

2020 Auctioneer Guide

A man wearing a black cap, a headset with a microphone, and a grey vest over a black jacket is pointing his right index finger towards a display of potted plants. He is holding a silver laptop under his left arm. The plants are in white pots and feature a mix of red, orange, and white flowers. In the background, a forklift is visible in an outdoor or semi-outdoor setting.

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 1 East Main Street, Ephrata, PA 17522
 Phone: (717) 626-1164 Fax: (717) 733-6058
 E-mail: farming@lancasterfarming.com
 Website: www.lancasterfarming.com

Cover photo by Art Petrosemolo.
Mike Martin, left, of Martin & Rutt Auctioneers, New Hol-
land, auctions at the Leola Produce Auction while wear-
ing a face mask, needed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Auctioneer Guide

Home Reference Manual

Welcome to this edition of the Auctioneer Guide, published by Lancaster Farming. We hope you enjoy reading some terrific stories about auctioneers, antiques dealers, collectors, and others in the auction industry.

What a year 2020 has been so far! The biggest impact on the auctioneering industry has been the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent restrictions on businesses, including reducing the size of gatherings and less interactions among people. This has, of course, changed how live auctions are held. But, the pandemic is not the whole story. On these pages, you'll read about successes, about the strength of the auction industry, about creative adaptations to new technology, about higher prices, hard work, and hopefulness for the future despite the pandemic's uncertainty.

The theme running through the auctioneer stories this year is how they are managing their businesses through a pandemic. For many, it forced them to turn to the internet. For real estate and agricultural equipment sales, auctioneers have had to rethink the possibilities for showing and selling homes and equipment.

And, for some, along with pivoting to an online business model came some pleasant surprises: larger audiences from farther distances are able to bid; people with more time on their hands due to pandemic stay-at-home orders are bidding and buying more; auction prices are higher in some instances. Who could have predicted that? And, as Pennsylvania Auctioneers Association president Jeff Pennington noted, "Part of what we do is move merchandise." For auctioneers, that means there will always be people downsizing and people selling their businesses who need the skills of a talented auctioneer.

Yet, it's too early to know about the long-term outcome of

moving online, because, as with anything, taking auctions onto the internet is not a cure-all for auctioneers or bidders either. It's probably useful to keep a foot in both worlds: virtual and real. Auctions online have their own problems. Future educational seminars may be dedicated to teaching (and learning from) auctioneers about how to manage online issues. Perhaps hybrid business models will develop. Maybe this is the right time for experimentation with new business ideas and models. Will auctioneers find ways to bring the live excitement of a real estate auction to groups online? Will socially starved online bidders be drawn to the magic of a live auction held in-person post-pandemic?

This time of COVID-19 has certainly been eye-opening. With more bidders turning online during the spring, can the industry learn how to attract them to join the profession of auctioneering? Has live auction attendance been decreasing because people are just too busy?

As Linda Sarubin writes, after the initial shock of the pandemic, she and her husband are slowly finding their way again with their antiques business. She reached out to customers in every way she could think of to connect with them — even when they couldn't come to her store. Isn't that what people are seeking when they buy an antique or attend an auction? Auctions are business, but they also are social events. Antiques have value to people not just because of excellent craftsmanship and design, but because of their story. There is value in function, but there is also great appeal in how an item connects to the past, to the people who used it, lived with it, and left their marks on it. Why else would rustic barn picks be so popular? It's not just function that people seek, it's connection. So, enjoy this issue, keep it handy as a reference guide this year, and by all means, stay healthy!

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SEPTEMBER

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Working in the Present, Looking to the Future

ANNE HARNISH

Food and Family Features Editor

Auctioneer Jeff Pennington is busy these days, pandemic or not. He's in his second year of leading the Pennsylvania Auctioneers Association, as its president, as well as running his own Jeff Pennington Auction Service in western Pennsylvania.

It's been an unusual year with serious challenges to any business. A pandemic was declared in mid-March this year, and with infections from COVID-19 spreading like wildfire when groups of people gathered, the governors of many states, including Pennsylvania, closed all non-essential businesses temporarily. States laid out guidelines for when and how businesses could gradually reopen, and gave stay-at-home orders to Americans, a situation that continues to affect the nation. The shutdowns included auctions, which have been affected by the uncertainty.

Jeff took some time out recently to talk about the auction industry in the state. His outlook is a positive one.

"The auction industry is strong," Pennington said, "and sometimes we have to handle unfortunate situations. Part of what we do is move merchandise (and that still goes on)."

Despite the pandemic, Pennington said his own auctioneering "business is pretty much the same as in past years."

One key to that was switching his auction business to online. Like many other auctioneers who dabbled a bit in online sales previously, Pennington took a large share of his business (but not all of it) to the internet when the pandemic hit.

"It's an industry-wide change," he said about auctioneers going online. "It started in the last three, four, five years. The industry has been going that direction."

Going online eliminates live auction crowds and puts all bid-

ding and payments online using special auction software.

