Deals, steals at annual Braintree police auction

By CRAIG NICKLES
For The Patriot Ledger

BRAINTREE – As an auctioneer, Kevin McHugh has the dry wit and droll delivery of a veteran cop.

A bike without a seat comes up for bid. His pitch: "Here's a bike you stand up on all the time."

Then he offers watches.

"These have a $799 price tag still on it. It says 'Movado.' I'll guarantee that it's a watch."

Then an 18-inch-tall elephant statue. "This is a genuine Indian elephant. It was brought here by the Maharaja in 1917. It's been here ever since – in the garage."

McHugh, Braintrtee's deputy police chief, acted as auctioneer for the department's annual auction Saturday. Once a year, the police department auctions off the lost, stolen, unclaimed and confiscated items it collects during the year.

About 20 to 30 people – a mix of veteran bargain-hunters and families – attended the auction in the police headquarters garage.

Police auctioned off a wide variety of items, ranging from car stereos to a Betty Boop talking bottle opener.
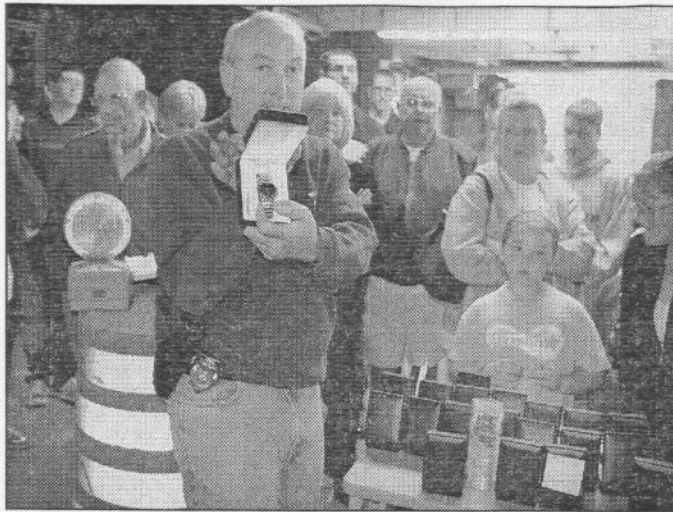
Items drew wildly different prices, based on little more than the needs of one or two attendees. A duffel bag full of rock-climbing gear, for example, sold for $72 after two bidders drove up the price. The next item – a car stereo – sold for a dollar.

"Different people want different things," McHugh said.

Bikes were the biggest draw. Police auctioned off 79, ranging from decrepit old toddlers' bikes to like-new mountain and dirt bikes.

Many bikes sold for $5 or less. The most expensive bike, an orange Mongoose dirt bike, sold for $35. Many more bikes were left unsold. McHugh said police are looking to donate the unsold bikes.

McHugh said he could not guarantee any item except to say that it exists. The "Movado" watches, for example, were "probably counterfeit and collected in a raid," he said.

Deputy Chief Kevin McHugh auctions off a watch during the Braintree Police Department's auction of lost and stolen property.

Dozens of bicycles for auction fill the Braintree police garage.

Many people were still willing to bid, if only for the sheer cheapness of what they were getting.

Dennis MacDonald, 14, of Braintree, picked up a paintball gun and Compaq personal data assistant.
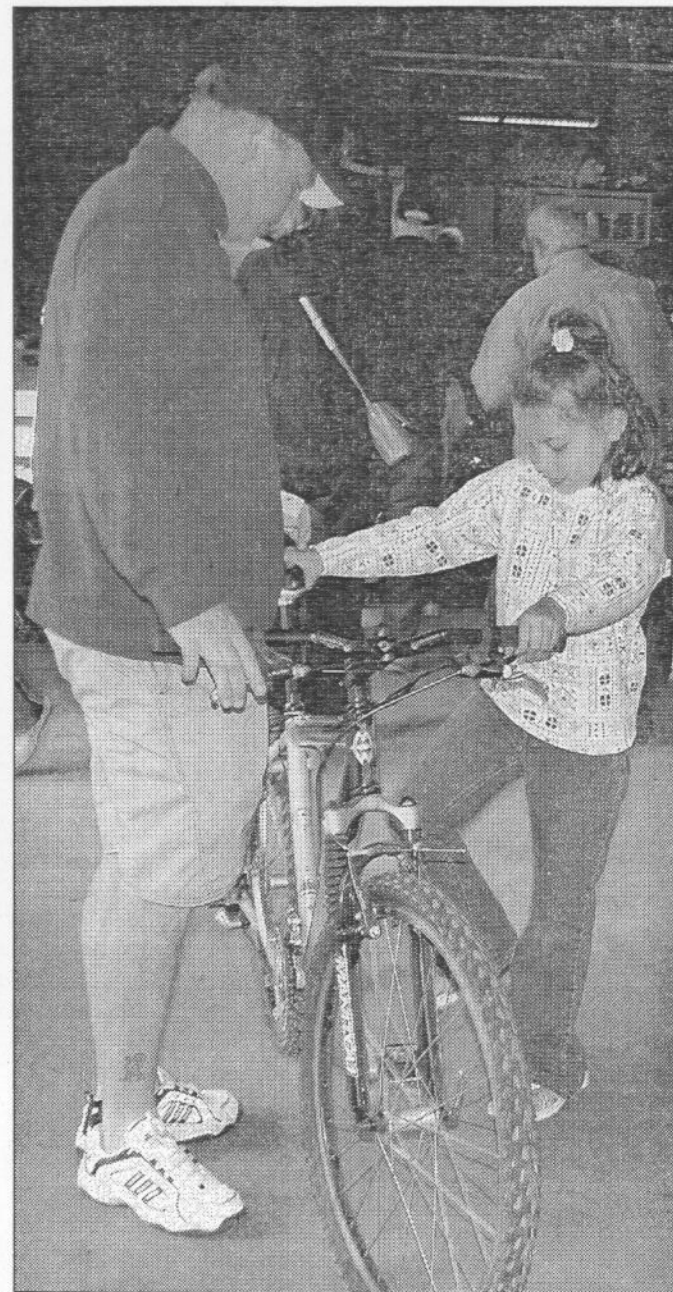
"It's a steal for 12 bucks," Dennis said of the PDA.

His mother, Patti, bought two of the "Movado" watches. "I got $1,600 worth of watches for nine bucks," she said with a grin. She added that, as long as the watches kept time, she'd be happy with them.

Betsy Flynn of Braintree picked up nine baseball bats for $2 after spending $50 for one at a retail store.

"There's super deals," said Robert Boyd of Quincy, who picked up a bike for a co-worker's son whose bike has been stolen three times. "There's gems among the coal."

DEBEE TLUMACKI photos/The Patriot Ledger

Amanda Moosick, 7, of Quincy looks at the bicycle she helped pick out for her stepfather, Rick McKinnon, during the Braintree Police Department's auction Saturday.