a bit rarer than "*Lasher*", also for sale at a reasonable price, so I bought that one, as well. So I found out that Bookman's is a good source of under priced, signed books. I won't tell them if you don't! How many people picked up and looked at these volumes, but didn't stop to consider that the autographs by the author made them a good purchase? So, the FIRST thing a book person should do, is, along with seeing if a book is damaged, an ex-library book, of association value, etc, IS IT SIGNED? If you get a signed Hemingway it might as well be signed by Picasso, the signature has great value! Almost ALL books are more valuable when signed, even if written by people who are totally unknown by the public. Although that might mean a \$4 book is worth \$7 or \$10, but it is STILL more valuable when signed, and it looks better on the shelf or in a catalog with the "*SIGNED and INSCRIBED by AUTHOR on the title*" description, which is how I do it!

**(2) Suspecting a forgery is not being paranoid, it is being realistic...** There have been books written about successful and notorious forgers of both art and autographs, and it is always possible that signatures are forged. I brought home photos of a number of Hollywood stars which each one had signed, from someone's booth at an antique fair, but my nephew, who is an expert at autographs, examined them overnight and, using certain reference books, was able

to verify they were all FORGERIES I should have realized they were forgeries – I got them just a bit too cheaply, just \$5.00 each. And the seller made sure to mention he wasn't sure if they were real or not. He couldn't provide any kind of “track history” or “pedigree”, either. And that's exactly what you need when you pay anything extra at all for something that's purportedly signed by an author or artist. Take an example. You're called to someone's house in Salinas or Monterey, California. Someone has a couple of books signed by John Steinbeck, one of which says; “To Al, may the whoppers be what you catch and not the stories you tell,”. This person you're buying them from had a grandfather named Al Jones who was a fisherman and story-teller on Canary Row in the 1940's and took Steinbeck out fishing in his boat a few times. Okay! I'd say that was a pretty good lineage of verisimilitudinous plausibility. But if you were in Greenwich Village in New York City and someone came to you with 2 books signed by John Steinbeck, and they didn't have any clue how they'd come to be there,, and they demanded \$300 for them, I'd be rather skeptical and would insist on comparing the signatures against known Steinbeck signatures before spending possibly irretrievable money. Remember, people that come out of nowhere tend to disappear into nowhere, too. .

**(3) “On-the-Spot” Actions You Could Take.** The main decision is: *Do you buy? Or pass it by?* My theory on this has been tested “in the field” of battle. It is as follows. The person innocently selling what may or may not be a SIGNED and possibly valuable book or other object, often truly has no idea what he has. He may be liquidating someone else's collection, for example. IF HE DOESN'T KNOW, he won't be asking very much for it. He will be asking the same \$1.00 for the book with the Hemingway inscription to Gertrude Stein that he is asking for the the Reader's Digest condensed book right next to it. It is probably, in fact, almost surely, genuine. At the very, very least, this seller is not trying to perpetrate a hoax on you, at your expense! If he doesn't seem to know, but is ASKING, say, \$20 for the Hemingway book but only \$1 for the condensed book, then chances are, he probably DOES know, and he may be trying to defraud you, hoping you will decide his relatively high price is worth paying to get the signed item. There is a good book I saw the other day, it is a collection of short stories, put out by Reader's Digest, in fact, and each story has the author's printed signature on the title page of his or her story... viewing this book is a wonderful way to get a feel for what the author's real signature is. But if you find a book with that EXACT SIGNATURE, exact in size, angle, --everything!-- as if it had been photocopied... it probably WAS photocopied!

## C. MAGAZINES

(1.) **Notoriously non-valuable magazines.** My father, bless his heart, collected every date he could find of National Geographic Magazine, but he found it difficult to find copies from before 1946 or 1947 or so... and too bad, because the W.W.II and earlier ones are more valuable. His collection took up an amazing amount of space, since he had more than 50 years, and 10 or 12 copies of each year! He did the same kind of thing with Readers Digest magazines. But in the end, these collections turned out to be barely worth collecting. But there are other magazines which have a lot more demand, and are conspicuously harder to find.

(2.) **Surprisingly valuable old magazines.** Life Magazines and Time Magazines and others can be seen in separate little air-tight packages in antiquarian book stores and book shows, and often a magazine that is only 30 years old may be worth \$5 to \$10, and one 50 years old, \$10 to \$20. That may be an 'asking price', though, a buyer may get a better deal if they buy a few of the same type. The particular story in a given magazine or newspaper is often the key to its value.

The National Geographics I was complaining about earlier are really worth something if you get the earlier ones which were printed in smaller quantities. One from WWI, 1914—1918 or so, might go for \$15, and one from about 1900 might go ten times that much because they are so rarely seen compared to editions that came out just 10 or 15 years later.

Sports magazines describing football match-ups or golf games or boxing matches from the 1920's, 30's, and 40's are of great interest. Old science and electronics magazines are, too. Even Hollywood movie-star magazines and fashion magazines of bygone ages evoke a lot of interest. When it comes to Hollywood or the Movies, how popular the stars a given edition talks about may be crucial to value.

I have seen copies of TV Guide from the 1950's and early '60's that bring back some amazing old memories of the days when you were lucky if you had all 3 major networks in your local viewing area, and if you didn't want to watch *Gunslinger* or *I Love Lucy*, you were out of

luck and had to go read a book, or something! These small magazines can go for \$10 to \$20 and more. May not sound like much, but what if you find that your neighbor has 400 different ones? They came out every week!

**(3) What to do with “Playboy” and other Erotic “men's” magazines.** Men's magazines have had a tough time over the years. Boy's mothers as well as men's wives have been rounding-up those piles and boxes of all kinds of “men's” magazines and tossing them into the trash for 50+ years now. I know my ex-wife did this to me, and I seem to remember my Mom making a bunch of magazines disappear as well! Women seem to do this as a natural part of their make-up, in their quest to instill better morals in the male creature, through making sexy stuff harder and more expensive to locate. After all, when a certain percentage of existing Playboy magazines go into the trash, the value, and price, of the other ones 'out there' goes up!

There are *men's* magazines and there is actual pornography! You may be making a big mistake if you buy a box full of pornography. Who are you REALLY going to sell it to? Is THAT the kind of customers you want to attract to your store? I briefly carried adult magazines in a side room of one of my stores, and it was the worst mistake I could have made. How will you ever be able to really ever profit from it? Plus, it may be discovered by either family females or youthful family members, in which case, you may never hear the last of it, in fact, it could break-up an otherwise fairly happy family home! So my advice about 'no-mistake-about-it' porn is 'don't even go there', don't bring it home, no matter HOW good the deal sounds like.

