

# JEWLARIOUS

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I live in the City of Broken Dreams, and it's on display every weekend at my neighborhood garage sales.

by [Mark Miller](#)

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If the traditional first rung on the Making It In Show Business Ladder is the talented young aspirant stepping off the bus at the Hollywood Greyhound Station, bright-eyed and filled with hope and wonder, its flipside, the final rung on the **Not** Making It In Show Business Ladder, can be found throughout my beloved Fairfax District neighborhood in Los Angeles. Home to a multitude of show business hangouts -- Farmers Market, The Grove, Canter's Deli, the Melrose Avenue scene, and CBS -- "the Fairfax," as we residents refer to it, is also, clearly, Yard Sale Central. The area, abundant with dogs, single people, couples with babies, Orthodox Jews, and Pan Pacific Park, features yard sales every weekend, offering the remnants of countless unrealized show business dreams.

That sounds sad, I know, but I don't see it that way. I perceive the yard sales as golden entertainments, providing great opportunities to meet your neighbors, find bargains, and basically get an entire picture of someone's life, lifestyle, resume, psychoses, taste, and online dating profile -- all laid out before you on the lawn, driveway, or front stoop, in the form of prior possessions. And while

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most of the buyers, and the sellers for that matter, would no doubt classify it all under the heading of Stuff I Don't Want Anymore. Or, Stuff My Girlfriend's Making Me Get Rid Of. Or, at times, Stuff That Even Goodwill Didn't Want ----An urban archaeologist or a conceptual artist might view it as living art, *A Life on a Lawn*. Seen that way, I often feel that a walk through my neighborhood on the weekend is akin to a walk through an open-air museum, one where it's okay to interact with the exhibits and their "creators."

What fascinates me is the telling nature of the stuff. Amateur detectives or anyone interested in his fellow man can have a field day. In what other casual human encounter can you within five minutes and without ever having met or spoken to the person involved, determine that he or she has: tried eight different diet and exercise plans, a fixation on Dustin Hoffman movies, really strange/bad taste in art, been through Freudian psychotherapy, had a baby, read every self-help book available, no longer needs legal pads, and has for some reason kept an entire wardrobe of clothing from the early 1970s until now? But there it all is, in plain and unashamed view, a pop cultural museum with those who bought and used the stuff now selling it and available to give you a back-story for each item.

**Without even meeting the person you know he: has a fixation on Dustin Hoffman movies, had a baby, read every self-help book available, no longer needs legal pads...**

This being near Hollywood, show business goods abound. The show business households are fairly easy to spot. There are "For Your Consideration" screeners and scripts sent by networks and studios, jackets and t-shirts bearing TV show and movie logos, framed movie posters, and countless books on writing, directing, producing, and acting. You'll have no problem finding formats that have long since fallen from grace -- videotapes, audiotapes, laser discs, even eight tracks and occasional record albums and reel-to-reel tapes. The resulting conversation is generally the same:

BUYER: So, who's the actor?

SELLER: I am -- or was.

BUYER: (TRYING TO PUT THIS AS DELICATELY AS POSSIBLE) Would I have seen you in something?

SELLER: I had a small part in "Revenge of the Nerds," did a few Taco Bell commercials and some plays.

BUYER: And now?

SELLER: Oh, uh, the work was just really unsteady, so we're moving to Minnesota. We have family. I'm gonna work at my father's hardware store and

Donna's going to have our baby.

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BUYER: Good luck. How much for the "As Good As It Gets" video?

SELLER: I don't know -- (SHOUTING UPSTAIRS) Donna, how much for the videos?

So there it is. The material ghosts of years of show business dreams, lessons, hard work, classes, auditions, occasional successes and frequent failures, strikes, and long periods of unemployment, all for sale and awaiting new homes. Their owners, having abandoned The Dream or, more likely, been abandoned by it, have no more need for those things being around as reminders of failures, efforts wasted, accomplishments that might have been. So the items sit, displayed on the lawn, like puppies at the pound, given up by the previous owner, waiting to be adopted by the next. There they wait, alongside unwanted gifts, possessions once popular and treasured, baby books and furniture, and, as required by Yard Sale Law -- a wooden salad bowl set, a Trivial Pursuit game, and a George Foreman Grill. Hey, even the Heavyweight Champion of the World is selling kitchenware now. Maybe working in the Minnesota hardware store won't be so bad. At least the air will be better.

Ironically, because of their bargain prices, these show biz cast-off items are frequently purchased by those same just-off-the-bus hopefuls just beginning their own show business careers. So they pick up "The Working Actor's Guide to Los Angeles," "The Secrets to Auditioning For Commercials," and "Making a Good Script Great," all for five bucks. Score! And so the money changes hands, from the young aspirant who's all about possibility and potential, to the grizzled veteran of the show business wars who clearly and no doubt sadly sees his younger self in the purchaser's eyes, thinks to warn him or her, but then thinks better of it. The end of one dream and the beginning of another. It's the Hollywood Circle of Life, moving us all through despair and hope, played out on countless weekends in countless yards in my Fairfax District of Los Angeles.

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(4) Riki , May 24, 2008

this might be right but still there are some succesful ones-and they get a lot of money!

**(3) Dawna** , January 23, 2008

**So funny and so true**

What a gem of a column. I will remember this and smile every time I drive past a garage sale.

**(2) aprylza** , January 23, 2008

**letting it all hang out**

et viola, so this is why yard sales don't really work in France. G-d bless America, where people can step out in faith, fall flat on their faces, and get back up again!

I see a clear connection to the LORD's call to Abraham. It's a whole lot easier to travel without all the baggage. The irony is that there are plenty of people who are willing to snap up your junk at a fraction of the price.

Thanks for an insightful article.

**(1) Anonymous** , January 23, 2008

**The circle of life, put another way...**

Excellent amusing piece but not really "funny". Really just the opposite. I found it to be a poignant look at dreams often gone unrealized, displayed for all to see.

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Mark Miller has written on numerous sit-com staffs, performed stand-up comedy in nightclubs and on TV, and been a humor columnist for the



Los Angeles Times Syndicate. But he claims he'd trade all his accomplishments and possessions away in a second for immortality, limitless wealth and inner peace. He can be reached at [markmiller2000@ca.rr.com](mailto:markmiller2000@ca.rr.com)

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