"The days of collecting money right on the spot (at a live auction) are over," Pennington said.

With the internet, the good news is that auctioneers can reach larger audiences — nationally and internationally. Pennington noticed other advantages, too: "Prices are good. Antiques of all kinds are making a resurgence. ... It's been an interesting spring."

When some spring auctions held online by Pennington brought in higher prices than he had experienced pre-pandemic, at first he was concerned that people weren't understanding how to do online bidding. He conferred with other auctioneers and found they were experiencing the same phenomenon. They speculated that it may have something to do with COVID-19 keeping people at home with nothing to do but go online. With the nation "closed down," shopping online, bidding and having packages delivered to one's home is an activity that people fraught with cabin fever can still do.

Pennington still prefers live auctions, but said "when it comes to business, you have to do what you have to do. ... I'm not advocating for online auctions. I just see it as one tool. We have not switched to 100% online."

The biggest problem online, he said, is with "intermittent non-paying bidders," who don't follow through to pay for an item. "It's a lost sale, and creates a headache," he added.

Pennington's advice going forward? Online, he said, you still interact with people, and auctioneers must maintain professionalism, and respect for buyers and sellers. It all goes back to positive customer experiences, he said, and these days "customers have many choices."

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Knights Reopen Cattle Auction

REBECCA PIZMOHT

Virginia Correspondent

ORANGE, Va. — The Knight family has a long history in the cattle business. Proprietors Mike and Patti Knight have been farming in Orange County for the past few decades.

The Knights have a 1,000-plus-head, cow-calf operation spread over several farms in the central part of the county. Mike Knight and his son, John Michael Knight, have expanded the business to include buying and selling loads of cattle.

For over 40 years, Joe Howell, the owner of the Orange Livestock Market, was the go-to guy for cattle sales in the area. Howell's business oversaw the sales of thousands of cows, calves, horses and small livestock.

The weekly cattle sales and monthly horse auctions brought a large and lively crowd to the property that sits halfway between Orange and Gordonsville.

Howell first decided to step away from the auction business in 2019 so he could retire. He listed the property with a Realtor, then after several months without any serious interest, he changed tactics and hired the Wilson Auction Co.

When the gavel fell on March 19, the Knight Cattle Corp. became the new owners of the 25-acre, industrial-zoned property.

Since its opening in the 1950s, the livestock market has held regular cattle, horse and livestock sales. Once known for being the liveliest sale barn around, the local livestock auctions have fallen off over the past few years because of increased local competition. And, the once-bustling monthly horse sales shrank to a handful of equines. Howell made his decision that 2020 would mark the end of the Orange Livestock Market.

"I had been talking about retirement for a while," said Howell.



Photo by Rebecca Pizmoht

Mike Knight hangs signs for the new Orange Cattle Auction.

"We had a really good run, but things are a lot different now from when I started in 1977. We used to have a ton of dairy cows in the area. Now, there are maybe five in Orange and the surrounding counties. There are fewer farmers now and other markets where people can take their stock. I was so happy that the Knights got it, so the property didn't become a housing development."

For the Knight family, purchasing the property just made

More **KNIGHT**, page E8



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Knight Continued from E7

sense.

According to Michael Knight, the acquisition of the livestock market offered his business a centralized location as well as opportunities for sales and shows.

"We are going to operate this a little differently," said Knight. "Our plan is to hold several select sales throughout the year, not a weekly cattle sale. We aren't looking to have a weekly sale or the monthly horse sale. We may eventually try to have some select sales, but for now we want to concentrate on buying and selling cattle."

The livestock market will be the third within a few miles of the town of Orange, with two others just over the Madison County line. Knight believes that competition will be beneficial to local cattle breeders and, ultimately, all of the sales barns.

"A little competition is good," Knight said. "It gives the farmers more choice in where they market, and (it's) good for buyers, too. It really makes this a great place to raise cattle and will keep all of us working to have better sales."

Since April, the entire Knight family has been involved in property renovations. The building has had a major overhaul with new paint and repairs. New pens have been built; brush clearing and painting have become family projects.

"We have been working on clean-up and renovations in between farming," said Patti Knight. "Everyone has been involved with painting and cleaning. Anytime we aren't making hay or working cattle, we are getting things ready. If it's raining, you can find us here."

Patti Knight, a longtime 4-H volunteer and supporter of youth livestock programs, is also hopeful that the property can be used for livestock shows and clinics as well.

"We have even talked about possibly doing a small livestock show here. With all this COVID-19 stuff going on, the fairs have



Photo by Rebecca Pizmoht

A Knight Cattle cow-calf pair at an Orange, Va., farm.

been canceled. We have talked about doing something here once things start opening up," she said.

The Knights planned their first sale to be a brood-cow sale on Aug. 15. They also will be continuing renovations to the property.

Rebecca Pizmoht is a freelance writer in central Virginia.



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Ag Mechanic Farms and Auctions, Too

TABITHA GOODLING

Southeast Pennsylvania Correspondent

LEWISTOWN, Pa. — An ag mechanic has created an auctioneering business that handles it all from beginning to end.