But as for Playboy, Esquire, etc., there are databases out there which indicate that if you find a hoard of 1970's Playboys, they may be worth \$10--\$20 each, and if you are lucky enough to find some pre-1960 editions, they may be worth closer to \$50 each. Finds like that turn up more often than you might expect! My brother had the very first Playboy magazine, the one with the famous Marilyn Monroe fold-out, but he took the staples out, dis-bound the magazine, placed Marilyn in a manila folder in his files. Being a kid, naturally I discovered it! If he'd kept the darn thing intact, he might have a \$10,000+ Playboy!

**(4) Curious Old Newspapers, Headline Editions, etc .** My guess is that the older the newspaper, and the more the front page deals with interesting events and people, the more value it will have. There are

limits to this, however. So many people kept cherished copies of “Kennedy Shot!”, etc., that it might have less value than other dates. Don't pay extra for these. Get them at bargain-basement prices, and even then, you are taking a bit of a risk, because how many people do you know what are eager to buy old newspapers? Often you will find a big leather-type book that has a great number of newspapers bound inside. Take such a book home. Analyze what you've found! You may find it is of some value.

## D. STAMPS

**(1) What to do when you find books full of old stamps.** BE GLAD, BE VERY GLAD! But be cautious. I've seen books of stamps that look full, complete, and possibly valuable, and the stamps turn out to be worth 10c each. And, sure... it's a challenge! Thousands of new items always are!

**(2) Only a few stamps out of hundreds are worth lots of money.** If you are going to be looking through stamps, or looking FOR stamps, maybe you know quite a bit about them already, so I won't have to tell you: Get Lynn's Stamp News or Scott's Stamp Books – as many as you can find! --so that you will have a good database to look up a few things when you DO find some philatelic material out in 'the field'.

**(3) But some stamps are of obvious interest and value.** It doesn't have to be an “upside down airplane” or a dirigible stamp to have value. But the only way to know for sure, is to take a stamp guide with you to bed at night, and get to know something about the subject!

## E. COINS

**(1) The danger of buying at near-retail and later, selling at wholesale.** This is something that has happened to almost everyone who's bought coins at a coin shop or coin show at any time in their lives. They load-up on coins at the going price. Then, when a time comes when they choose to sell, (or, worse yet!) NEED to sell their coins, they find that what they bought at retail can only be sold at wholesale. No dealer will pay even half of what he's going to sell an item for. Sad but true... after talking you into buying a rare old quarter, or a half-penny or something, he will look at it skeptically and act as if it smelled bad. IT DOESN'T MATTER if you come back TEN

YEARS LATER, or even TWENTY YEARS LATER, you probably won't get as much for the coins as you had to pay when you bought them. This excludes things of metal value such as common gold and silver coins, the values of which can widely fluctuate. It WAS possible to buy a \$20 gold piece for \$400 which is now probably worth \$900, but whether the coin dealer plans on paying you nearly that much or not remains to be seen!

Sorry, but the only way to do nearly as well as a coin dealer is to become a coin dealer, and you certainly CAN do that – IF You want to! But think very carefully – do you REALLY want to? In my opinion, coin dealers are a little like dentists and doctors, people resent them – often hate them!

(2) **The “Red Book”, “Blue Book” and Coin World magazine.** References you should know about include the Red Book of Coin Values which has been coming out every year for at least 60 years.. It purports to give a fair view of retail old coin prices. There's also the Blue Book which gives wholesale values, and Coin World, which gives actual values that real dealers and collectors are buying and selling coins for, right now. If you plan to look at someone's coins out in the “field”, or at a house sale of some kind, you MUST have this in your car or your back pack or some place where you can retreat a bit and study-up on the dates and mintages you haven't memorized yet.

(3) **Taking property security measure when buying or selling coins.** Along with the dislike many people have for coin dealers, comes a willingness to break into their stores or houses at night and steal everything they can carry away! If you want to become the target of both professional and amateur thieves, just let lots of people know that you buy & sell old coins and sooner or later, something bad WILL happen to you! I guarantee it! I've seen coin folks who work from their homes make a big, big “P.R” effort: “ALL COINS ARE KEPT IN SAFE DEPOSIT BOXES AT THE BANK!” But nobody will believe this and it will attract them to want to climb in through your windows to have a good look around even more than if you said nothing. One thing I would do, if I were you, is this: If you advertise that you want to buy coins, have them call you at an UNLISTED number or cell-phone number. Have them MEET YOU at a public place, such as MacDonal'd's or even your BANK!! Don't be followed, don't let them see what car you're driving. Be cautious as the dickens, you'll be glad you did!

(4) **Could that rare coin have been stolen?** Be careful with anyone who wants to sell you something of obvious value for nothing. There's just no way under the sun that someone would want to SELL YOU a thousand dollars in gold for \$200 cash. It just ain't gonna happen, unless the loot is stolen. And if you feel a deal is too good to be true, you'd better get outta there!

I remember the time 2 gentlemen stopped me on a San Francisco sidewalk to show me a large gold coin, and asked me if I'd give them \$20 for it. I almost fell for it. I'm pretty sure that what would have happened is, the moment my wallet or the \$20 bill popped into view, they'd have grabbed my money –and been gone! There is nothing to be more careful about than money itself, and old collectible coins and bullion coins, etc., represent money-- the most SOLID KIND of money there is! Be careful if you ever have ANY dealings with it at all in the realm of collectibles !

## F. ART & CRAFTS

(1) **Surprisingly Valuable Art Does Appear** at Moving Sales, etc. People do have to move cross-country for business, health, etc., reasons, and paintings and sculptures are just as difficult to move cross-country as boxes full of heavy old books. So if a local place to take 'em turns up, many will choose to sell and leave town with clean hands. Also, many, many people inherit a house full of art works that they know nothing about. But it may not be “their kind of art”, and they will be most glad if someone came by and took it all away! They may not have a clue that one or two of those paintings are now worth \$50,000, because they're our classic “DON'T WANTERS!” they just want to get rid of it. This can assume insane dimensions sometimes! Grandma may have collected a dozen old masters over a 50 year period, but grand-daughter and grand-daughter's no-good new husband don't like, can't stand paintings, the grand-daughter never did like grandma's art collection. If you were to come along at just the right time and offer \$20 each for the old paintings and take them off their hands immediately, they might agree. After all, they fit the pattern of “DON'T WANTERS,” I.e.,, they want to dispose of ALL the property so they can SELL THE REAL ESTATE, assuming the real estate is where the REAL money is located. It may not be. It may be in that Klee or Kandinsky or that bizarre-looking old Jackson Pollock which they haven't been able to stand for the past 40 years and getting rid of it

TODAY won't be SOON ENOUGH. You take it home, or to an art dealer associate, and find it is worth \$500,000 or more. Well, your superior knowledge and desire to get rich has defeated the seller's negativism and "DON'T WANTER" attitude. If he or she doesn't want the old paintings, if they want to "clear everything out of the house," they don't need the \$500,000, either, that should be YOUR money!

