

Auctioneers just want to have fun

BY CHARLOT M. DENMON
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"I have \$100--\$150, who'll give me \$155? \$155--going once, \$155 going twice, \$155--sold!"

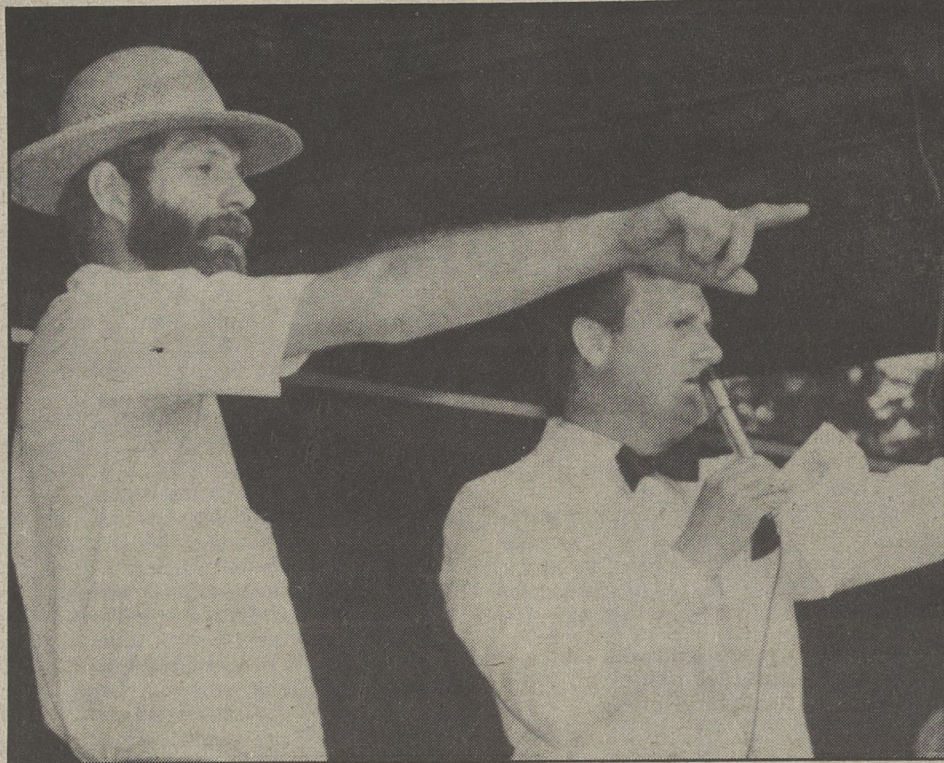
In only nine days, the Back Mountain Library Auction will open on the auction grounds behind the library buildings on Main Street, Dallas, and for four days the auctioneers' chants will be heard selling items over the auction block. Those four days will mark the last time the volunteer auctioneers will work over the block behind the Main Street buildings, for next year the auction will be held on the grounds of the new library location on Huntsville Street, Dallas.

"This year, we need to raise more money than ever," said Dr. Craig Aicher, co-chairman of the auction committee. "In addition to raising the regular operating funds, we have the new building to pay for, so the auctioneers have a job to do."

Aicher has been working as an auctioneer for the past 12 to 15 years. He is the senior member of the group of 14 of 15 volunteers who work on the block.

"Like most of the volunteers, I first started working in the barn tagging the items and handing them out to the workers on the block," he said. "Then I started spotting and after four or five years worked up to the auctioneer job. After a while, you get comfortable working with the crowd. It's hard work, but it is a lot of fun.

"We work on a schedule and an hour at one time is plenty on the block especially when it's hot. I have no favorite items to auction off. I enjoy all of it, particularly when it is an item you can have some fun with."



Jerry Fritzges, left, and Monty Evans work the block as auctioneers during the

1983 Library Auction. Aicher said the popularity of the items vary from year to year, even from night to night. Sometimes an item the auctioneer doesn't think is so great takes off and goes for an enormous amount. The next year you can't give the same type of goods away.

"Quite often the auctioneer has a lot to do with the popularity of an item" said Aicher. "It depends on his enthusiasm

and how interesting he makes it sound, how he gets across to the crowd.

"The most interesting thing that happened to me was one year when I was helping another auctioneer auction a pinball machine. I was demonstrating the machine for the crowd while the auctioneer was working the bidders. When the bidding was over, I discovered I had bought the machine. My wife was in the crowd bidding on it. I still have the machine."

Aicher said it is good experience for many of the volunteers. Certain ones who are rather shy come forward and become good auctioneers. "It's amazing how good they become," he said.

Kerry Freeman, co-chairman of the auctioneer committee with Aicher has been an auctioneer since 1976, the year he was chairman of the auction. Someone suggested that he try being one of the auctioneers, so he did.

"We have no advance preparation," said Freeman. "We just get up on the block and take off. We have a lot of fun, otherwise it would be too much work."

Freeman said they have a group of about 14 or 15 volunteers with several new ones this year. He and Aicher will get together some time this week to make out a schedule. The volunteers work an hour at a time, half hour spotting and a half hour auctioneering.

"The crowds in the afternoons and early in the evenings are usually light in the bidding. The heavy bidding usually starts later on Friday and Saturday night.

"Bidding on new goods is usually the same year-to-year but the antiques vary," Freeman added. "Sometimes glass is popular, sometimes furniture and sometimes other items. The flavor of the bidding is usually determined by the taste of the antique chairman, whether he or she likes glass, furniture or other items. I enjoy auctioning antiques more than anything else."

Freeman said the children's auction is fun. "They like anything," he said. They would bid up to \$400 for a 10 cents item. All they want to do is to raise their hand. But we limit their bidding, their auction is a fun thing. We let them draw colored chips when the bidding is tied."

One year, Freeman was spotting for Auctioneer Sonny Smith. Each of them was working a bidder and they had them bidding back and forth until they got \$400 for a miniature chest of drawers. "It was a most satisfactory moment," said Freeman. "Every year we have something humorous sold off the block such as a toilet seat. We always have a lot of fun with that.

"To be successful, we have to get rid of 15 to 20 items every half hour. One year we wanted to close the auction Sunday night, but we still had a lot of items in the barn, so we held it over to Monday night. On Monday night I got rid of 40 items in a half hour. That's working, if we didn't have fun up there I would never have done it. You couldn't pay me to do it, but they're a great bunch of volunteers. it's a great experience."

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