Parkes Auctions & Appraisals in Mifflin County has been operating since the spring of 2012.

Travis Parkes grew up on a dairy farm in Reedsville and has been an ag mechanic with Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences since 2002. He said he often thought about becoming an auctioneer, but didn't pursue it until after a work accident in 2010. He took some time off work and enrolled in the auctioneering program at Harrisburg Area Community College.

In August 2011, he completed the necessary hours for the program. He took the state auctioneer test in January 2012 and became licensed. Then Parkes bought his auction house in February 2012. His first sale was in March of that year.

Parkes completes roughly 36 sales per year, mainly in real estate. He also works full time as an ag mechanic.

"I did lots of sales in the Clearfield area," he said, including with the Clearfield County School District and the Clearfield County 4-H fair and livestock auction.

"I eventually had to cut back a little," he said, as he and his wife became parents to their boys, now ages 10 and 12.

Parkes occasionally sells farm estates. However, as a farm kid himself, Parkes said he hates to see a dairy farm need to sell because it may be surrendering to the dairy crisis.

More **PARKES**, page **E10**



Submitted photo

Parkes Auctions & Appraisals gets ready for an auction.

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J. Meryl Stoltzfus	Auctioneer	AU# 005403
Jake Yoder	Auctioneer	AU# 005851
Noah Shirk	Auctioneer	AU# 005928
Jeff Fortenbaugh	Auctioneer	AU# 005542

Apprentices

Matt Bergey	AA# 019473
Glenn Horst	AA# 019298
Harold Martin	AA# 019488
Wilmer Martin	AA# 019644
Alphie Stoltzfus	AA# 019657
Elvin Stoltzfus	AA# 019514



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Parkes Continued from E9

His parents' farm was 600 acres, but the milk cows were sold last year. They now work with 400 tillable acres and some beef cows.

His auctioneering is not full time like others in his area, but his business offers something a bit different.

"We started doing full clean-outs," he said.

Parkes and his helpers go into the homes and remove all items and sort accordingly. This is a task typically done by the family, but Parkes said this effort actually saves the auctioneer a lot of headache and frustration, despite the time spent doing the cleaning.

Parkes employs a few young men part-time here and there as needed to assist in the clean-outs.

All non-sellable items are given to thrift stores.

"I have some eBay'ers to take things locally," he said.

As an appraiser, Parkes looks for specific items that qualify as valuables and collectibles.

His first appraisal was for a woman who did not want to "just leave it all to the children without understanding the value," he said.

That particular house had a great deal of Buffalo Pottery, pieces made as far back as 1903 from a company based in Buffalo, New York.

For Parkes, though, it's the local connections that keep a cleaning-out project interesting.

"Every time you clean out an estate, the local history sticks out," he said.

He admitted he sometimes gets distracted while looking at the items.

Parkes said there has been a price drop in antiques over the last 10 years.



Submitted photo

A view of the interior of Parkes Auctions & Appraisals in Mifflin County, Pa.

However, he said that when it comes to revenue, "You always bank on a large percentage in furniture."

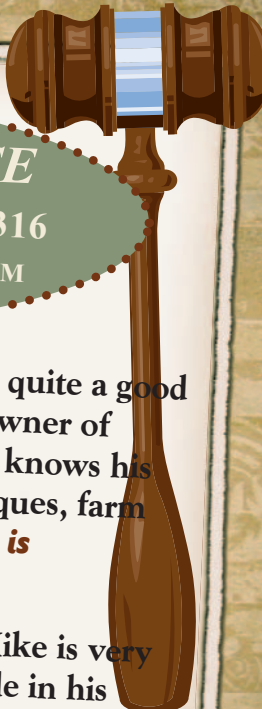
Sometimes, what family assumes is treasure may in fact be better off in the garbage can.

"You have to find collectibles, primitives. Not your McDonald's cups," he said, "or an attic full of Beanie Babies. The money is not there and I have to break it to them."

Milk glasses are also no longer a money maker, despite what families think, he said.

"We run into a lot of Depression-era estates and they

More **PARKES**, page E11



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Submitted photo

Furniture ready to be auctioned at Parkes Auctions & Appraisals.

Parkes Continued from E10

didn't throw out anything."

Parkes also takes calls for strictly appraisals.

"People call and say they just want an estimate. So I ask, what's it for? Are you trying to settle an estate? Is it for insurance purposes or are you going to have an auction?" he said.

He said he often has to explain that what the item is worth and the actual value of the item are very different.

For instance, if an individual looks up an item and sees it on eBay for \$100, it does not mean it will bring \$100 at auction. If there are plenty of these particular items available on the market, buyers at auction may not want to bid \$100.

Parkes also started an event for the spring season at his auction house that is always well-attended. "The Man Sale," as he named it, is an annual auction that is for men with cabin fever.

"It's nothing but 'guy stuff.' We have as many as 30 consigners for one sale," Parkes said. The merchandise includes tools, sports cards, auto items, etc.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused this year's event to be canceled.