**(2) Tens of Thousands of "Known" and "Collectible" Artists!**

There are huge databases of "known" and "collectible" artists in the United States and the world. My brother once gave me a nice old oil painting as a present. I was about 10 or 12 years old at the time, and really enjoyed looking at it, over opposite the bed. But about two years later, he came to our house one day, took it down off the wall of my room and walked off with it! It seems he'd done some research and gotten a sudden inkling of who the "Mc—" somebody was that had signed the still life in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, he hadn't been quite able to figure it out, but now he thought he could get a thousand dollars for it, so he wasn't going to leave it in my possession! He took the painting he'd given me---and was gone! You could learn a lot from my brother! He can be painfully practical -- but he's successful in a field where many or, in fact, most people don't have the intestinal fortitude to succeed!

**(3) How not to be "taken in" when purchasing art.** The advice I dished-out for autographs and signed books holds true for art, as well. There should be some obvious link between the artist and the person offering you the art work. Often there is an actual bill of sale, poster or flyer from an art exhibit featuring that artist, an obvious connection in the art world or friendships among artists and denizens of the same milieu, or some other logical way this particular seller got ahold of this painting to offer to sell you! BEST, of course, is what happened to me one sunny afternoon.. I was called to have a look at and appraise the approximate value of an attic full of books. But while I was up there I couldn't help noticing three or four dozen 19<sup>th</sup> Century paintings of the western frontier, indians, canyons, horses, etc. I didn't get that batch, but I wish I had! They were horrified that I'd even SEEN those paintings "up there", I guess nobody was supposed to know about them! But there have been other times I've been luckier with art. Like the time a nice older man sold me 7 framed paintings and prints for \$1.00 each. I guess it was either his day to be very generous or my day to be very lucky! If you get into this business of going out on Saturday mornings, you will soon find BOTH situations are more common than you thought they'd be! People WILL be generous, and YES, you WILL be lucky! I haven't known a soul who's followed my Saturday

“system” and not done very, very well! Assuming they have the 'constitution' and fortitude to do it, that is!

(4) **Beware of lithographs and prints, signed or otherwise.** Suffice it to say that many limited edition prints are not so limited as they pretend to be. I am never confident that the Dali print I'm being offered is genuine or not. I would very much prefer to discover it among other cheap art-works than be offered it for \$100 or whatever! If you pay \$100 for something, you are not buying at SUB-WHOLESALE, and SUB-WHOLESALE is where you make the money. It doesn't matter what you sell the piece for if you can buy it for the lowest possible price. This applies to art works just as it does to paperback books! I had a gentleman walk into the store once with several old lithographs, framed and under glass. They were about the size that would fit in a photocopier! I couldn't see them well enough under the glass to have any idea of whether they might be genuine. Removing the frames and glass revealed to me that the edges of the lithographs were not pressed into the paper the way real ones are, so I passed-up this purchase.

(5) **Ceramics, Sculptures, and other (*Hopefully!*) Signed Pieces.** You must obtain a book which describes the different major manufacturers and the average current values of their items. There will always be surprises. A miniature a little less than 1 foot high of Rodin's “The Kiss” will be worth \$5 to \$10, if you can get it. But an obscure little coffee mug about Gilligan's Island or a saucer about the O.J. Simpson trial might be worth \$100. Each was bought at the same yard sale for 50c each. People love topical subject matter, after all. And small editions are always more valuable than huge ones!

## G. ANTIQUES

(1) **Why you shouldn't bother looking for antiques at antique shows.**

Antique Shows are almost completely the venues of antiques dealers and private dealer-collectors to sell their goods at the closest to RETAIL as humanly possible. There is seldom if ever going to be a situation where someone pays \$300 or \$500 or more to have a booth for a weekend at such a fair, where that person hasn't dutifully researched the value of every item he possesses and tries to coax every penny he can out of the sales he makes. I think antique fairs often have every bit as high an average price on a certain collectible than you would encounter at a retail antique store. Just like at international book fairs, the dealers seem intent on showing off by bringing along

their MOST EXPENSIVE items. Under these circumstances, how do you plan to make a killing there? You can't!

(2) **One man's antique is another man's piece of junk.** Taste is subjective and taste in antiques is quirky. My ex father-in-law had somehow gotten started collecting one certain kind of glassware. He wasn't interested in even looking at any other antiques, but if he saw four or five of these kinds of glasses come up on auction, he would wait in the rain, if necessary to get a chance to bid. One man will be quick to get rid of a trunk full of occult or religious objects because “they give him the creeps”, whereas another will venerate such a collection of objects. There's just no telling! Train collectors will do anything to get a new train, or track, or layout. But ninety percent of the rest of us would look on them as if they're nuts. Nobody's nuts. It “takes all kinds to make a world.” Maybe that guy was found tied to the railroad tracks as a child and has had a 'thing' for trains ever since. Maybe the person who collects watches can't keep track of the time, but would like to, so they buy more and more watches. Lots of jewelry hasn't been bought by the women who wear it at all, but their male admirers, suitors, and husbands. One day, when they're off in Europe on vacation, one of their teenage daughters, who hates jewelry, puts it out to sale on a Saturday morning and ends up selling her mom's diamonds at a nickel per karat. Things like that happen all the time.

(3) **Repaired and mismatched pieces and sets.** We've all seen episodes of “Antique Road Show” (either the British or American version), where the expert unveils the fact that a Georgian chesterfield or a Rococo dressing table has had parts not only repaired but replaced, been repainted and refinished, had coasters put on where bird's claw legs used to be – that kind of thing! Don't pay a high price for something that might be a “Frankenstein!” *Avoid! Avoid! Avoid!*

(4) **How to solve storage problems with the larger items.** There is no point even looking for big items if you don't have a place to put them! Many of my friends have temporarily solved this problem by renting a storage locker. The size depends on how much stuff you're going to haul around, and how much money you have to pay for the locker! I have become skeptical of putting things into storage, myself, simply because the cost to store an item has gone sky-high lately. What used to be \$90 a month has suddenly become \$200 a month in many parts of the country, and, unlike real estate, the price doesn't come down if there's a recession! The first month or two, you might be OK with that \$200 storage fee. But I will bet you the squirrel's bag of

nuts that after a few months, you will start resenting that expense. Well, now! What to do? Use some of the furniture at your house. Put some of it in your parent's or children's, or brother's or sister's house. Put some of it "on consignment" at an antique store of your choice. That way you won't pay to store it, and if it sells, you make some money. Only about half as much as you'd LIKE to have gotten, but the whole point was to BUY at such a low price that you can't go wrong, no matter what you later sell them at!

