

This auctioneer is a woman!

By JOANNE SPAHR
CARLISLE — The inscription under her name in her 1964 high school yearbook said only one thing — "Wants to be an auctioneer."

And they laughed because she was a girl.

Undaunted, she thought to herself, "Let them laugh, I'll show 'em."

And she did. Today Carol Burruss, Carlisle, is that auctioneer that she always wanted to be and she is one of only two or three in the state. Back in 1964 when opportunities for women weren't nearly as abundant as they are today, Mrs. Burruss forged the way for women in auctioneering, a profession she grew up around and always loved.

"My dad (Paul Boyles) has owned Potties Auction House in Newville for 32 years," relates the smiling Carol, "And, ever since I was little, auctioneering was something I thought was fascinating."

"In fact," she continues, "I used to get up and holler when I was a little kid. One time our auctioneer became sick and I yelled, 'I'll do it, I'll do it!' That was when I was about 12 or 13 years old."

It was around that same age that this self-proclaimed tomboy made up her mind to be an auctioneer. And, even though she knew it wasn't going to be easy, she set about the task when she was still a senior in high school.

She began the process by writing a letter to Reppert's School of Auctioneering in Decatur, Ind., telling them of her aspirations and her desire to enter their school. Unfortunately, they never wrote back.

Carol, however, did not give up.

"I made a pest of myself," she says with her big, easy grin. "I just kept writing for over a year until they accepted me. I think I wrote four or five letters until I got a reply."

Up to that time no women had ever been admitted to the three-week school and when Reppert's agreed to

accept her, she was told that the school was doing it only on a conditional basis.

"They said they'd try it one time," she notes with her pleasant, very-slightly-southern-tinged accent.

The main drawback, as the school saw it, was that women would detract from the program. But, actually, says Carol, they have now found that men actually work harder when women are enrolled because they don't want a little lady showing them up.

At the same time Carol was enrolled, two other women were accepted, as well, and the practice of taking women has continued ever since.

But, Carol points out, just because they were accepted doesn't mean that the women had an easy row to hoe.

"We poor girls," Carol laments with her usual infectious smile and laughing eyes, "We had to furnish our own living quarters and we had to worry about our own

transportation from the hotel where we were staying." The men, in the meantime, lived in dormitories.

Some of the teachers did take pity on the women, however, and attempted to make life easier for them.

"When they did that," says Carol, "I told them I didn't want favoritism. I wanted to be treated just like everybody else. I think I shocked them."

Once she finished her course, she had another

obstacle to overcome — her apprenticeship. As was to be expected, few auctioneers wanted a girl apprentice at their side. But, she was able to obtain one with Dean Shull of Perry County.

She vividly remembers her first sale with Shull. It was her uncle's farm sale, and the first time she got up she couldn't talk because of "stage fright."

"I tried, and I'm still

trying," she says with laugh. Even today, she notes, she still gets butterflies in her stomach when she steps in front of a crowd. But, over the years she has developed an attitude which helps her greatly.

"I just say to myself, 'Nope. They're not going to laugh at me. I've heard worse than myself.'"

But, there's still some (Turn to Page 54)



Carol Burruss and her daughter Linda display a few of their spotted swine.

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