

When the Going Gets Stuff, the Stuff Gets Going

BY GLENN McDONALD

ILLUSTRATION BY BRIGG BLOOMQUIST, U. OF KANSAS

YOUR FINALS ARE OVER. YOUR summer job secured. It's time to move out. Now for your biggest challenge, the perennial headache of May: You have to deal with your stuff.

Dealing with your stuff in college is like dealing with 700,000 rubber duckies floating in the middle of the Indian Ocean. Simply gathering all your things is strictly impossible. Moving them anywhere is even harder.

There are few sensations as unnerving as standing in the middle of your room, neck deep in all the random junk you've acquired in the last year, and realizing you have 12 hours to get it all out. And vacuum. It makes you wish you had a little disintegrator gun like Marvin the Martian used on those old Bugs Bunny cartoons. No takers on that broken futon? ZAP! Salvation Army doesn't want that 1955 cabinet-style TV? ZAP! Earth obstructing your view of Venus? ZAP!

But alas, you are a mere terrestrial and must somehow deal. Don't kid yourself, either. Abandon any hope of clearing a profit or maintaining your environmental standards. Your carefully laid plans of reselling this and recycling that will soon crumble as you jam trash bag after trash bag into that overflowing dumpster out back.

A word of warning: If you live in a group house or a big apartment, you may feel the temptation to just sort of "leave behind" a few things here and there for your roommates to deal with. This will seem like an expedient option at the time, but trust you me — you don't want to mess with this type of thing.

See, there is an inescapable system of causality in

dealing with unwanted stuff. It's called stuff-karma. By the laws of stuff-karma, if you leave some arcane, hard-to-get-rid-of items for your roommate to deal with, you will eventually come into possession of items that are even more arcane and harder-to-get-rid-of.

This is swear-to-God true. Just the other day I got a phone call from an old college roommate who claimed that some of my old stuff had glommed onto her stuff and now she couldn't get rid of it.

"Like barnacles to a manatee" were her exact

words. I tried to explain to her that, by the laws of stuff-karma, I'd already been punished for my transgression. If I were to reclaim my old stuff, I'd have to get rid of the stuff I'd since acquired, and hence bring upon myself a cosmic double whammy of stuff-karma. At any rate, it's too late for me — I can only hope these words of warning do not go unheeded.

Once you've finally pared down your possessions to the stuff you absolutely cannot live without, you'll need to find a place to store it until fall. I recommend Mom's place (your mom, not mine). Your parents may object to another carload of stuff bound for the attic. If they do, ask them how much of their stuff is still in Grandma's attic. This should restore their sense of perspective.

If all this hassle is getting you down, take heart in the fact that you're not alone. Right now, all across America, millions of befuddled students are trying to figure out what to do with their stuff. Books are being bartered, clothing is being pawned and couches are being clandestinely abandoned on midnight lawns from Berkeley to Boston. It's a spring tradition as natural as dandelions, and you'll be supporting the college-town dirt-merchant barter sub-economy.

Best of all, you can look forward to returning in the fall and buying back all the stuff you need at a 200 percent markup.

Glenn McDonald is now accepting all unwanted stuff from college students around the nation. Call for directions.



Double Take

Remember when Crayola had a contest for renaming its popular crayon colors? Well, we thought we'd share a list of what we call the alternates. These are some suggestions that were left on the play room floor:

Earwax orange
Mean Joe Green
Pickled Pig's Feet Pink
Betty White
P-pto Pink
Carrot Top
Blackhead
Urine Sample Yellow
Bellybutton Lint Gray
Charlie Brown
Purple Purple
Bleeding Gums Red
Marge's Beehive Blue
Bruise
Red Rum
Virgin White
Bongwater Brown
Eye-booger Green
Kate Moss
Gangrene

Seth Lives, Sebastian Conley, Harvard U.

