

# Sue Hand captures the auction with paint and paper

If you say hello to Sue Hand while she's painting an auction scene on location, don't expect her to answer.

She and her paint box are on a special island of quiet, which includes only the scene, the creative work at hand and her enormous talent.

For six years Hand, a teacher and internationally recognized artist, has worked on the scene to capture the feeling of this important piece of Americana re-enacted every year practically in her studio's back yard.

Her on-location paintings are done in the style of en plein air, a French term describing the how artist captures the ever-changing lighting, atmosphere and mood of a scene.

"All en plein air paintings are done on location, but not all on-location paintings are en plein air," Sue said. "En plein air paintings are more than just pictures of objects. They recapture what people felt while they were there—the sounds, the smells, the heat and the excitement of the bidding. For example, my night scene one year recreated the strange yellow-green lights around the auction block after dark."

Even under the best of conditions lights and shadows change—every 10 to 15 minutes to the

**"You can't work ahead of time on these pieces because the auction is the people, not things."**  
Sue Hand  
Paints auction scene each year

Sue has operated her studio, Sue Hand's Imagery on Main Street for 21 years, the past 18 of which she has donated artwork to the auction. Until she began painting en plein air, each year she created several still life paintings of featured items, which easily found owners once they reached the block.

For the past three years she has also created original drawings for the cover of the special library auction section in *The Dallas Post*.

Her 1996 cover includes the three barns which have hosted the auction—Howard Risley's barn on Lehman Ave., the building specially erected behind the old library on Main Street and the present location behind the former Dallas Borough school on Huntsville Road.

Gaily waving flags, the traditional auction bell, Mrs. Crump's

Book Booth and the crowds of bidders settled in lawn chairs in front of the block help to capture some of her best memories of the event.

Sue's cover drawings have included auctioneer Kerry Freeman and his trademark cowboy hat, kids licking ice cream cones, and candid sketches of area residents and visitors.

The excitement of walking up Huntsville Road to the Risley barn, hearing the auction's noise in-

crease the closer you came and knowing you'd have a great time are only part of what the Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction means to Sue.

"When I hear it start Thursday night and I'm at the studio, my heart still starts to pound," she said. "Just think—50 years from now someone will be writing about this one."

## Auction history

This became an annual event for Dr. Schooley, with the cost of the coat soaring as other members of the community joined in spirited bidding against the good-natured physician.

Another coat figuring in a recent auction was the fringed buckskin jacket and Stetson hat owned by the late Herman Thomas and donated to the auction by Mrs. Thomas. Many persons remember Bill Moss, an unflinching auctioneer, modeling the jacket and hat while clutching an antique rifle.

One procedure that has creased a lot of fun over the years involves the "Surprise Value." The auctioneers fill a small suit-case with items of questionable value, adding other items periodically as an inducement to raise the bid. Always some loyal supporter of the library bids on it, buying it at a price greatly above its real value. Harry Ohlman was a prime instigator of this tradition, encouraging his friends to buy the suitcase as a "souvenir" of the auction.

Past auctions have also included these highlights: Joe McVeigh purchasing an old com-

mode and using it as a front row seat during the auction; selling the 125-year-old pews from the Huntsville-Christian Church, old-fashioned school desks from the Dallas School District, and the original park benches from the Wyoming Monument; unrolling several carpets from the upper barn door which resulted in clouds of dust being deposited on the auctioneers and audience, thus ending the sale of carpets at the auction.

## Highlights from the Auction's second 25 years

In 1974 the auction received statewide publicity by being in-



After leaving the Risley barn, the auction was held behind the library on Main Street until moving to the new building.

cluded on several tourist calendars. This was the first year using the new auction barn and book booth gazebo built by volunteers and members of the Dallas Fire Company behind the old library on Main Street.

A bevy of hostesses headed by Ardeth Walters and including Anne Gray, Linda Tough, Kathy Jannson, Donna Heidle, Leslie Bruket, Kaite Gray, Jennie Rodda, Beth Stolofa, Susan Miller, Mary Klug, Lorie Miller and Kim Druskemiller, acted as bid spotters.

The colorful Congressman Dan Flood of Wilkes-Barre took his turn on the block as auctioneer.

The theme in 1976 was "Aurora Americana," in keeping with the nation's Bicentennial celebration. An antique Conestoga trunk complete with brass fittings was chanced off.

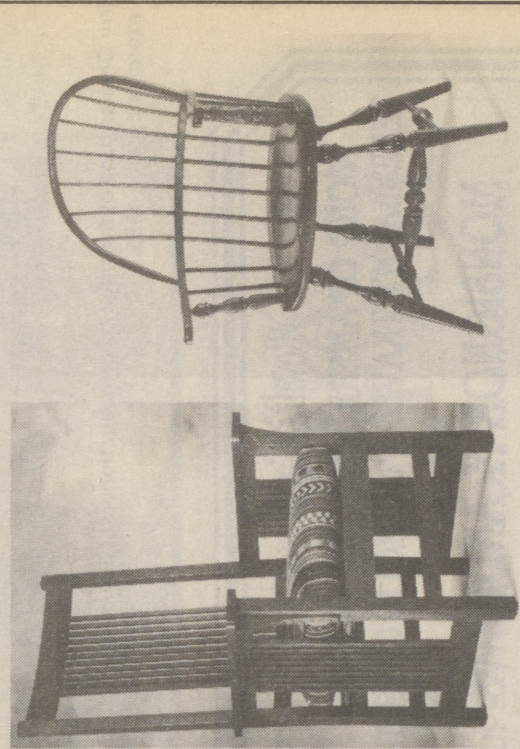
A signed antique lamp donated by the first librarian, Miriam Lathrop, and two 10-speed bicycles donated by Commonwealth Telephone were featured items. Dallas resident Theresa Young, 20, working as a music teacher in Jamaica, made and donated a huge multicolored quilt to repay the library for all it had done for her in her youth.

In 1977 a Waterbury oak kitchen calendar clock was chanced off. Volunteers from the Dallas Fire Company built permanent booths, including another new book booth complete with sign and restrooms behind the auction barn. Caroline and Shannon McCarthy and Kim and Kristen Dougherty of High Point Acres collected 300 books from

Continued on page 6

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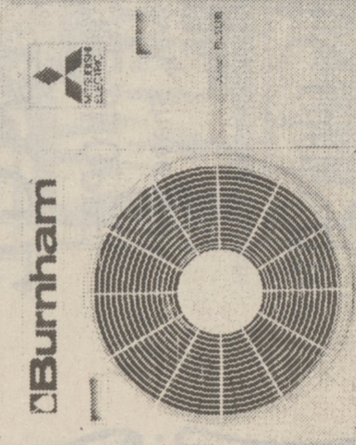
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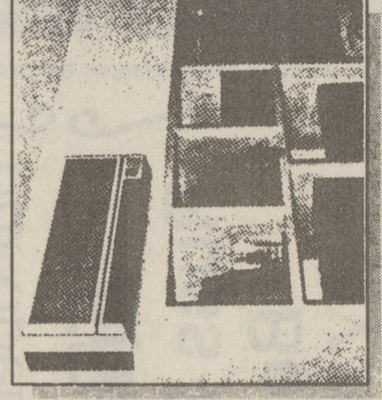
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