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CITY LIGHTS

BY MATTHEW BUDMAN

Sunday Saling

By 11 a.m. Sunday, Gerald knew it would be a slow day.

"Saturday was about 20 times better than today," he said. "We've had about three people come by today.

"Sunday is not the day to have a garage sale."

Every weekend in every town, people ransack closets and boxes throughout their homes in search of nonessential items to unload at yard sales, garage sales, estate sales, block sales and flea markets.

Space is a valuable commodity, and most people don't have enough. Some never will.

No one's sure where all their stuff came from.

"We're always buying newer and different things," said Phyllis, "and sometimes you have to get rid of things, unless you want to buy a bigger house or a bigger garage."

Phyllis bared her Whitewood Avenue garage to this weekend's sporadic public for a simple reason: "To get rid of stuff that's excess and give people a bargain. You don't make a whole lot of money on a yard sale."

"Everyone wants something for nothing," said Gerald. "You can mark it down to almost nothing and they still want it for less."

Customers left many of his Oleander Avenue yard-sale articles to be returned to storage—a chair, an old phonograph, some pottery, a set of bamboo plate holders.

"The stuff I would probably give away—the oddball stuff, the weird stuff—is what sells," said Gerald, citing the purchases of a five-inch Singer TV set and dozens of 78-rpm records.

"I don't know what the hell people do with them."

He had placed an ad in a local newspaper, highlighting the availability of a refrigerator, car and gas stove. "No one has asked about any of that," he said.

With signs to put up and merchandise to organize, price and sell, setting up a garage sale takes some effort, Gerald said. "It's a lot more work than you realize. It was my fiancée's idea, but she's inside, fast asleep."

The door of a small East Avenue home opened, and an enthusiastic girl ran out. "Mom says I'm in charge of the garage sale," said Kari, 13.

Her family wants to clear out excess stuff, she said, glancing back at the broken-windowed house. "We're gonna move."

A sparse array of yarn, shoes and clothing spread over tables on the patchy lawn—with a small rack of sport coats hung on a tree branch—greeted Sunday visitors. "Today was better than yesterday," Kari said. "We've sold mostly toys and a couple pairs of shoes.

"Mostly everything is 25 cents," she continued. "If the shoes are in real good shape they're 50 cents."

A neatly lettered sign reading "Estate Sale" drew passersby to a house on West Lassen Avenue. "The property's been sold and we have to clear everything out of the house," said Norma. "We'll try to sell it first and whatever we can't sell goes to Goodwill, I suppose."

The aging household assortment filling the garage, driveway and lawn, Norma said, had drawn the attention of all types: "People looking for bargains, people looking for antiques, people looking for things to resell, people looking for things to take home and tinker with."

Still remaining—and more than likely, to be displayed next weekend in a final selling effort—were flatware, tires, two old TV sets, and a broken-down sewing machine.

The house had belonged to her mother-in-law, Norma said. "This is bric-a-brac from her 60 years of accumulation—just an old lady's treasures." □