Because of the pandemic, Parkes has been "stacked deep" with auction rescheduling since June, he said.

Dealing with the demand is done strategically, which is how his business is always operating, he said. Parkes credits the success of his auctioneering career to his farm experience.

"It's about work ethic," he said. "It's about not quitting until the job is done. And don't be surprised when there is a curve ball."

Growing up on a farm also taught him to not make plans, "because that will be the day something breaks down," he said.

And that is exactly how these recent months since COVID-19 arrived have played out for the business. The "breakdown" was the pandemic shutdown in this case.

The Parkes system of doing the cleaning out has made the pandemic-related uncertainty a bit easier, he said. When the state allowed many businesses to partially reopen again in late spring after an initial slowdown of virus infections, the auction crew could go in and "get it done" without confusion or wondering what was sellable.

"We have everything laid out the way we want it. If things are out of order, we lose the flow of the sale," he said.

The sales that had been scheduled for March took place in July. Parkes expects to be busy the rest of the year unless there is another COVID-19 shutdown, he said.

Tabitha Goodling is a freelance writer in central Pennsylvania.

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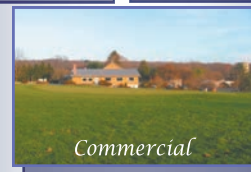
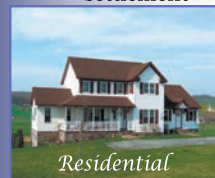


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Petroliana Collectible Sales Humming Along in High Gear

DICK WANNER

Staff Reporter

DENVER, Pa. — Would you pay \$3,000 for an old, double, Esso gas pump in need of a bit of restoration?

Petroliana collectors go for everything related to the petroleum industry, such as gas stations — from 6-inch-high oilers with screw-on spouts to station signs costing tens of thousands of dollars at auction. Other collecting categories within petroliana include advertising, road maps and gas station giveaway gifts, which attracted customers to use one gas brand over another.

At a three-day petroliana sale held last October at Morphy Auctions in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, for instance, one item that stood out vividly were the glass globes that once perched on the tops of gas pumps.

The focus on globes may explain part of petroliana's attraction — a sentimental look back to an earlier time when an illuminated glass globe was a beacon in the darkness for road-weary travelers looking for gas, food, rest, a break from driving,

and a connection to people. The romance of the gas station was even captured in a 1940 painting by famous artist Edward Hopper, titled "Gas," now hanging in the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

The painting captures the era, depicting a wood-frame gas station with three pumps, each topped by a glowing globe. There's a gathering dusk in the picture, and a lonely country road. Hopper's painting projects a melancholy side of the great American love story between men and their cars.

And it is mostly men buying petroliana, according to Morphy's John Mihovetz, although he said women are a growing faction of collectors. And, while the big-ticket items go mostly to older guys with money, Mihovetz sees growing participation by Millennials and Generation Y collectors, people ranging in age from 25 to 50 years old. That age group is definitely driving the market upward, he said.

Mihovetz, the automobilia and petroliana department expert at Morphy, puts together auctions of petroliana there twice a year. He said globes get a lot of interest, but that the highest-ticket items are gener-

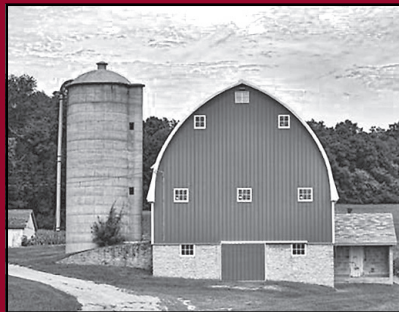


Photo by Dick Wanner

John Mihovetz heads up the automobilia and petroliana department for Morphy Auctions in Denver, Pa.

ally the metal signs that serious collectors might hang in a specially built garage for a collection of luxury automobiles, for

More **PETROLIANA**, page **E13**



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example.

Mihovetz is 33 years old himself, a California native, married, with a 2-year-old son, and currently living in Nashville, Tennessee. He grew up around his father's machine shop, and by the time he was 16, he was accompanying his auto-enthusiast dad to car shows and swap meets in southern California.

He discovered oil cans at the Pomona Swap Meet and Classic Car show one teenage summer and he became hooked. He helped pay his way through college — he majored in American literature — by dealing in petroliana and other collectibles. From oil cans it was on to signs, and then every other collectible having to do with oil, gasoline and cars. Along the way, he also developed expertise in antique advertising, country store ads and a few other niches of the collectibles world.

By phone recently from his home in Nashville, Mihovetz said he met Dan Morphy about 10 years ago at the gigantic All American Toy and Advertising Show in Glendale, California. Morphy was in the process of developing its 45,000-square-foot auction house in Denver, Pennsylvania. Morphy said he didn't know an awful lot about the subjects that energize Mihovetz. Eventually, Morphy said, he'd like to develop a world-class petroliana department, and asked Mihovetz if he'd one day like to be part of that.