## H. COMICS

(1) **Value & demand changes... but old comics are always good.** As of the time I'm writing this, *graphic novels* and Japanese-style '*Anime*' has surged forward and practically conquered 'comickdom', the world of comics and comic collecting. Or so it would seem! But don't this fool you, there are still millions of comic collectors in this country, and more around the world. Any weakness on the market means one thing, for sure: Someone is inheriting a collection of comics RIGHT NOW, who doesn't think they have much value, and will be willing to part with them for cheap "Please haul 'em away!" prices. And tomorrow someone else will inherit another collection, and so on. The task becomes one of sleuthing around, putting out some 'feelers', and getting in on the ground floor! I would never have thought that in 1990, someone would want to "get rid" of a whole box of 1970's "X-Man" comics as if they were nothing but junk, yet this was exactly my experience.. a whole box of these comics was carried in the door of my store without my having to do a thing except sit there and wait for their arrival. That's the nicest thing about having a store.. you know something will be brought in through that door any minute now, you just don't know quite WHAT yet! If you're lucky, they'll be nice, venerable, golden age comics. They don't take up much space, and they can be worth more than their weight in gold.

(2) **Golden Age comics are the best...** when you can find 'em! A recent film called "*Comic Book Villains*" said it like it is about Golden Age Marvel and DC comics. There are individual titles worth \$2,000, \$10,000, \$20,000 and more. Quite a few of them, actually! There is at least one very good "Comic Book Price Guide" that comes out annually that lists everything of value, and will teach you the ropes faster than I can, sitting here!

If you are really an absolute novice at comics, such as if you moved here from a country where comics were banned, etc., then let me just mention the obvious. It is the "Super Hero" type comics which have always been most in demand. The Loony Tunes, Hannah Barbara, and

Disney comics, and lesser vehicles, don't quite match up to the D.C. and Marvel line-up. In one of the upper corners of the front cover, there ought to be a number, such as "No. 1" or maybe just "2" or whatever. This is important information. Even not-so-valuable, not-so-golden comics marked "1" are the first number of the series, and can be worth quite a bit. I had an Uncle Scrooge #1, for example, and it was worth more than a \$1,000 when I finally sold it. When it comes to "Ducks" (I.e, Disney's), the 1940's and 1950's comics drawn by Carl Barks are the most valuable. There was something special, something dedicated and inspired about his stories! Look for some Barks' "Ducks", you'll see what I mean! He did both Uncle Scrooge and Donald Duck comics.

(3) **Security problems** if you have valuable comics around. As I have commented elsewhere, the only time I ever got burgled was the night when kids climbed through my back window to get a box full of "X-Man" comics that I had thoughtlessly left sitting around on the floor. This taught me a valuable lesson: It's not that kids can't be trusted, it is that people feel rare comics are worth breaking into a place and stealing for – more than other kinds of collectibles! Of course, I've never had any Renoirs or Picassos around so I've never been able to test how this theory of mine works in the real world. But according to my experience, if you are going to be dealing in comic books, you had better secure your facilities from possible predation, "swarming", nocturnal banditry, etc.

## I. RECORD ALBUMS, CD's, DVD's, etc.

(1) **Old Record Albums ain't what they used to be.** Cassettes didn't decimate the LP business, but CD's and now file-sharing seem to have. Turn tables to play records aren't even being made any more. I recently witnessed a couple of kids seeing a record turntable for the first time! They were incredibly intrigued with this ancient technology! I really feel old record albums DO NOT, cannot possibly, have nearly the buyers and fans they did 20 years ago. The dwindling number of record stores around the country proves my point. But this DOESN'T mean LP records are worthless now. There are STILL collectors, and they are able to take advantage of the wonderful BARGAINS that crop up sometimes as people who move out of their homes are leaving behind heavy, massive rows of boxes filled with record albums. Boxes of record albums are more intimidating to most people than boxes of books, even! But even though there is a profusion of quantity, there is always a demand for quality. If you find lots and lots of quantity, you usually can't help but obtain some quality items as well, and one or two

high-priced goodies will pay for all the trouble you had hauling boxes of old record albums around town!

(2) **Condition Matters here: Both Record and Album Cover.** You will soon discover that condition of record albums is judged more precisely than the condition of rare, collectible books! The record itself is given a grade ranging from poor to mint, and so is the album cover or jacket or sleeve. Sometimes the word “sleeve” denotes a kind of thin album cover, sometimes an ordinary cover. Some dealers put the jacket condition first, and the condition of the record itself, second. You are not mistaken if you decide the condition of the jacket is more important than the record itself. This is because few people are buying these old records to play them on their (hard-to-find) turntables; they are buying them for the sake of the covers, in many cases!

(3) **Collectible *Versus* Donate-able Records.** It is not hard for most music lovers to tell a collectible record from a donate-able one. There is always a set of “*Let's Learn French in 12 Easy Lessons!*” records dating from the 1960's or '70's. These and anything similar that you don't find personally interesting can be almost surely chucked at the curbside receptacle.

There is also a whole panoply of silly Hawaiian luau and Mexican meriachi records, Swiss and German love songs and French drinking and dancing songs, etc., usually English language translations, that came out mostly from the 1950's to the 1980's, they are a silly lot and only old people, possibly some ethnic people, listened to them 20 to 50 years ago, and even fewer people are listening to them today. These were not recorded by famous bands or top orchestras, often they have music that sounds like it could have been recorded by Cheech and Chong in “*Up in Smoke*” Needless to say, these are records you can almost surely pass over in your quest, and if you find yourself owning a few boxes of them – donating them to be sent to Kazakhstan or El Salvador where they will annoy a whole new generation of listeners and their kids.

But guess what? Almost every kind of record album I HAVEN'T mentioned is probably collectible and could be worth a pretty penny! This includes Folk Music, Rock & Roll, Rythem & Blues, Broadway albums, Carl Sandburg singing folk songs and Robert Frost or T.S. Eliot reciting poems, and everything in between!

(4) **Taking Advantage of High Trade Value** for Nice CD's and DVD's . You may arrive at someone's sale who long since got rid of their record albums, but they now have an accumulation of a few hundred CD's they'd like to get rid of. *“Ours not to wonder why, ours just to do or die!”* So you leave their home with 140 various music CD's, and DVD's, but most of them is stuff you're not personally interested in. So... my advice is to take 'em to a used & rare media outlet like Bookman's (in Tucson and Phoenix), or Street Light Records in the S.F. Bay Area, as another example, and put 'em up for TRADE or SALE. They might give you a modest amount of cash that will more than pay for what you got, or a much better quantity of “Trade Value”. That's if you can USE “Trade”. Then you can look at the kinds of merchandise you can get with your trade 'ticket', and find something you REALLY like !

