





Valuable ADVICE

Knowing what your prized possessions are worth can give you peace of mind

Story and Photographs by Robin Conover

Just how much is that stemware in the circa 1890 bow front china cabinet worth? About \$10 a stem, according to antique appraiser Connie Sue Davenport.

Moving quickly from room to room, Davenport tags items with small, removable white stickers. On each, she records an estimate of the fair market value.

As the client leads Davenport through her Trousdale County home, she recounts the family history tied to many of the pieces. It's obvious that emotional ties can far outweigh any monetary value placed on possessions.

Some treasures, perhaps inherited from great-grandparents, may only be worth a

few dollars but are emotionally priceless. Other cast-off pieces, found hidden away in the attic awaiting the next yard sale, can fetch surprising appraisals and have no emotional ties.

With more than 30 years of experience in social science, psychology, education and antiques, Davenport combined her multifaceted background into a consulting business — Connie Sue Inc.

Through workshops, seminars, appraisal events and individual consultations, Davenport helps clients to understand what their possessions are worth and how to deal with all the stuff that collects during a lifetime.



Connie Sue Davenport checks the markings on a child's dish. In today's market, this porcelain item is very collectible at a range of \$95. Hand-made quilts, like the one below, and other textiles may be more valuable than owners realize. Properly caring for these items helps to retain their value for generations.

worth can help lessen the stress of this crisis situation. A dollar figure makes it easier to divide possessions among heirs and can help you decide what to keep and what to sell.

“Most homes can be

done in a couple of hours for less than \$200,” says Davenport of her personal property appraisal services.

After appraisals, Davenport's clients often use the knowledge gained to begin a home inventory. Creating a diary of sorts of their stuff. Recording a list of possessions including their history, value and what they mean to you can be an invaluable tool. You may even include a note about what you would like to be done with the items.

“In a lot of instances, I'm giving them permission to let go of stuff,” says Davenport.

Helping clients during the crisis of an unplanned estate sale is just one of the services Connie Sue Inc. provides. Davenport spends about half of her time with individual clients and the other half teaching workshops and leading seminars.

Working more than 50 events a year, Davenport entertains, educates and informs clients about their stuff. Quite literally, Davenport helps clients put material things in their place. She helps make sense of possessions and the roles they play in our lives.

Realizing most people have too much stuff and that sometimes it owns them rather than the other

Whether they are yours or your parents', dealing with possessions accumulated over generations can be daunting. Answering the question of what to do with all the stuff becomes difficult whether you're cleaning out closets for more space, downsizing to a smaller residence, planning a yard sale or facing an estate sale.

“In any situation, understanding what things are worth helps people make decisions,” says Davenport, who lives in Cottontown. “Having a professional evaluation and placing a fair market value on items can level the playing field. This knowledge empowers people with the information they need to decide what to do with things.”

Many of Davenport's clients are middle-aged sons and daughters who are suddenly faced with the loss of a parent, a house full of memories and their parent's life possessions at the same time. “With our busy lives and the fact that many people don't live in the same town as their parents, this situation becomes a panic issue very quickly,” says Davenport, a Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation member.

Knowing the value of higher-end items, what pieces are family treasures and what collectibles are really





Though not that old, this gaming table is in excellent condition with several compartments and is complete with all the game pieces. Condition and completeness often play key roles in determining the value of any piece.

way around, Davenport wants to begin a dialogue about what to do with all of it.

“I rarely see an empty drawer,” says Davenport as she appraises a chest of drawers.

With more than 20 years of experience in antique appraisals and estate sales, Davenport had become an expert at studying human behavior when it comes to collecting stuff. With a dry wit, she entertains audiences by describing what’s in their closets, what’s in their mother’s chest and what’s in their grandfather’s garage.

Describing these items and the memories often associated with them, Davenport gives audiences a glimpse into our own behaviors. She explores our culture’s obsession with material goods; why we acquire the things that fill every empty space we once had in closets, drawers and under the bed.

According to Davenport, realizing why we have so much stuff is the first step into learning how to deal with it.

Like the title of Davenport’s newsletter says, “It’s Just Stuff.” With her help, clients find the right place for all of there stuff. ☺

What’s it Worth

Feb. 4 • American Antiques Class, Volunteer State Community College, Gallatin. One-day class from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Contact (615) 230-3358 or <http://www.vsccl.cc.tn.us/>
Pre-registration required.

March 25 • Life Events and Our Possessions Seminar, Volunteer State Community College, Gallatin.

Half-day class from 9 a.m. to noon.

Contact (615) 230-3358 or <http://www.vsccl.cc.tn.us/>
Pre-registration required.

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