In 2016, Mihovetz did join Morphy's business. He spends most of his time on the two petroliana auctions each year, one in the spring and one in the fall. The 2019 October auction had 1,800 lots — each item is a lot — which were sold at the rate of 600 a day for the three-day sale. The auction grossed \$2.1 million.

The two-day event in May of this year consisted of 1,362 lots

More **PETROLIANA**, page E14



Photo by Dick Wanner

Graphics for petroliana signs were from the same era, but were incredibly varied.



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and brought in \$1.2 million. There are no reserves in the petroliana auctions, so everything sold.

On auction days, the Morphy bidding room normally fills with people, who view the items up for sale both in the gallery and on giant screens at the front of the room. Attendees typically bid against each other and against remote bidders who log in on the internet or call in by phone.

Remote bidders get their information sometimes by visiting the auction house before the actual event, or they may bid entirely on the strength of what they see in the catalog, either in the hardbound printed version or the online version.

Mihovetz said he was a bit anxious about the May auction, because there would be no live bidders. He had just finished putting all the photographs and descriptions together for the sale catalog when the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

"We did extend the preview timetable so people who wanted to see the items in person could make appointments to do so. But when auction day came, it was with an empty house. We had about 10 employees in the building, because that was the minimum number of people we needed to make it work."

Bidding was lively, sales were strong and Mihovetz said he didn't think there was any negative impact from COVID-19. He said he has tracked other online auctions since the start of the pandemic, and has not noticed any negative impact in their sale figures.

Mihovetz said it takes him about six months to put a sale together. He makes a lot of phone calls and sends many emails to reach out to old and new contacts. He keeps track of how other sales are going. He looks for collections. In ordinary times, which he hopes soon return, he goes to shows and scouts for collections that might be coming into the market, as well as talking in-person to dealers, collectors and other auctioneers.



Photo by Dick Wanner

Vintage gasoline pumps lined up and ready for a petroliana sale at Morphy Auctions in Denver, Pa.

When everything is assembled, he holes up in Denver at Morphy's while 2,000 or so items are photographed, described, assigned a number and placed to their best advantage in the catalog. And then, it's auction time. Everything is sold in a two- or three-day window and it's finally all over.

Then he starts the process over.

"When one sale is over, it's time to start getting ready for the next one," Mihovetz said.

Dick Wanner reported on this story for Lancaster Farming. He can be reached at rwanner.eph@lnpnews.com.



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Antiques Dealers Reach Out During COVID

LINDA SARUBIN

Antiques Correspondent

YORK, Pa. — I have been in the antiques business for almost 40 years. It's the only business I have ever known. My mom was an antiques dealer, and ever since I was old enough to stand in front of an auction block, I was buying and selling.

I have sold at flea markets. I have sold at fancy shows. I've had a store on Baltimore's famous "Antique Row," and I've sold antiques out of my van on the fields

of Brimfield in Massachusetts. For the past 18 years, I have owned and operated a big old-fashioned country store in southern Pennsylvania, a store that was built during the Civil War.

The antiques business is a tricky one. Prices go up and prices go down, sometimes for no apparent reason. It could be the stock market, the weather, the holidays, current events. But the business always bounced back.

Now, all of a sudden, things seem very different. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the antiques business, along with everything else in the country, has been mostly shut down since mid-March. All of the shows that I had planned on exhibiting at are canceled. My Pennsylvania country store has only recently re-opened since the pandemic hit, with very limited hours and capacity allowed due to the state's COVID-19 requirements to avoid the spread of the virus. The auction halls are closed. And, although I have great faith and optimism in the future, for the time being, the virus is ruling the roost, not us. And no one knows when things will get back to normal. I have moved my business mostly online, and it is a perfect time to do that.

I have always used technology to pro-



Photos provided by Linda Sarubin

Sarubin's antiques shop, The Gatchellville Store, was founded during the Civil War, and she is determined to keep it running, even during the time of the COVID-19 crisis.

mote business. But now, it is more important than ever. Facebook and Instagram are valuable tools, and they're free of charge.

If you haven't done this already, set up

More **SARUBIN**, page **E16**



Sarubin's specialty is antique buttons. In the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, she uses social media to promote her button business.



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Sarubin Continued from E15

business pages on both of these sites. Consider building an online shop on eBay or Etsy. Use your time at home to take photos — lots of them — and post them regularly. Post photos of things that you would like to sell, things you would like to buy, and things that you have questions about. Engage your customers. I make posts each and every day, sometimes just asking my followers, how their day is going. How are they coping? Over the past two months, I have had online contests. I have made instructional videos on cleaning, preserving and repairing antiques. I have sent samples. I have offered discounts and surprise bonuses. Not only has it helped my business, but it has helped my mood. It is a reminder that we are all in this together.

I sell antique buttons online and work with historical costuming, needlework and dressmaker groups. No matter what type of antiques you sell, seek out online groups that cater to your specialty and you will find a ready-made audience for your wares.