## **J. OLD PICTURE POSTCARDS**

(1) **Here, there is a collector for practically any & everything!**

Only after I bought a collection of nearly 6,000 picture postcards, did I discover the amazing variety of things which people like to collect! One woman collected lighthouses, a man, train stations, he wanted postcards of every little 'whistle stop' on the continent.. Another man, anything relating to subways, streetcars and buses! Meanwhile, no sooner did I sort out a few dozen mainly orange and black HALLOWEEN cards from about 80 to 100 years ago, that someone came in, and bought them ALL. Which was kind of a shame, because the next guy who might be looking for Halloween cards wouldn't find any!

(2) **Attacking, Organizing, a large assortment** of old post cards. Subdividing a bunch of old picture post cards into a hundred & twenty different categories may not be your idea of “fun”, but it was only after I sorted 'em out that I began selling old postcards every single day. Not a day went by that SOMEONE didn't come in and browse through 'em and buy something. I had bought the cards for little more than 10c apiece, and when I sold them, the average price was \$3.00 to \$5.00., so – that's an example of that wonderful “sub-wholesale” purchasing that I like to talk about and which I suggest YOU get in on! .

(3) **Marketing Them at Shows, Flea Markets, and Stores.** I found that a display of cards in a number of shoe boxes , etc., was a good way to show them off. But every time there was a book fair or flea market, I took along a nice selection of cards, so that an audience of potential buyers in a completely different part of town, could get to look through

the old postcards! You have to do whatever you can think of to increase sales when you have this kind of a product!

## **K. OLD LETTERS, DOCUMENTS & MANUSCRIPTS**

(1) **Letters by noteworthy people**, and what makes a person noteworthy? If you happen to find files full of autobiographical materials or manuscripts which you can link to the author, first determine if the person in question ever wrote a book, has Google-search references, appears in Wikipedia, is known in the community for some reason or other. If they were known as an artist or musician, have they left a legacy of art or musical works? If they were a teacher, were they well-known and well-liked? If they were a scholar, is their scholarship notable, and do other scholars know of this person? Maybe it's worth writing the queries necessary to find out about the subject of the old letters or papers you've found. If the person in question never wrote a book, is not well known, then most likely the papers they left are not of much value except to their own living relatives and, failing that, old friends. Determine what college or university he or she attended. The library of that school may offer to acquire these papers for their collection, but if the person is not outright *famous*, chances are there won't be much if any cash involved.

(2) **Look for boxes of old letters**, etc., that some nitwit assumes is junk. People leave boxes behind in storage units. Heirs lose track of stored materials, and heirs themselves put things into storage and then pass-on and leave strangers to find boxes full of unknown papers, manuscripts, etc. The contents of unpaid storage lockers are auctioned off on a "sight unseen" basis. In the part of the country I live in, potential buyers stand in the doorway of the storage unit but don't get to see what's in the boxes. This is how a surprising amount of pure junk, mixed generously with strange and unusual, unexpected items, turn up. Someone is likely to find the manuscripts, autobiography, and other documents, of some notable individual this way. A hoard of valuable old manuscripts and papers could be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars – maybe millions! When I lived in Santa Clara, annual "Junk Week" revealed a ton of unusual stuff that people chose to put-out on the streets to be picked up as trash by the city. This is how I got an entire collection of Hindu mystic and philosophy books worth more than \$2,000., they were being thrown away as if they were trash! The same thing happens to collections of a departed relation's personal papers!

(3) **Publicize Your Find – To Make it Even More Valuable!** If you find a rare old manuscript or draft version of an autobiography or other interesting papers, by all means report this to both experts, libraries, museums, educators, and even local newspapers. This will “raise consciousness” about your discovery and make its value go up, *up*, and *up!* One technique to use might be the standard “PRESS RELEASE”. Send information about your “FIND” out to dozens or hundreds of newspapers, radio and TV stations, etc.

## L. OLD PHOTO ALBUMS & PHOTOGRAPHS

(1) *Deguerrotypes and Ambrotypes*. I discovered an album full of old 'tintypes' from the 1840's and 1850's. This was an extremely interesting and valuable find and I quickly sold this treasure to a specialist. It is possible that individual pieces of this kind might be worth *hundreds* of dollars each, and might auction at that level or the whole collection be bought for good money by museum, library, or gallery. If the tintypes are identified with a certain city or region, that's the place to look for institutional or corporate buyers!

(2) **Civil War era photos** Photos became more common during the Civil War, and many photos were taken of men in uniform, as momentos. Photos of officers and/or linked to certain regiments, etc., are of special interest and value.

(3) Other possibly valuable photos. Ansel Adams is just one 20<sup>th</sup> Century photograph whose Sierra Nevada / Yosemite photos are highly valued. But there are many other photographers, some of whom are known for particular kinds of scenes, cityscapes, portraits, etc. Look for words, notes, on both the front and bac, of old photos. In the old days, white lettering shows on the front of the photo .

(3) Family photos of unidentifiable families? My feeling is that if you can identify a family, the best 'sales target' is any affluent members of that family. Next, libraries and museums and university libraries in the area where that family lives or lived. Remember that very often a family lineage comes to an end and there are no heirs, no descendants at all, in which case, photos of that family may have interest limited to manner of dress, anything particularly interesting in the photos, etc., rather than the actual identities of the people.

(4) **Albums themselves**. I have seen mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century albums sell for hundreds of dollars. A lot depends on the attractiveness and condition of the album. Stickers or associated papers that prove the album is 100 or 150 or 200 years old will definitely add greatly to the value.

## M. NATIVE OR OTHER TRIBAL ARTIFACTS

(1) **Navajo Blankets & Baskets, Papoose Carriers**, and other Native Items. My ex-wife's family has owned a lakeside chalet on the north shore of Lake Tahoe since the 1920's. It was furnished originally with a collection of Native American baskets and blankets that was acquired during the 1920's and which hung on the walls from one season to the next for more than 40 years. One day someone discerned that at least some of these items were worth \$1,000 or more! Some of them were then removed to keep them safe from inevitable deterioration and possible theft. Not every Navajo blanket or Hopi basket is worth hundreds or thousands of dollars, but without any doubt, some are, and there are on-line tips on determining age and value, plus lots of experts who would look on such 'finds' as a challenge and help you out in identifying your finds!

(2) **Masks and Carvings from Africa & Oceania.** One day I found an elderly couple who were both wearing pitch helmets and khaki outfits, sitting behind a couple of card tables that were loaded with curios from Kenya that they'd brought home in the 1950's. There were lots of animal figures and carvings, a few idols, masks, and other items. All they wanted to do was show off their treasures and sell them for a couple of dollars each. I picked out a few and had a nice conversation with these 'explorers' at the same time, and later found some of these old carvings are worth hundreds of dollars. I was surprised to find that some carvings that look like they're of African origin are actually from Melanesia and other island groups of Oceania, such as Fiji, which held isolated pockets of natives who appear to have had African origins, thousands of years ago, and made idols, carvings, statues, and masks similar to African varieties. Maori and Aboriginal materials from New Zealand and Australia may also be found, though the connection with Africa itself is difficult to trace.

