

Fine, Lady, Just Take It

By Judith C. Smith

"My Motto, never pay full price for anything - bartering also works."

At certain seasons through the years, I am full of energy, don't need to sleep very much and I love a bargain. I also love to bargain down prices on stores where I am shopping and especially at Flea Markets and other public vendor locations.

It seems like a victory and to have my friends say that what was already a good bargain, I was able to bargain down even more, sometimes a LOT more, feels like a real accomplishment. In middle Eastern and European countries, no one expects you to pay the marked price and they think you are a fool (or a dumb American) if you don't bargain and bargain.

Thrift stores are where real finds are waiting on Tuesdays at one of my favorite ones. They have 30% off on that day and 50% off on Holidays, but you better get there early. It will look like Black Friday sometimes. Designer clothes for pennies on the dollar are common. Upon walking in and seeing those lines from front to back waiting on three darling girls ring up one's find as fast as their hands could work.

I had my cane that makes into a stool, so I was well prepared for the wait. Of course, I struck up a conversation with a nice lady and her grandson who had just moved to Huntsville. She insisted that I get in front of her and hold her place in line while she ran off to fill another basket full of wonderful finds.

Meanwhile, I proceeded to talk to the twenty-one-year-old grandson. I was telling him where to apply for a job and where to eat. By the time we got to the register forty-five minutes later, we were old friends. They insisted on taking me to lunch and we all agreed that the thrift store morning was one of our best.

Dealing at a flea market with vendors is another matter. Here prices are only "fixed" for the uninformed. If you are prepared to haggle and even play a bit of strategy, you can save even more over the discount prices. At a recent "hamfest" I attended with my husband, the first thing that caught my eye was a shiny steel cart with two wheels on it and collapsible handle. Sitting in the bottom was a very nice black plastic carton, similar to what 4 gallons of milk might come inside of it. The price was \$10, not bad and a lot less than others I had seen, but I offered \$5 for it. The vendor said "no" but I didn't stop there. I offered \$6 and finally when I lingered longer examining it and saying how it was just what I needed, and others were getting behind me wanting to buy some lovely trinkets, I finally offered \$8 and he said, "OK, Lady, just take it." Wow, I was off and running at this flea market and now a wheeled cart to put everything in.

I made several other purchases in the \$5 to \$10 range, but near the end, my husband and sister who had come, were amazed at my bargaining. My husband wanted 3 small antennas that were marked \$18 each and he felt they were already a good bargain for a total of \$54.00 But I told him to give me the cash and I got lots of dollar bills along with two twenty-dollar bills. I took the 3 antennas up to the table where the vendor woman was standing. I had already found that women would not deal as well with my discount offers as men would, so this would be a challenge.

I took the three packaged antennas, each about four-foot-long, to the vendor and at these places they don't charge tax. I said, "How Much?" and she replied, "Fifty-Four Dollars." I said that I was getting them for a special occasion for my husband but I didn't have that much money. I got the \$20s and a couple of ones and said, "How about \$42.00?" The reply was, "Fifty-Four Dollars." So, have carefully hidden dollar bills in every shirt and jeans pocket I had, I proceeded to pull out another dollar, and each time the woman vendor would reply, "Fifty-Four

Dollars." I was now up to \$47.00 and her reply kept being the same. At this point I just kept putting my hands in each pocket and coming up empty . . . while saying all along, "My husband sure would like these antennas." There was a group of several other men wanting to buy things and the lady was getting antsy I could see, so I felt deeply and got all the change in the bottom of one pocket and fished out a total of \$.68 and said, "this is all I have got. Won't you take \$47.68?" At this point she breathed a big deep sigh and said, "FINE LADY, JUST TAKE IT."

Now if you are looking for me, I'll be in line opening day of the next sale. Care to come along?

(Below of the black cart & the antennas she bargained for at the Dalton, GA Hamfest & Flea market in February of 2014)