Remind your customers every day that you are a small business and that you appreciate their loyalty. If your customers cannot afford to buy antiques right now, remind them that there are other ways that they can support your business. They can follow you on social media sites, by “lik-

ing” and “sharing” your posts.

This is a challenging time for all antiques dealers.

Richard Gryziec has been selling antiques for over 30 years. For the past seven years, he has been running the Bloomsburg Antique Show in Columbia County, Pennsylvania. Most show promoters are anxiously waiting to see what the next months will bring in terms of public safety and health. Gryziec has always used social media to promote his shows and boost sales, but he realizes that now it is more important than ever. When customers cannot come to him, he must go to customers — virtually, that is.

Richard’s specialty is antique samplers. He uses Facebook to keep his business vital. He promotes weekly “Textile Tuesdays” and his followers eagerly wait for Tuesday mornings to see what he has to sell. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, he has had to get even more creative. Last week, he posted items that he would have taken to The Penn Dry Goods Show, an antiques show that was scheduled for May, and then canceled. In the days before his online sales, he posts “teaser” photos of the weekly offerings. This week, he posted samplers that were all under \$100. All of the samplers were sold within hours.

Gryziec’s advice for dealers who want to move their businesses online is to treat their virtual customers just as they would



Photo provided by Linda Sarubin

Linda Sarubin, with her husband and business partner, Carroll Swam, in their antiques store in Pennsylvania.

treat customers they meet at a show. That means good customer service, polite interactions, detailed and honest descriptions, and lots of photos. He credits his success with finding a specific niche for

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himself — the antique samplers — and using Facebook forums that specifically target his specialty.

I have used a similar business model. Out of all of the millions of antiques in the world, I chose to sell antique buttons and have made them my specialty. Like Gryziec, I am using social media to seek out collectors — buying and selling, and also educating myself. In the antiques business, knowledge is power. The more you know, the more successful you will be.

Both my husband and I want to limit our exposure to the COVID-19 virus. We now put a notice on our Facebook page during the week, stating the limited hours when we are expecting our brick-and-mortar store to be open. So we do have a small trickle of customers. Like other businesses during the pandemic, we require people to wear face masks in the store and observe social distancing to prevent infections. We put hand sanitizer out everywhere, per health guidelines, and I notice people using it regularly.

At the beginning of the pandemic, people were so unsure about what was happening. Now, I think people want to feel like life still is going on, so they come to the store a bit. I also feel an overwhelming sense from my customers that they want to support small local businesses, mine and others. And I feel that way, too. All in all, I feel a bit hopeful.

COVID-19 has changed small businesses all over the country. The antiques business is unique in the fact that some people might think that antiques are non-essential luxuries. The shows are closed. My store was closed and now hours are very limited. But I have not stopped working. Small businesses like mine — we just have to keep going. I



Photo by Katherine Bovard

Mary and Richard Gryziec, of Bloomsburg, Pa., with their collection of antique samplers.

know that many shops have closed their doors permanently. But that isn't an option for me.

My store was built during the Civil War, by a Union soldier, whose name is still on the front door. I am not going to let it fall apart on my watch — not after all of these years.

Linda Sarubin owns The Gatchellville Store in southern Pennsylvania. She can be reached at 717-382-9252 or gatchellvillestore@zoominternet.net.

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Vintage Vans With Lots Of Fans

VWs Have Never Stopped Being Collected

ART PETROSEMOLO

Southeast Pennsylvania Correspondent

They were dubbed “iconic” shortly after the first one rolled off Volkswagen’s Wolfsburg, Germany, auto production line in 1950. Known originally as the T1 Transporter, nearly 4 million of these popular and boxy VW vans or buses have been sold worldwide. They had official names, including Bulli, Kombi, Type2, Westfalia and Eurovan, although they also were affectionately referred to as tin cans, breadboxes, minibuses and hippie vans.

In the United States alone, almost 200,000 VW vans were sold by the early 1960s. Today, the most sought-after early model vans — typically with 21 or 23 windows — when completely restored have been known to fetch upwards of \$200,000 at high-end auctions.

Sadly, the last VW Transporter vans, sold in the United States until 2003, were the T4 Eurovans. The company ended the production of its last T2 van in Brazil in 2013.

Today, a vehicle made exclusively for camping, called a California van, is manufactured in Germany for the European

market and is both popular and expensive. Volkswagen revealed an electric van as a concept vehicle about three years ago and it is expected to be on the market in 2022, under the name “I.D. Buzz.”

And, despite being introduced seven decades ago, people are still buying, collecting and driving the old, vintage VW vans. Why?

Conversations with the director of the Volkswagen Club of America, car restorers, vintage collectors across the country and auto-parts retailers supporting the VW van industry, explain why the vans just aren’t fading away.

Bill Bowman is a retired flight attendant living in St. Louis. He has been driving, collecting and restoring Volkswagens since 1974, when he purchased a VW Karmann Ghia sports car at age 22, while living in California.

“The Karmann Ghia is iconic itself,” Bowman said, “and also has a huge following.”