## N. JEWELRY, GEMS & CRYSTALS

(1) **Huge, sudden profits** to someone who can recognize 'what's what!' There is no doubt that some of the biggest 'finds' at garage sales, etc., have been made when someone sold precious heirloom diamonds, emeralds, rubies, etc., which the blighted seller THOUGHT was mere

“costume jewelry”. You wonder how someone can confuse valuable gems with plastic and glass, but it happens all the time, usually after a relative inherits someone's jewels but doesn't realize some of them are valuable. Maybe the benefactor never *told* them about a certain important bracelet or necklace, and the heir literally expected to have been told. The lucky buyers of this high-quality jewelry face a bit of a moral crisis... If they return home and do some research and realize they just bought a 3-karat diamond for 50 cents, what should they do? Maybe they don't even remember what address the garage sale took place at. What do they say when they come back and knock on the door? “I found that this 50c item you sold me is worth more than \$1,000, and I wanted you to have it back?” This is between you and your conscience, or between you and God! In most situations, “in the real world”, it is “let the buyer beware”, but by the same token, “let the seller beware!” If the seller doesn't know what they're selling.. well, they got the 50c they were *asking*, didn't they?

**(2) Distinguishing a Valuable Crystal from an Ordinary Rock.** Needless to say, there are books and on-line guides that can identify a crystal by its various qualities. But beauty is truly *in the eye of the beholder*. I found a pointy, triangular slab of quartz rock on a walk around an urban park near my home. I put it up for sale in E-Bay and immediately got bids started on it, the bids went up & up! This was an ordinary ROCK, mind you, but I did give it a florid, unusual description! What I'd found was a mystic who subsequently bought some of my unusual paintings, as well! (See: [www.edaugusts.com](http://www.edaugusts.com) ) Of course, all kinds of strange things turn up on E-Bay, last week somebody successfully auctioned off a cornflake that had a vague resemblance to the state of Illinois. Go Thou And Do Likewise... my theory about this is when an oddity gets national coverage, some wealthy person or company will make a bid in the 5 or 6 digits just to get themselves some advertising! But it isn't free advertising, it includes whatever cost they have to pay to buy the cornflake that looks like Illinois, or the Taco with the Face of Elvis.

## O. BONES, SHELLS, & FOSSILS

(1) Fossils Can Be Valuable. There are millions of fossils out there in the field or the mountainside or creek bed. And museums have millions of fossils. But more and more private individuals are building-up collections of various kinds of fossils. Browse or download an on-

line CATALOG of fossils for sale to see the variety available and pricing used.

(2) Human Skulls, etc., are Not Legal to Sell. You may see human remains, most likely skulls, for sale sometimes in your travels, but aside from questions about the legality of the origin of these human remains (were they dug-up out of graveyards? Are they somebody's family members?) is the fact that it is illegal to traffic in these remains. E-Bay, etc., won't touch 'em!

(3) Shell Collecting & What to Look For! Shells are found to be either common or uncommon species, obviously if you find someone's collection of clams, scallops, cockles, common snail-type shells, oyster shells, abalone, etc., they are not of more than "*garden variety*" interest. That is: You might as well put them out in the garden! But there is a Golden Cowry which native chiefs used in their crowns. There are various cone shells and similar mollusks which are very beautiful, and also highly poisonous in the 'live' state. Triton's Trumpets are found in the Indo-Pacific, but turn up in Tibet and Nepal, where they were used as horns. These shells, and others, which can be found in catalogs of shells for sale, are more or less scarce and therefore valuable. Often you may find a local club of shell collectors who can be recruited to help you determine rarity and value. In fact, local or regional clubs of various kind apply to every single kind of collectible item.

## **P. GAMES, "KNICK-KNACKS"& MISCELLANEOUS**

(1) Games. Boxed *games* of all kinds, as old as possible, and in as fine a condition as possible, can be worth quite a bit. Even common games are worth money if you get early editions in very good condition. I've seen old "Ouija boards", in their original box, as well as children's games like "Candy Land", etc., that are worth plenty if COMPLETE and in very good to 'mint' condition. Speaking of Ouija, there were a number of imitators of Ouija that came up with similar "Talking Boards" in the 1920's through the 1930's., and those are of much interest and value as well.

(2) Old packages, boxes, and cans. The collecting of old "stuff" is

part of a major “nostalgia craze” that has increased over the decades. Aluminum glasses which were delivered by dairies to people's doorsteps in the 1950's and originally held sour cream or half-and-half could be worth \$10 each now. So don't throw away *any* old boxes or cans, not the pictorial ones which interesting labels, which you find that might date back to the 1960's or earlier, (the earlier the better, of course!) since there are collectors for all these kinds of goods. Go visit any antique fair or have a browse on E-Bay to see this for yourself!

(3) Tools of all kinds, as well as: Scientific Instruments. Household, garage, and shop tools may be valuable. Consider buying whole collections of tools from people's estates, then sell the individual tools off one-by-one. Old medical, dental, and scientific lab equipment may be of value.

(4) Cultural fads & fancies. What Hula-Hoops were to the 1950's, and Pet Rocks to the 1970's, 'Tickle Me Elmo' was to the 1990's. These “MUST HAVE!” items go up in value as they become popular, but they also often come back down again. It would not have been wise to make a big investment in cheap overpriced stuffed toys ten years ago, because the bottom DID fall out, for those collectibles! .

## Q. DOLLS & TOYS

(1) Old Dolls. I was shocked to find an old 'bisque' baby doll that a friend found at a yard sale for \$1.00 was worth more than \$500.00 at retail value! Yet, every weekend, bargains like this turn up all across North America. If one bones-up on this subject, the profits, and the satisfaction from making a great 'find' can be enormous.

(2) Teddy Bears. A lady friend threw away my old teddy bear. She thought it was junk. No, it was not junk, not to anyone else except her. It was worth several hundred dollars. *This sad episode confirmed in my mind that MOST people DO tend to think someone else's “old stuff” is junk.* That's why one person's loss is another person's gain. My old teddy bear was old when I got it, as a young child, in the early 1950's. Too bad that it was thrown out as if it was junk, there were dark psychological forces at work in this kind of disaster – someone tossing out another person's sentimental possessions... which also have

cash value. She must have been jealous that she wasn't given a teddy when *she* was a little girl!

