

Bidders Open Hearts And Wallets To Help Family Who Lost Everything

GAY BROWNLEE

Somerset Co. Correspondent MEYERSDALE (Somerset Co.) — "Come back, Renee," said the auctioneer at the Somerset County Fair's junior Livestock Sale. "We've just been told that the buyer donates the lamb back to Renee," the auctioneer told the buyers and spectators in the show arena. Fifteen-year-old Renee Korns attempted to exit the platform with her 118-pound Suffolk lamb eight times, until the sale committee, realizing that 95-market lambs were waiting to be auctioned, called for an end.

Renee's lamb was sold immediately after the various champions. When the eight bids were tallied, the lamb brought \$31.55 per pound, or \$3,723.

But there was a reason for the madness, which didn't end there. Renee's family had lost their home the night before the county fair opened. In fact, they had just arrived home from delivering lambs and Belgian horses to the fairgrounds, and were settling in for the evening when Darla Korns, Renee's mother saw flames in the laundry room.

What didn't burn was ruined by water and smoke, so with dad, Warren and sister, Megan, the family basically lost everything. They felt numb.

Then some sneaky friends, including Mary Ann Sorber, a fair director and sale committee member who believes that people ought to help each other in times of need, started a scheme to benefit the family. Some buyers were found who would donate the lambs back.

Sorber found a big container for cash donations and left it in the livestock barns. The idea was that the Somerset Co. exhibitors could be one buyer. They raised the money to bid \$8 a pound for the lamb, the highest bid.

Of course, Sorber, looking as guileless as the lamb, itself, was kept busy all week whisking the money jar out of sight when any of the Korns family appeared.

"I was taken by surprise," said Renee, a sophomore at the Meyersdale Area High School. "I thought it was going to be a normal sale. But I'd walk out and they would call me back and say 'you aren't done.' I thought it was a never-ending thing," she laughed.

Later, the second lamb was sold and donated back to the White Oak 4-Her four times. One of those buyers was Gambill Amusements, Stubenville, Ohio, which provided midway rides and games during fair week.

Renee began to fear her lambs would never be sold for real. Under the circumstances she certainly didn't want to keep them.

To top that, proceeds from the sale of several other lambs were also donated to the Korns family because Warren is a 4-H leader and member of the sale committee. That group included Fair Queen Jennifer Randall who sold two market lambs.

"It was the least I could do," remarked Randall, later.

Waiting while the other lambs and steers were sold made a long day for Renee.

When the last steer was sold, the auctioneer asked the group to clap their hands if they wanted Renee to bring back the two animals for more bidding. A few seconds passed. A six-hour sale had everybody waried, anxious to leave.

Then a few claps were heard. They steadily increased. A last try. James Yoder bought one for \$1 a pound. The other sold for \$.75 a pound to Lou Shredy of LaRue Meats. What a relief!

Bidders on the first lamb were Leroy Bittner, Meyersdale; Exhibitors and Friends of the Somerset Co. Fair; John Dom, Meyersdale; Walker Farm Service, Somerset; Singo Feed and Sons, Somerset; Keystone Vacuum, Somerset; Snyder of Berlin and Silver Valley Farm owned by Cecil Petenbrink.

Lamb number two brought bids from Gambill Amusements, Ritco, Inc., Richard Sines, Meyersdale and Mark's Auto Sales, Friedens. The total was \$748.

Darla Korns, who after her house was gone, had little interest in the fair, came only on those days their animals were being shown. Her arrival at the sale was in the nick of time to see Renee and her first lamb. She was unprepared for what happened.

"It was overwhelming," she said, standing in the sheep barn next to the lambs' pen and wiping away tears.

The fire had started in the motor of the electric clothes dryer, Darla said. She and Renee were in the house.



Chatting following the Somerset Co. Fair's Junior Livestock Sale are from left, Renee Korns, Darla Korns, Warren Korns, Mary Ann Sorber and Megan Korns. Sorber helped plan a surprise benefit for the family who lost their house and household goods just before opening day of the fair.

Warren, a feed salesman for the Bedford Farm Bureau, a locally owned co-op, was tending the animals at their small farm located several miles away.

