

A How-to Manual on the Disposition of the Contents of a Home

By John Minck

Last updated: December 16, 2015

At our senior age, many of us have faced the job of helping our parents downsize their home to move to senior housing. Or, after their death, to empty and close their home. In the last year, I've tried to help the children of several HP friends, struggling with what to do with hobby collections, a garage full of power tools, shelves of books and a gazillion HP binders. It is pretty overwhelming. But most of us don't want to just call "Got Junk?" and have them haul it all to a dump.

This manual is just a starting point for ideas and specific contacts on disposing of the collections of stuff that might have taken a lifetime. The contents come from suggestions made by members of the **Hewlett-Packard Retired Employees Club (HPREC)**, as they have gone through the process. I have not gone through further processes of calling Goodwill or Salvation Army to ask about specific items accepted or rejected.



A Work in Progress

This compilation has been created from suggestions to our first request in the newsletter. A number of HPREC members have sent comments. *And thank you for these ideas.* We want to continue to use the good practices of people who have actually gone through the complex tasks of closing a house, or downsizing.

In that spirit, we ask you for new usable suggestions and will update this document as you submit them. Use my email: JLMinck1222@att.net

Overall Management and Disposition Consulting

If you don't have time to spend months at the task, there are managing "experts" who will do everything from consulting to the actual physical task of separating and contacting disposal firms and moving it out.

1. Google: Managing Moves and More
About Us
Our Dream Team

Lots of other good stuff about this outfit.

\$70 / hour - we have topped \$2K so far - only half done - well worth it.

--**Jim Eaton**

2. The Stuff Cure. I wanted to share that my husband of 40 years, J. Michael Sproule, and I have brought to completion a collaborative project to write and self-publish a book on downsizing, organizing, and getting rid of excess stuff—experiences and stories related to our return to the West Coast. *The Stuff Cure: How We Lost 8,000 Pounds of Stuff for Fun, Profit, Virtue, and a Better World* is now available at

http://www.amazon.com/Stuff-Cure-pounds-profit-virtue/dp/148016237X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1357695502&sr=1-1&keywords=stuff+cure

If clicking on the link doesn't work, go to www.Amazon.com and search for "Stuff Cure" and you should be able to find our book. Our book was published in December 2012 and continues to sell in the top 10% of all books on Amazon. It is available in both a paperback and Kindle edition. Check out our website at www.stuffcure.com to see my TedX talk on [Getting to the Right Stuff](#) and like us on Facebook.

In terms of managing stuff, there is a difference based on whether the stuff is your stuff or someone else's stuff. Said another way, is the stuff tied to personal memories and meaning, or is it just stuff. When it is just stuff, there are full-service estate clearing services that will come and take everything away all at once. Some of these services will triage the stuff and identify and sell the valuable stuff, recycle what they can, and dispose of the rest. These services deduct the proceeds of any sales from your bill or pay you if there is a net positive. These services are very useful when there is a very short time frame to dispose of stuff.

When your own story is associated with the stuff, there is a psychological letting go as well as a physical letting go of the stuff. Many people find they have to spend some time to manage the entire process. Their goal is often to find a future home for the stuff that they care about that is better than their own home. Many people use a combination of approaches to manage the different categories of their stuff, whether currently functional, really valuable, or outrageously sentimental. I would encourage you to include as many resources as you can find in your list as there are many different situations when it comes to stuff.

There is a website referenced in our book that lists estate sale resources by geographic area. For the San Jose area, you might want to check out <http://www.estatesales.net/estate-sale-companies/CA/San-Jose.aspx> I am hoping that some of our HPREC members may share personal experience with some of the providers as the best of these services are usually local providers.

--Betty Sproule

3. Senior Move Managers. In the (3-15-2015) San Jose Mercury, Section D, page 4, good article on "Move managers for seniors help with years of accumulated items." There's an association of Senior Move Managers. To find those in your area, go to www.nasmm.org/find . Can either help an elder downsize to move into more manageable quarters, or for a family member to arrange for new homes for a deceased person's belongings. Article written by Marni Jameson at www.marnijameson.com .

Although these experts are primarily dedicated to moves into Senior housing, presumably these same managers will have contacts for the purpose of disposing of assets with the move.

--Carol Nakamoto

4. Trustee Help. As the last living member of my birth-family, I was executor and successor-trustee of my sister's estate. While my wife and some other extended family members assisted me, I found the Trustee Help firm to be quite helpful. They find good homes for stuff of all kinds. Also, they offer a service to inventory things in a home which I also utilized as a first step in the executor process. I oversaw the selling of my sister's home and found it interesting that the realtor that I used offered some of the same services as Trustee Help.

