

eBay the 2008 Election

Obama and Palin Memorabilia Doing Brisk Business on the Web, But Experts Say Buyers and Sellers Beware

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Who says the economy's down? If the staggering price tags on most of the more than 83,000-plus election goodies up for grabs on eBay -- everything from Nov. 5 morning after newspapers to presidential action figures -- are to be considered, it seems Americans have plenty to spend. In fact, sales of Obama-related merchandise have increased by 140 percent in the past five days, according to an eBay rep, with items like a signed first edition of his memoir, *Dreams From My Father*, going for \$8,900! But is it worth the investment?



Can't get enough of the 2008 Election? Barack Obama and Sarah Palin memorabilia is up for sale on the Web.

"Right now, the value of these election items is speculative," he advised. "These items haven't stood the test of time. And most of them won't."

The same could be said for all the Sarah Palin merchandise that's still up for grabs on eBay. There's Palin aplenty, but, "Who collects the losers? How many Geraldine Ferraro collectors do you know?" said Rinker. "You have to look at the long term, and if you must buy, the bigger and more displayable an object, the better."

"Anyone paying \$100 right now for a newspaper is out of their gourd," said collectibles expert Harry Rinker, who blames the spike in politician prices on a phenomenon he's dubbed the "celebrity bounce."

"There's a period of time after a historic event occurs -- Princess Diana dying, Obama winning, whatever it may be -- where there's this sense of euphoria that causes people to do crazy things and pay ridiculous prices," said Rinker, author of the guide "Sell, Keep or Toss?" "But give it a month or six and you'll get the same items for a dollar."

Rinker subscribes to the "30-year rule" when it comes to memorabilia

A spot-check of completed auctions of election memorabilia on eBay showed some evidence of the vagaries of delving in the political collectibles game. There were indeed many big ticket items that sold for four and five figures, like a pair of VIP tickets from Obama's election night rally in Chicago's Grant Park that sold for \$1,104.08, or an autographed first edition of Obama's book "Dreams From My Father," that sold for \$8,900. But there were also hundreds of auctions that failed to attract any bids at all. Things like morning-after newspapers went unsold in droves, even some that were offered for as little as 99 cents.

Herewith, a look at some of the quirkier items up for bid.

History, Take Two



Missed grabbing your copy of the Nov. 5th edition of The New York Times -- or The Washington Post, Chicago Sun Times or USA Today, for that matter? An unread copy of a "sold-out" paper -- with Obama's victory splashed across the front page -- could run you as much as \$200.

Rinker's take? "If you're nostalgic, OK. But it'll come down to a few bucks in a month or so. I don't advise anyone to buy this stuff as an investment."

President Palin?



He hasn't even been sworn in yet, but President-elect Obama already has some competition lined up for the 2012 election. And if you're rooting for Palin, you can still nab this nifty 3-inch round button, a bargain at \$3.49. Made with recycled materials, it's environmentally friendly, to boot.

"Election-related buttons, pre-win, are the best bet," said Rinker. "But they have to be the real thing. They're scarcer now. These days, you have to make a campaign donation to get one."

And Action!



She might not be Wonder Woman, but looks like this pint-sized Palin action figure can hold her own. Standing tall at 12 inches, this special edition figurine comes factory-sealed, complete with her own pistol and holster. But Alaskans be forewarned, the free shipping is limited to the 48 contiguous states. Bidding starts at \$49.

"Dolls do have crossover collectability," said Rinker. "Once the political nostalgia fades, doll collectors may still be interested."

Hungry?



After coughing up a minimum of \$65 for a box of sugary ObamaO's, you might not be able to stomach eating them. With a "limited edition" of 500 boxes in existence, who could resist? Rinker, for one.

"Collectors' edition, limited edition, there is no truth to those catch phrases," he said. "The only limit is the buyers' interest."

Web Wise



The priciest political prize on the web? The domain for www.SarahPalinforPresident2012.com, which clocks in at a staggering \$2 million starting bid. But this isn't your everyday eBay sale. Transfer of this domain will require attorney involvement. Also noteworthy: This seller is based in Wasilla, Alaska. Perhaps Palin's trying to recoup some of those election wardrobe expenses?

"Again, it's all speculative," said Rinker. "The only people who win are the sellers, because you won't be able to resell these things at 10 cents on the dollar."

And Action!



This budget breaker is what the seller dubbed the "Holy Grail" of Obama collectibles, an autographed copy of the president-elect's "Dreams From My Father," along with documentation dubbing it "authentic." But if you're interested, you better move fast. There's already two bids in, and this will set you back a minimum of \$3,300.

"Unless there's a photo of Barack signing it, the signature's a fake. And again, what's the long-term prognosis?" said Rinker. "In 50 years, who's going to care? It's no better than the Bush stuff."