The following sample poems from Selling the Family focus on possessions that trigger memories of those who once treasured these belongings. The auctioneers’ staff sorts through my brother-in-law’s photography equipment and my father’s WWII memorabilia. A gift to my parents from my Uncle Curtis reminds me of one of many Christmases celebrated with my family, and I save keepsakes from my grandmother and Aunt Dorothy. “Resignation Affirmation” appeared online in *One Sentence Poems* as “Resignation” on April 21, 2019.

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**The Artist in the Barn Loft**

The auction sorters

bring down from the loft

cases too heavy for me

Outside in the sun,

they open cartons and bags to light

for the first time in years.

Brother-in-law Harlan’s

old camera equipment,

thousands of dollars of

mechanical SLR cameras, lenses, filters,

one telephoto lens with a note,

“bought at garage sale, never used.”

Polaroids, Canons, Minoltas,

large format negatives, developing

equipment, crowded slide reel.

The head auctioneer

uses his mobile phone

to take quick snaps of

once ultramodern instruments

that produced Harlan’s

vanishing art.

The Auctioneer’s Staff Sorts through WWII

I watch one worker kneel in the grass

taking a pocketknife to triage

father’s WWII army uniform,

cutting away rotten bits

saving most of the jacket.

He tells me what some things are,

ribbons from three campaigns,

a good conduct medal,

a sharp shooters medal,

which he carefully removes

to look at the back

to see if it is sterling.

It is. Forty bucks.

He pins it back on.

I tell nearby sorters the story

of how Dad met Patton.

After Normandy, D-Day,

he was an MP in occupied France,

guarding some road and,

and told the lead driver

of one nighttime convoy

no papers, no passing.

Dad outranked him. Then,

he told the sergeant the driver sent

that they were of equal status,

no papers, no passing,

and the officer the sarge sent forward

asked Dad’s name when

Dad said the officer did not outrank his C.O.

Then a final figure strode up

through the shadows and said,

“God damn you, Sergeant Pete,

you son of a bitch, let us through!”

He did.

Proudest moment of my Dad’s service,

being called a son of a bitch by General Patton.

They throw the scraps of uniform

into the semi-sized dumpster,

lay his jacket on the auction wagon,

move on to the next remnant.

**Christmas in July**

Sorting through the estate,

sweltering in summer heat,

I recognize the dented metal

Viking ship silhouette

mounted on wooden plaque,

a present from Uncle Curtis to my parents,

who proudly posed with it

for a Christmas Eve photograph,

then displayed the ship for years

in our suburban dining room,

and now passing through my hands,

worth barely a glance.

Resignation Affirmation

Winter nights I lie beneath

aunt’s comforter and grandma’s quilt,

the only soul left alive to know

the meaning of their weight and warmth.