Bowman currently has eight VW vehicles that he describes as his “kids” and a garage big enough to house them. His first VW bus — purchased and completely restored in the early 1980s — was a 1967



Photo by Bill Bowman

A 1967 VW Westfalia Campmobile restored by Bill Bowman. The vehicle was the last year of the split-window models.

Westfalia Campmobile. In the early 1990s, Bowman acquired a 1959 first-generation (T1) crew-cab, pickup Transporter that he purchased from a friend for \$3,000 and now estimates is valued at \$70,000.

In 2001, Bowman purchased a 1959 double-door panel van without an engine that was used by a florist and had been

More **VWS**, page **E19**



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parked for 35 years.

"I was the fourth owner and did a sympathetic, not a complete, restoration," Bowman said, "to use (it) as an equipment truck for VW events I help sponsor in the St. Louis area. And, it is still going strong."

Bowman estimates that with its patina and original paint, it probably would sell for \$40,000 to the right collector.

"The golden years for these vans were the camper years of the 1960-'70s," Bowman said. "They were reasonably priced, mini-motor homes that you also could fit in your garage and drive to work."

Bowman explained that Volkswagen supplied the buses to a contracted German company called Westfalia to build the camper interior, fittings and accessories that then would go to VW dealerships to sell.

With more free time now, Bowman said he is working again on a 1967 Westfalia Campmobile, to keep his 1987 Vanagon Westfalia Camper company.

"Yes, it addictive," Bowman said, "and restoring vans for my collection has given me lots of pleasure throughout my adult life."

In Lancaster, Pennsylvania, the family-owned Autohaus Volkswagen dealership has been in business since 1964, selling



Photo provided by Bill Bowman

VW collector and restorer Bill Bowman stands in his garage filled with vintage VW vehicles.

lots of Volkswagens, explains second-generation owner Tom Wanner. Wanner started working at the dealership for his parents as a teenager and became general manager in the 1990s. In 2008, he and his wife, Carol, became owners.

Wanner said the VW dealership stocked and sold Volkswagen vans from day one

and that he always had a fondness for them. Today, Wanner finds vintage models to buy and rehab or restore. He sells them to customers who, he said, are always looking for vans, all the time.

Earlier this spring, Wanner purchased a 1978 T2 camper van from a Florida VW

More **VWS**, page **E22**

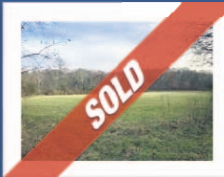
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dealer colleague who had taken it in trade from the owner.

"It is 42 years old," Wanner said, "and in excellent, original condition and should sell quickly." He estimates its value at \$20,000-plus.

Wanner also owns a 2003 bright-red T4 Eurovan that he had bought to keep, but the van already has had a lot of interest from collectors and he believes it will sell in the \$15,000 range.

"It doesn't have the pop-top option," Wanner said. "That would make it more collectible and valuable."

Although vintage vans may be bought at VW dealerships, most candidates for restoration are found by buyers and would-be collectors at online sites or by word-of-mouth. When purchased, the question always is, do I have the time and or expertise to do a restoration that will significantly increase the value of this vehicle? And if the answer is no, collectors look for individuals or companies that specialize in restoration work, which can take significant time and be expensive.

Tom Janiszewski coordinates the Volkswagen Club of America (<https://vwclub.org>). It is a national club for fans of both old and new VW vehicles dating to 1955, and has more than 100 affiliated clubs in the United States.

Another national group, the Vintage Volkswagen Club of America (<https://vwwca.com>) was organized in 1976, with 40 chapters, and focuses on older VW vehicles.

Some of the Volkswagen clubs have a specific vehicle interest, Janiszewski said, including the independent Orange County Transporter Organization in California, which focuses on T2s from 1967 and earlier VW buses. With California's moderate climate, there are many VW vans on the West Coast where there also is a strong following from restorers.

More **VWS**, page **E36**



Photo by Art Petrosemolo

Buck Mortorff, York, Pa., with his Volkswagen 1978 modified pickup restored from a van with a crushed roof.



Photo by Bill Bowman

A 1959 VW double-cab pickup in restoration process.



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COVID-19 Boosts Online Sales for Two Pa. Auctioneers

Treasure-Seekers Enjoy 'Box Lot' Shopping

DICK WANNER
Staff Reporter

Early this year, some Pennsylvania auctioneers were working on plans to replace at least some of their live auction business with online sales action. In Manheim, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the 18 employees of the Hess Auction Group were easing into the online process, hoping to complete the switch by the end of the year, or maybe early 2021. In nearby Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, the Kleinfelter's Auction crew had a similar plan and a similar timeline.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit. On March 19, Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf ordered all nonessential businesses, including auction houses, to close.

"We knew we either had to sink or swim," said Serena Myers, general manager of Kleinfelter's Auction Inc. "We decided to swim."

Kleinfelter's quickly pivoted to online-only for their weekly Thursday auctions.

