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Attic of riches

Couple turns one man's junk into treasure

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Published:
October-08-2008

If you are trying to reach Judy and Richie Ravner on the phone, you can pretty much call them any time of the day — that is, unless it is between 5 and 6:30 p.m.

During those 90 minutes, they are huddled around their glowing computer screen watching the worldwide online bidding site eBay.

Items are sold, questions are asked and money is made. They care because it is their life.

The Ravners have turned a hobby of buying items at local garage sales and selling them on eBay into a full-time job run out of their home. And at their international online storefront, a lot of that activity takes place just after 5 p.m.

Don't mistake their business for other sell-your-stuff-on-eBay-type stores. The Ravners specialize in historical items, usually ones that seem worthless but wind up being worth thousands of dollars, such as a horseshoe.

A gentleman came to the Ravners' about two and a half years ago with an assortment of items ranging from a quesadilla maker to an old horseshoe. Engraved on the commemorative shoe, which the owner said he would take a few dollars for, was the date 1897 and a dedication from "Robert Fitzsimmons, Carson City, Nevada."

Judy, who is a self-proclaimed history buff, fell in love with trying to find out the historical background of the dressed-up and slightly polished metal shoe.

Soon she learned "Fitzsimmons" was not only the boxing world's first triple-world champion, he was also a New Zealand blacksmith who commemorated his own accomplishments.

Similar sports memorabilia had sold in the past for about \$500, so the Ravners put their customer's horseshoe on eBay for \$475. At the end of the seven-day auction, a buyer had a bid in for \$3,650.

Countless other items of historical significance have passed through the couple's home, including leaflets dropped from bombers in World War II and a letter of invitation to view an execution in Florence, Ariz., in the 1800s.

Though the Ravners find excitement in following the bidding, getting their hands on items from the past is a thrill all by itself.

"When I was a kid, our weekend trips were always to go to something historical, not to an amusement park," Judy said. Through her upbringing full of museums and historical sites, she found she had a love of history.

In 2005, Judy and Richie made their own history and moved to Tucson from New York. Their hobby of searching through items at garage sales and selling them slowly dwindled in Tucson, but word of mouth spread of their selling talents. As friends and family asked for help selling their items, more and more people found out about the couple's ability to reach a buying market.

Now, using their son's old eBay account name from five years ago, JoeDaWolf, the Ravners have almost 13,000 feedbacks and a 99.9 percent positive rating.

They use their old son's room for storage and the bed as a place to package the sold items. They use another room as the computer hub where Judy writes up and posts her items and Richie loads his photographs. The Ravners go to great lengths to ensure that the items they put in their online store are authentic and well investigated.

"We don't sell fakes," Judy said. "We try really hard to research our items to find out as much information (as) is out there."

The Ravners have put historical items in the hands of buyers all across the globe. If you would like them to sell some of your items, or if you would like to see what they are selling to their worldwide market, visit to www.joedawolf.com.



Randy Metcalf/The Explorer, Richie and Judy Ravner have sold items on eBay for the past five years, turning a hobby of selling hard-to-find items bought at garage sales into a full-time business run out of their home. Though they don't sell solely on eBay, the Ravners have more than 12,000 feedbacks and a 99.9 percent positive rating on the Web site.