

THE WORLD'S LON

FOR THREE DAYS ON WASHINGTON'S LONG BEACH PENINSULA, BARGAINS ABOUND

By LYNETTE RAE McADAMS

Tom Miller tinkers with an old Coleman lantern, tightening the top and adjusting the bail before setting it on the “man table,” with an assortment of other camping items and small tools. “It pays to put this kind of thing out in the open,” he says, “where it can be seen from the road. The ladies will always park and walk in for a closer look, but if the guys can’t see what they’re after with just a drive-by, there’s no hope of reeling them in.”

From the other end of the yard, where she is still pricing the last of a box of items, his wife, Sharon, holds up a small bag of lug nuts. “What do you want for these?” she asks him.

“Honey, just put a dollar on them.”

She thinks for a second. “I want to put \$1.95.”

“What is this,” he asks, his voice an equal measure of affection and teasing, “Fred Meyer?”

She laughs out loud, then settles the matter for good, tagging the lot with a bright label: \$1.65.

It’s just the sort of compromise you’d expect after 55 years of marriage, but for the Millers (and countless others up and down Washington’s Long Beach Peninsula), it’s also something more: practice for the upcoming World’s Longest Garage Sale — three full days of recycled capitalism at its very finest — where every turn of the 28-mile road brings another opportunity to barter your way to a bargain.

Hundreds (that’s right, hundreds) of sales will once again dot neighborhoods, parking



PHOTO BY LYNETTE RAE McADAMS

Hers: When it comes to garage sales, neatness counts! Clean, reasonably priced, nicely displayed items make it easy on the buyer.

lots and sidewalks throughout the Memorial Day weekend, all participating in what’s become a favorite local tradition for 20 years running. Completely unsanctioned, unsponsored, and unofficial, this now famous grass roots “event” attracts thousands of people to the beach each year, wielding small bills and large vehicles, breathless to sort through piles of gently used furniture, books, antiques, household items, tools, clothing and unnecessary plastic objects of every kind, all with the hope of turning someone else’s trash into treasure.

“I enjoy it every year,” says Tom Miller, who admits his favorite part is visiting with repeat customers who seek out the Millers’ sale time and time again. “It’s neighbors and families, all out together — it’s just a whole lot of fun.”

And he’s absolutely right, it is. But with so many sales vying for attention — from Ilwaco all the way to Oysterville — it can



PHOTO BY LYNETTE RAE McADAMS

Sharon Miller holds two antique Ball canning jars—favorite items from the glassware table at her annual Porch Sale on U Street in Ocean Park, Washington.



PHOTO BY LYNETTE RAE McADAMS

His: Tools and machinery (known as “man stuff” in garage sale parlance), are always good sellers.

also be more than a little overwhelming.

Dear reader, fear not: Whether you’re a buyer on the prowl for a deal on a NordicTrack, or a seller needing to offload their supply of macrame plant hangers, the following tips are sure to help you navigate this one, long, fabulous weekend, full of friendly supply and demand.

IF YOU’RE BUYING...

Mind your manners: Most sales run Friday through Sunday, from 9 or 10 a.m. until about 4 or 5 p.m. Please don’t show up early or start knocking on doors during off hours (it doesn’t matter that you’ve realized you can’t live without that blue-ribbed goose utensil holder you saw earlier in the day; you had your chance, move on).

Strategize: With sales literally left and right, it helps to plan a route, particularly if you’re in it for the long haul. Check the extra fat section of classifieds in the Chinook

Observer for any novelty items, and map your day around those specialty sales. Also, consider your timing: Shopping earlier in the day gives you more selection, but later hours usually yield better deals.

Embrace change: Have a reserve of small bills and a few coins at the ready. If you’re in the market for big-ticket items, load up on the cash, as very few sellers will accept a personal check. (And whatever you do, please don’t barter that 75-cent Snoopy Christmas brooch all the way down to a quarter, only to end up paying for it with a \$20 bill. Serious garage sale faux pas...)

Barter better: We all love a bargain, but there’s a fine line between tactful and tacky. Know how much you’re willing to pay for an item before you start bidding, and be fair — don’t just haggle for fun. Consider buying in bulk and asking for a discount. (They might be willing to cut a deal on their Streisand collection if you’ll agree to take