(3) Other Toys. Search on-line data bases for accurate, specific information about various kinds of toys and other merchandise. I've found that antique-type books not only cost a lot of money, but they never have a wide-enough selection to include ALL the kinds of toys and other goodies you're likely to find "out in the field". As to what kinds of things to look for: "Computer" kits for kids, trains and track kits, "rockets", ROBOTS, planes, boats, dinosaurs, action toys, military-related items for kids, etc. etc. all have value. Don't throw away any toys that looks to be of interest, and don't pass-up interesting items that are offered at a "give-away" price at a yard sale or moving sale, either. Avoid BROKEN or incomplete, faded, stained, toys.

## **R. HISTORICAL ITEMS OF POSSIBLE INTEREST**

(1) Items linked to a famous person. Most everything associated with George Washington, Jefferson, the Adamses, Abraham Lincoln, etc., is already in a museum somewhere. But there are many objects, photos, signed books, etc., relating to *2nd-tier* notables "out there", "*weakly held*" in small private collections, maybe grandma's memorabilia, and when I say 'weakly held', I mean liable to come suddenly, incoherently, onto the open market when a person suddenly ceases to exist or a family moves away, or a 3<sup>rd</sup> party, usually someone without much knowledge or training, cheaply, more or less thoughtlessly, sells-off a collection of someone's beloved memorabilia. That 3<sup>rd</sup> party just won't know that her friend's grandfather's aunt was a lady named Aunt Nelly who, 80 years ago, dated T.S. Eliot and acquired signed first editions of his first books of poems, which are now worth more than \$1,000 a copy.

(2) Items linked to a particular place, war, or decade. Look around at an Estate Sale or garage sale and you may notice a lot of stuff is all about New York City, or about Judy Garland, or about the Beatniks of the 1950's. If you find one collector of a kind of item, you can be sure of finding hundreds! Don't hesitate to look further and buy. And ask about MORE stuff that is NOT included in THIS sale, they may invite you into the home and you may find that you hit the jackpot!

(3) Old radios and TV sets, treadle sewing machines, etc. I was disappointed to find “mom’s” White-brand treadle sewing machine from about 1900 was worth no more than \$100, probably less. And finding someone in the LOCAL AREA who would pay anything for it, made it even less likely that I could find a buyer who’d come out and take it away. I abandoned a piano like that. The piano was just much, much too heavy. And I couldn’t figure out who would pay anything for it! My situation is duplicated across the nation when it comes to heavy valuables. That’s why so many cars are abandoned next to barns and garages in rural areas. It is not worth hauling them away, so they sit there and rust. Don’t buy any white elephants like that! Some old TV sets, early vintage personal computers, and radios, may be actually worth something, though. Almost any item’s value can be looked up rapidly by just visiting [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and entering the product name and model in the “Search” engine. I do it all the time. That’s the exact same way that I find the values of old record albums, too, I just enter the code number! You could do the same by entering, let’s say, “*Kewpie Doll*” or “*Uncle Scrooge Fall 1952*” (or: *number 6*), etc. Among other things, you’d turn up every similar item that’s on sale right now on E-Bay.

## S. OLD CLOTHING

(1) The incredible, mostly unknown, value of ordinary old blue jeans! Who’d have thought that wealthy young Japanese would pay \$100 or more to get a worn pair of old blue jeans? (*Levi’s*, in fact!)

(2) What if you think some old clothes might have value. Look for “resale” shops that feature old clothing. “VINTAGE” is the keyword to use, here! Very often the old, OLD, clothes of an elderly person will turn out to have value. It all depends on whether that person threw away old clothes or not! Some people have collections hanging right in their closets, protected by mothballs, of blouses and skirts they wore in the 1950’s. Call ahead, and then take these down to a vintage used & rare clothing shop and see if they give you a good offer! They may not, in which case, you might do better by selling them yourself, piece by piece!

(3) Good Deals when Buying Clothes at Garage Sales, etc. *Guys?* Look for interesting old ties as well as belts and belt-buckles. Boots, if

in good condition. *Ladies?* You already know what to look for. Especially if you have kids and already know about the advantages of hand-me-downs and used clothing... Oh, by the way: Don't forget lingerie! Some very attractive lingerie just isn't being made anymore, so if you find some, grab it!

8. Develop an 'Eagle eye' to spot things at a glance. *This can only be done through years of experience, so you should get started, right away!* THE ODDS ARE IN YOUR FAVOR: You are likely to find a great bargain, on your very first day. Learn to skip over obviously common, unwanted items and keep looking for something that might suddenly appear out of the corner of your eye, that will make your *whole day* worthwhile. Don't let your mind stray to thoughts of family, the ball club, your date that night, etc. One way to KEEP FOCUSED is to talk to yourself just a little as you search around the grounds of a sale. "There's a box of kitchen gadgets, *I don't need those*, there's recent National Geographics, *I don't need those*.. Aha! What's THAT? It's a box containing an old stamp collection. (Or teddy bears and dolls!) Let me have a *good* look at that..." Etc. Just find the best way for you, personally, to keep focused!

9. Develop the talent of looking for old, rather than very recent. Although newer objects may also have value, perhaps you'd do better if you concentrated your search upon obviously antiquarian items. This will definitely keep you focused! One thing to remember is, once you find there is nothing at a sale which is of value, LEAVE so you can get to the NEXT SALE, it is likely the NEXT SALE WILL have items of value which can help you get wealthy in a hurry!

10. Look for material of possible interest to scholars. This goes without saying, although I'm of the opinion that it takes a scholar to know what scholars would find interesting! But the again, maybe you're a scholar!

11. Look for what you know is popular with collectors. And look for what is popular with YOU! You may not do nearly so well speculating on buying-up items that are in an area of collecting about which you have yet to learn! And there's ALWAYS SOMETHING you DIDN'T know! I don't know much about salt and pepper shakers. Or pipes. Or collections of old fountain pens! But I found out that some collections like that are worth tens of thousands of dollars, and often end up like junk in somebody's garage sale. That's where YOU step in and soon collect the profits.

12. Don't be afraid of old stamps or coins. I sometimes find myself a

*little* suspicious of a civilian selling stamps or coins from their garage. More suspicious if its 2 teenagers selling a set of gold coins. But maybe that's the best way they could think of to sell-off grandpa's collection. You are not in much danger of participating in the sale of stolen merchandise, although if, after buying something, you want to call local law enforcement and tell them about this strange good fortune you ran into, buying \$1,000 in gold for \$200 cash, etc., by all means, go ahead! Don't buy any "gold bricks", needless to say, and some gold coins are bogus, the gold will wash off to reveal lead underneath, but there's no reason to think a packaged set of coins, such as a Mint Set or Proof Set, or a bunch of silver dollars is "fake" in any way! Stamps are a little scarier than coins because there are so many that have very little value, that finding any valuable ones out of a hoard of albums, may be a day's work, and you may not have that much time to decide whether to buy an album full of stamps, plate blocks, first day covers, and the like, or not!