Company: Trustee Help, Inc.
Full Name: Cari Hays (cari@trusteehelp.net)
Address: 4950 Hamilton Ave, San Jose 95130
Business: (408) 489-9558
Web Page: www.trusteehelp.com

--Fred Harper

Specific Organizations for Disposal—with comments

1. Suggested contacts:

Craig's List – lots of items listed with good results. My wife also used it to unload her entire Dickens Village collection a little at a time. No problems and it is in cash. Will probably sell the string trimmers, chain saw and tractor on Craig's list as well.



Garage Sale – One sale but buyers seem to go with the purpose of resale so little luck here.

Salvation Army – We had a large Lane recliner sofa that was heavy so they came and removed it.

St. Vincent de Paul – Redwood City -- Catholic version of Goodwill, may have different acceptance rules.

Goodwill - We have dropped lots of items off here but a friend was a volunteer on their board of directors and the president makes a lot of money in salary. The Salvation Army is better but there is no drop off location near us. Used mainly for less expensive items and clothing.

American Cancer Society Discovery Shop – My wife volunteered here for several years and the proceeds go to a good cause. More expensive items are donated here.

Habitat for Humanity Restore – Have taken quite a bit of stuff here but mainly construction items (guy stuff).

--Bob Lundin, Loomis CA.

2. More suggestions

While I have a few minutes, thought I'd share some of the info I found out when needing to find places that would take my mom's belongings after she passed away in 2012:



Old books - Los Altos Library book drive

Yarn - Los Altos Senior Center

Yardage - local quilting center or senior center

Mid-century teak furniture - Mt View Consignment Center on El Camino/Grant Road - she came to house, placed value, had items picked up and delivered to their store - sent me periodic invoices and checks as items sold - included a piano

Bird cages and assorted equipment - Santa Clara County Bird Club (she used to raise and show canaries)

Pre-arranged garbage/recycling pickup with City of Palo Alto, arranged them separately along front of yard, they picked up in few hours on scheduled day - even took a few toxic items (batteries, etc); very helpful

Garage sale that people had a field day, price everything in advance, cash box with small bills and have lots of helpers if lots of items - good profit - things that didn't sell, I prearranged Salvation Army to pick up next day

--**Carol Nakamoto**

3. And more:

Happy Dragon Thrift Shop

245 W. Main St., Los Gatos

408-354-4072

The proceeds of this all volunteer gift shop go to support EMQ Families First. They take clothing, housewares, linens, not sure what else. Recently there was an article about them in the *San Jose Merc.*

Nearly New Shop Upscale Resale

<http://www.nearlynewsunnyvale.org/>

225 E. Maude Avenue

Sunnyvale, CA 94085

408-732-6202

The proceeds of this shop go to support college scholarships for local women. They take men's, women's and children's clothing, household items, collectibles, kitchenware, jewelry, art, books, toys and gift items. They do not accept SOILED, TORN, BROKEN OR DEFECTIVE ITEMS. They cannot accept:

Electronic Equipment, Magazines older than 6 months, Baby or sports equipment, Video tapes, Health care equipment, Non-functioning kitchen appliances, Knives, Tools, Large furniture and appliances

Heaven's Closet Thrift Shop -- 439 N Cloverdale Blvd, Cloverdale, CA;

<http://www.ucclloverdale.org/heavens-closet-thrift-shop.html>

Located on the grounds of the United Church of Cloverdale; operated by United Church volunteers; Church Phone 707.894.2039.

Takes clothing, small kitchen items, linens, accessories, small toys; cannot accept computers, monitors, books (hard or soft cover), mattresses, or large furniture.

-- **Dee Marik**

4. Freecycle

There is an online service called "freecycle," on-line for giving stuff away. I have both given and received from freecycle, and I think it is great. This website provides for locations by city.

-- **Dee Marik**

5. eBay. Probably the world leader on sale of stuff. But the task of itemizing and photographing and managing the sale of hundreds of items could be overwhelming, especially if you have a regular job. Packaging and shipments take more time.

There are eBay selling services available though something called eBay Drop Off Stores. These people take on the job of cataloging and photographing and managing the sales on eBay. You can Google eBay Drop Off stores and find them by city. One example is Golden Gate Consignments on 2383 Ocean Ave., San Francisco.

www.goldengateconsignments.com. They may quote low sales fees, but typical commissions run about 50%.