At least you can't accuse Mark Shapiro of not cleaning up his messes.

With the completion of last week's annual July garage sale, Shapiro essentially closed the book on his role as general manager of the Indians, a job he took over in late 2001, by sweeping out most of the last remaining vestiges of his tenure as the Cleveland Indians' general manager. .

It was hardly a rousing success. When his 9th year is completed, he will have posted exactly two winning seasons in a career that ultimately will be known more for bungled opportunities, bad decisions and misspent millions than anything else.

The good news, though, is that for the next few years general manager-in-waiting Chris Antonetti won't have to preside over his own annual auction. Pretty much anything not nailed down already has been sold by Shapiro and all that remains in the cupboard that Antonetti inherits is an essentially minor league team with a mostly minor league budget.

Shapiro's sale didn't create much of a windfall for the team this year, assuming you define windfall as legitimate prospects. The good stuff had been picked over the past few years

anyway and all that remained in the cut out bins were the likes of a sore-armed Jake Westbrook, an injury-prone Kerry Wood and an attention-challenged Jhonny Peralta. Indeed, in a few cases the Indians actually had to help pay the salaries of the departed. For their trouble the Indians received a few low level prospects who you'll most likely never hear from again.

Given the voodoo economics of baseball and the draconian way in which Shapiro had the Indians participate, it's hard to argue about any of these trades. Indeed, you really can't argue much with any of his previous trades, either. The Indians under Shapiro were mostly desperate sellers because of their own financial issues and pretty much had to take what's offered in order to meet their more immediate goals of fiscal prudence.

Under Shapiro's careful direction, hammered out at the insistence of owners Larry and Paul Dolans, the Indians are officially s shoestring operation again, much as they used to be, with no business charging major league prices.

Shapiro's teams made two runs at a championship and twice Shapiro wasn't able to get the team over the hump. But those teams look like anomalies at this point because they had top-level talent making major league dollars. But as decisions Shapiro made didn't pan out and age and impending free agency caught up with the players he mostly inherited the Indians have been on a slow, painful march to the bottom as they look to pare their budget to an absolute minimum.

Whether you think the team under Shapiro was shrewd or simply mismanaged depends on what you think about the contracts of the three players they just dumped. Along with Travis Hafner and his contract, they are at the core of why the Indians are struggling so mightily financially.

Let's start with Westbrook. He's under .500 for his career with an ERA of 4.34. Until his injury, his best attribute was as an inning eater, pitching over 200 innings in each of 2004-06. Those seasons led the Indians to sign him to a contract that's paid him over $10 million in each of the last 3 seasons alone. It's hard to know if Westbrook's contract was market price or if Shapiro set the market by overpaying him in the first place. Suffice it to say though that more than a few people questioned Shapiro's decision at that time to give Westbrook that kind of contract given his rather modest accomplishments.

Peralta is even more of a mystery. He's a lifetime .264 hitter whose one decent season in 2005 convinced Shapiro to label him a core player. That led to Shapiro signing Peralta to a long-term above market contract to buy out of his arbitration years. Peralta never duplicated that 2005 season, coming relatively close just once in 2008. Meanwhile he proved to be a player who seemed oddly indifferent to his craft.

The signing of Kerry Wood still mystifies. Wood had been a closer for only one season with the Cubs when he was signed by Shapiro. While he did save 34 games, the Cubs didn't seem particularly interested in re-signing him. Meanwhile it was difficult to understand Shapiro's thinking giving the context of the Indians at that time.

Remember, the 2007 Indians went 96-66 with Joe Borowski saving 45 games. They beat the Yankees in the divisional series and were up 3-1 against Boston before losing 4 straight. But Borowski was a high-wire act and a better general manager would have made the move for another closer then.

But Shapiro stood pat and the team regressed in more ways than just on the mound. CC Sabathia, the reigning Cy Young award winner was traded. Thus by the time Wood was signed for the 2009 season, the team was a shadow of its former self. The Indians had far more fundamental problems that needed addressing and signing a player like Wood for just two years at that kind of money reeked of stop-gap. It's money could have been much better spent.

Now back to Travis Hafner for a moment. The reason he's still standing in an Indians uniform has nothing to do with either sentimental attachment or production. It's simple dollars. His current salary is $11.5 million and there are still two seasons, plus a club option in a third, at $13 million per. There's also a $2.75 million buyout if that club option isn't exercised.

At that price, he'd have to be producing Albert Pujols numbers to move him, which if he were I still believe he'd be traded. But that's a rather worthless debate. He's been out of the lineup recently with a sore shoulder, though in fairness it's kind of hard to tell. In July he hit 1 home run and had 4 RBI. He also had 21 strike outs and had more games with multiple strikeouts than in any other month of the season.

His is the contract that just keeps giving and giving. While there's no reason to think that

Shapiro wouldn't have traded Peralta, Westbrook and Wood just for sport, in truth those trades are as much directed at Hafner's unmovable contract as they were to conclude the process Shapiro started when he and the Dolans determined that they could never sign Sabathia.

In a sense, then, these recent trades provide a fitting conclusion to Shapiro's career as a general manager. He was never able to climb the mountain with this team because for all his bluster and easy-going ways, he wasn't a particularly good judge of talent. In making his one real run to a championship he consistently bet on the wrong horses and those bets ended up costing this franchise millions in unrealized value while inhibiting the real growth of legitimate prospects.

From this point forward, the team now is in the hands of Antonetti, someone who has been trained directly by Shapiro and who will be supervised by, wait for it, Shapiro. That means there's no reason to believe that much will change, from the business model built on a one-word strategy "hope" to an endless cycle of trades and prospects.

So come season's end, when Antonetti takes over for good and reboots the server, in all likelihood, there's little chance it's going to clear the error codes.