13. Beware of Antique Dealers cloaked as Estate sellers. This happens all the time in every civilized country and some that aren't.. At least once, every weekend, you will spot this, if you look carefully: Some antique dealers went out of business and tried to run an antique store, right out of their garage or home! This will cause you no end of delays in getting to a GOOD sale of INEXPENSIVE merchandise, if you find yourself at a house where a proficient, cagey antique dealer has all his stuff out there, at full retail price! Even if you find something you love, and would love to buy, you will never make money with it. When I realize that's the case, that someone is using their home to sell at FULL RETAIL PRICE, I leave immediately and don't leave a call back number!

14. Discard certain kinds of items from consideration. I suggest you don't fall in love with something that's bigger than the size of your *car!* You will never get it home, and if you leave to get a truck and come back, the item, and the seller, may or may not still be there! If you get on the phone to call Uncle Ned over with his pick-up, you will be missing thousands of dollars of profits you MIGHT have made at the next sale, and the one after that, that you are going to totally miss-out on by indulging your lust for this painfully large, nearly immovable *object d'art*. I tell you, unless you have a pedigree dated Paris, 1925, which states the item was carved by Picasso and given as a present to Ernest Hemingway, and maybe not even then, keep going! Because if you had a 'pedigree' like that, it's probably fake anyway! Now, what you can learn from me, is: I am not an expert on tools, toys, games, old pens, old pipes, old decks of cards, jewelry, etc. I KNOW I'm no

expert in these fields, because whenever I spend more than \$1.00 on any such item, I find out later that I got “burned!” and so nowadays, when I see this kind of stuff at sales, I nod and smile, but keep going, looking for the things I DO know and can tell a bargain “*by sight*” from 3 feet away with one eye... such as old books!

15. Do not waste your precious time. Do you agree with me that Saturday Morning is your best, most fertile, window of possible opportunity to make the “finds” that will make you rich? It has been for me and others, and I know it will for you, as well. But Saturday Morning is just a few hours long. DO NOT, therefore, waste your precious, precious time on any thing which will NOT add to your booty, your loot, your bottom-line capital!

16. Don't be afraid of haggling and bargaining... Some people cannot bear to haggle over a price, not even in a Latin American or poor old Mediterranean country when little boys are thronging around you trying to sell you “*Chicklets*”. Not even when in an Egyptian or Istanbul marketplace, if you ask how much a shawl or scarf is, and the man coldly replied, “*Fifty dollars American!*” . Yet it is only haggling and bargaining that will deliver an item to you at a price at which you aren't overpaying, in fact, a price where you might make money when you re-sell the item. If you have to bargain hard for an item, chances are you won't be getting it at the magic “Sub-Wholesale” level anyway, and you may be better off going on to the NEXT sale where you will find a true “DON'T WANTER” who will be glad to have you remove 20 pounds of items for 25c a pound.

17. BUT... If you're getting a great deal, don't haggle! This is absolutely necessary for you to know! If the old lady has a box of Golden Age DC and Marvel comics and she says “10c a comic”, you would be crazier than she is if you said, “make it 5c!” YET I have SEEN this kind of stupid insistence on getting a low and lower price happen right in front of me. In most cases, it will make the seller edgier than they are already and they may order the insulting buyer to leave without selling them anything! I know I've done that when I sold things out of my garage and was offered ridiculously low prices, *I sent the idiot packing!* You are not locked in a struggle for survival with the garage sale seller. You don't have to “win”., and you certainly don't have to make the seller “lose”. You won just by being there and taking advantage of low, garage sale prices. I have never actually seen a garage sale seller go into the house and come out with a loaded shotgun before, but I'm sure that HAS happened when certain undesirable and insulting ruffians try to get the best of a haggard old seller!

18. Don't wear out your welcome. Maintain common courtesy at all times, after all, you are on the seller's property. You are a customer for a cheap little item, this doesn't entitle you to expect a cup of coffee and a chair. Don't stay and gab and gab and gab, even if you think they might be interested in what you're telling them, and especially don't tell them ABOUT THIS BOOK, not after you just scored a big monetary victory!

19. Don't make 'em think. Or (*worse!*): regret! Don't play games with a willing and happy seller to make them question whether they were in their right mind to sell you something. Don't rub in the fact you made a really great deal, no matter what you do, because the 'deal' came at THEIR expense! They may even suddenly change their mind, especially if you are blatant enough to tell them the 200 year old psalm book which they sold you for \$5.00 is probably worth \$500 or more/

*“Gawrsh! A-hyuck, A-hyuck! “ imitating Goofy) “...a signed Stephen King! You don't see THAT every day! Heh, heh! Thank You, so VERY much!”* That could lead to mayhem when two or three family members rush out to pry the offending thousand dollar “50c book” right out of your grasp. A clean and quick exit, once you have obtained the riches you've discovered, is strongly encouraged.

So be smart and once the sale is consummated, once they've got your coin or bill, and the item is tucked under your arm, LEAVE!! Don't even give them your calling card because they might come over the next day and say they've changed their mind! I heard of that actually happening several times, and it DID actually happen, not once, but twice, regarding old books I purchased that turned out to belong to someone else in the house who didn't want them sold. I was gracious and gave them back in exchange for what I paid for it. I would rather do that, and suggest you do the same, lest an ugly scene break out. But once a father came back and asked for the books his son had sold a week earlier, and I had to break the hard news to him that I'd already sold the item. He was already taking the belt out of his pants as he got back into the van to drive back home to gently admonish his teenage child for irrevocably selling dad's stuff!

20. Don't think something's good just because of high (or low!) price. If the slick, probable former antique store dealer who is now living in a seedy little bungalow, brings out a signed Matisse or Klee, or a baseball signed by the New York Yankees of 1938, for that matter, don't be impressed or excited if he or she asks \$500, because it may be fake, or if he asks \$5, because it still might be fake, stolen, illegal, etc. The reason to like things enough to buy them is if they seem truly worthy

of purchase and eventual resale, AND if you can get it at sub-wholesale prices. If any DRAMA develops – get in your car and keep going!

### CONCLUSION

Now you are ON YOUR WAY to making an *absolute fortune* in collectibles, purchased at the lowest possible prices (*aim for 1 to 2% of the probable retail value, if you can!*) and good terms (cash & carry!) Experience will from this point on, become your best teacher! Not every time you stop to look at an array of sales items will you find even one thing which is worthy of a dime or quarter from your pocket, but very soon you will stumble upon a sale where the purchases you make will reward you a hundred fold! May that day come swiftly, for you!

*Best of Luck, ---Ed Augusts*

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