After watching the local television newscast that carried some pre-fair clips, Darla began to read the newspaper. It was then that she

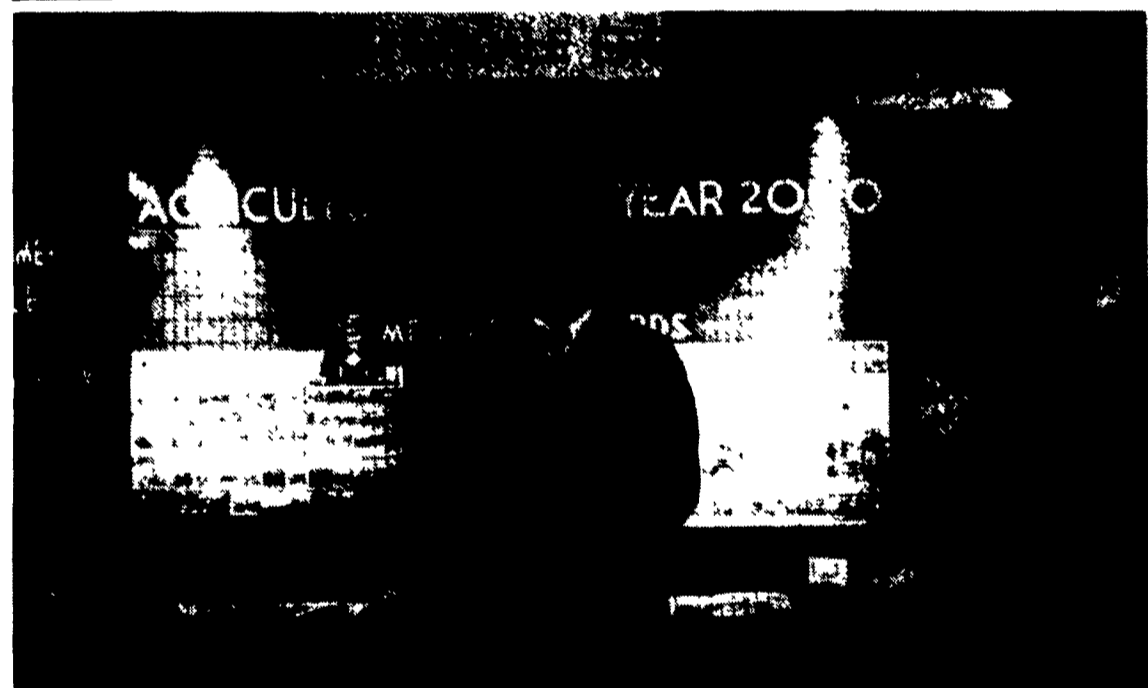
noticed flames shooting through the laundry room, next to the kitchen.

Four fire companies responded to the scene.

Until the house can be fully gutted and rebuilt, the family is staying with Darla's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Elwood Ackerman. They live next door at Meyersdale, RD

3. "People have just been wonderful," said Darla. "Renee is excited about how much money her lambs brought."

Darla says although the unexpected aid will help to rebuild and purchase necessary items, some of it must go toward Renee's future.



In official dress, Jason Tipton, president of the Somerset County FFA, displays the first place blue ribbon won by the Meyersdale FFA Chapter at its exhibit seen at the Somerset County Fair. The theme was "Agriculture in the Year 2000."

Somerset County FFA President Says FFA Reversed His Life

GAY BROWNLEE

Somerset Co. Correspondent MEYERSDALE (Somerset Co.) — Spend a few hours in the company of 18-year-old Jason Tipton, president of the Somerset County FFA, and you'll hear nothing but praises.

"I wouldn't trade it for anything," he said while strolling at the Somerset County Fair on 4-H and FFA Day.

Jason wears the white shirt, dark tie, and requisite royal blue, corduroy FFA jacket. Gold embroidery at the right shoulder area identifies him by name.

The words are confession of sorts from a young man whose lifestyle underwent radical change after joining the Meyersdale FFA Chapter in ninth grade.

At the time, Jason was looking for an easy way — an effortless

passage on to somewhere else. FFA was just the ticket for such transportation, he thought.

"I basically got into it as a gag, to be with my friends, but I learned respect," said Jason. Trips to Penn State and the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown with the FFA exposed him to new people and new situations. At home, patient teachers combined with those experiences to change Jason's wayward character.

"FFA isn't just for farmers, it's for anybody," said the president, "anybody who wants to better himself."

"It's given so much to me. I want to give back to it," he said. "If you want to better yourself, you've got to do it yourself."

Standing erect in official dress, Jason knows there is something special about the FFA jacket. It

causes people to notice you.

"If we're dressed up in our FFA jacket," he said, "we get respect. We can go anywhere and we get respect. If I'm in official dress, I can talk freely," said the Meyersdale Area High School senior, former chapter parliamentarian and current chapter secretary. John Hartman is the adviser.

"There's nothing like State Days at Penn State because of the kids you meet," said Jason, whose maternal grandparents, Bill and Jerry Bauer, raised Jason and twin brother, Joey, after their mother died. They moved here from Warren County when Jason was young.

"In one word," said Jason, "the FFA is 'Friendship'." That belief became clear when, after losing

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Renee Korns and her younger sister, Megan, are in the sheep pen at the Somerset Co. Fair. Two of the lambs were sold to 14 buyers and other exhibitors donated money from their lambs to the Korns family to rebuild their house.