

# Library Auction features

By ANN DEVLIN  
Staff Correspondent

(EDITOR'S NOTE: As staff correspondent Ann Devlin researched material for a story on the history of the Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction, her sources included a July 7, 1966 special edition of The Dallas Post, a Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction publication from 1947-73, and a college thesis entitled "History of the Back Mountain Memorial Library" written in July 1969, by Edward Potera, then a student at Marywood College and now librarian at the Dallas High School. Also providing much background information for this story was Nancy Kozemchak, an employee of the Back Mountain Memorial Library and the library correspondent for The Dallas Post.)

The 37th Annual Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction, netting a profit of over \$40,000, could very easily have instead been the the 37th Annual Back Mountain Memorial Library Cookbook, clearing only a couple of hundred dollars.

It became apparent that the library would need some sort of fund-raiser in 1947, two years after the opening of the library, when the library's financial reserves were dwindling. That winter, a group of volunteer women were trying to come up with a money-raising plan as they prepared books for the library. This

was when the ladies came up with the idea of collecting recipes and publishing a cookbook. Among the women were Librarian Miriam Lathrop, Mrs. Alice Howell, Mrs. Harry Ohlman and Mrs. Lewis LeGrand.

However, due to discouragement from Howard Risley, then publisher of The Dallas Post, who felt the cookbook idea would involve too much effort and too little profit, the door was left open for the auction idea to evolve.

One afternoon while working in the library, Mrs. LeGrand casually mentioned that a friend of hers was involved in a group that had made a \$700 profit from an auction. This suggestion seemed a good idea to Mrs. Howell, who immediately approached Mr. Risley with the idea. He was genuinely enthusiastic, and is remembered by Mrs. Howell as saying, "Hell, we'll have an auction and make \$2,000!"

Thus, the start of the Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction.

The headlines of an article in the January 31, 1947 issue of The Dallas Post read: "Old Furniture Auction Planned to Raise Funds for Library." In the article it was announced that the auction would be held in Howard Risley's barn on Lehman Ave. in Dallas.

Miss Frances Dorrance, chairman of Friends of the Back Mountain Memorial Library, headed a committee to contact community members who had articles to give to the sale. Lest people think that



Harry Ohlman, at the microphone and Howard Risley, right, get things underway at the 1949 auction.

only antiques or used items were wanted, Mrs. Fred Howell, member of the telephone solicitation committee, informed the public that "anything that has value or that someone would want to buy," would be gladly accepted.

Harry Ohlman, chairman of the special gifts committee, enlisted the aid of the Dallas Rotary Club to contact all businessmen for possible donations. Flyers were also distributed, asking for donations of livestock and household goods.

Mrs. Harris Haycox, chairman of the baked goods booth, assisted by several women of the community, collected baked goods from women in the Back Mountain region.

Then, in poured the donations. All members of the community were eager to participate in a drive which would help support the only functioning memorial to the war veterans in the area. Items even came from those who were strangers to the Back Mountain area.

As contributions also came from other parts of the country, Henry Peterson, chairman of the grounds committee, made provisions for the possibility of the auction to last into the night hours. Paul Shaver installed floodlights at the Risley barn on Lehman Ave. Serving with Peterson were Charles Wheaton Lee, Charles Nuss, Atlee Kocher, Jack Richardson, Joe Hand, and Stanley Rinehimer.

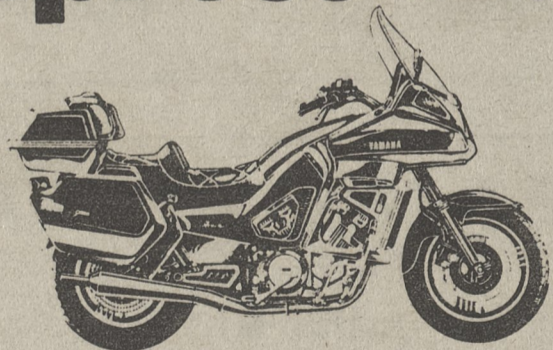
An antiques committee evolved by chance when Mrs. Risley, who was searching around the upstairs of her barn, mentioned to Mrs. Howell and Mrs. Hutchison that there seemed to be some valuable antiques among the donated items. As they washed and dried some of the better ones they placed them on a separate table to insure their safety. The women then decided to auction the antiques separately.

The first Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction opened with the sounds of drums and horns from the Lehman



Attorney Frank Townend, left, and an unidentified friend chat with Sen. Harold Flack, right, during a lull in 1956 auction activities.

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