Hess Auction Group also rose to the challenge, according to John Hess, founder and president of the company, which has a history dating to 1962. Hess said they went from a live-plus-online format for their weekly Tuesday sales to online only in a week.

Both Hess and Myers said the switch to online-only for the



Photo by Hess Auction Group

This bright-red tin sign brought \$70 at a recent online Hess Auction Group sale.

weekly sales has been an unqualified success. The Hess auctions run for a full week, Tuesday through the following Tuesday. Kleinfelter's sales are online Thursday through Thursday.

Treasured, Cheap Box Lots

Live auctions have always been part theater and part treasure hunt. There's always the chance to find a \$100 treasure for a \$5 bill. And, for those treasure seekers with five or 10 bucks on hand, there's the appeal of an auction category called "box lots"

More **ONLINE**, page **E24**



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or tray lots.

At the Hess auctions on Tuesday mornings pre-pandemic, this category was called table lots, and there were always a few bidders interested in buying them. The table lots at an in-person auction worked like this: there were about 20 six-foot tables piled high with an unrelated variety of sale items. Bidders followed the auctioneer as each table was sold. Before the entire table was put up for bidding, the auctioneer would ask if anybody wanted to bid on his or her choice of any single item on the table. Almost always there seemed to be two treasure seekers who needed that one exact thing and who are willing to pay more for that one thing than the final price brought by all the other things on the table. Bidders who bought the whole table often ended up donating many of the random items to thrift stores, for instance. But sometimes one or two of the items lost in the box lot or table lot have a high value and get re-sold or added to a collection.

There's a small bidding audience for box lots, and it's a great way to sell a lot of small items of unknown or lesser value, but it seems difficult to translate the treasure-searching fun of box lots into an online auction.

"We're still doing partial table lots online," Hess said, "but we can't do choice

anymore and the lots are more defined."

Prior to the move to online, a table lot might have consisted of wrenches at one end of the table and Avon bottles at the other end.

A partial table lot these days is more likely to be a large grouping of tools or dishes. In contrast, tray lots are smaller groupings of similar items deemed by the auction staff to be a notch above the table lot category. And things like Longaberger baskets, Lionel locomotives and Griswold frying pans get sold off one at a time.

On a recent Tuesday, Hess's online site featured a tray lot for sale with a toy truck loaded with two contemporary John Deere tractors. There was also a set of four his-

toric John Deere model tractors, including a Waterloo Boy, a Model R, Model G and a Model M, all in original packaging. The lot brought \$10.

There were obviously not many John Deere fans watching that auction online, but a devotee of Frank's Fruit Beverages bought one of the company's tin signs for \$70, and a reverse-painted table lamp went to its new owner for \$200.

Online auctions obviously have the same kinds of things you might find at a live auction. The excitement of spur-of-the-moment bidding at a live auction is missing, but if the only thing you were

More **ONLINE**, page E25



Photo by Hess Auction Group

A pre-COVID-19 photo of the Hess Auction Group crew.

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interested in was the John Deere set, for example, you wouldn't have to wait around for three hours until it came to the front of the room to be auctioned.

And, if you're not prepared for a live bid of \$75 for that table lamp, you'd have a whole week to reconsider just exactly how much you want it and realize maybe it's worth more to you than \$75.

Hess said they spend a lot of time photographing listings for online sales. They take two to four pictures from different angles of table and tray lots. For items offered alone, he said, "We'll take at least four pictures. Even if it's a round ball, we'll get four angles."

Buyers and would-be buyers need to register online with the auction prior to bidding. There's a nine-page, easy-to-follow set of instructions on how to register for a Hess account, how to bid on an auction, and how to pay for successful bids. Buyers can either have their items shipped, or they can pick them up at the auction center.

Due to COVID-19 and the need to prevent infection spread, pickup times are assigned, Hess said, and auction staff takes the purchased items to customers' cars for contactless exchange.

The procedure at Kleinfelter's Auction is similar. Myers said the company's move to online has worked for them.

"Online sales have been incredible," she said. "We switched our entire auction to online-only in just one week's time. We had done online sales prior to COVID, but just for specialty sales. Now that we're online-only, we are cataloging and photographing 800 items a week."

Those sale items come into the auction house from the usual sources. Even in a pandemic, people move, downsize, decide to trade a collection for cash. Heirs still need to clear out a house or a barn. Homeowners decide they'd rather live in a retirement community.

Myers said the auctioneers look online at photos of the thing people want to send to auction, and if it's saleable merchandise, the Kleinfelter's crew arranges a delivery time, or a time when the auction house can pick up the items.

And, the online exposure has greatly expanded Kleinfelter's reach, Myers said. "Business was good pre-COVID, but since going online, over 40,000 people view our auctions each week."

"We've sold things to people everywhere in the U.S., and internationally, to buyers in Colombia, England, Spain, Italy and Canada," she said. "All our categories, across the board, have improved, and some of our typical online sale prices have quadrupled since we went online."

Dick Wanner reported on this story for Lancaster Farming. He can be reached at rwanner.eph@lnpnews.com.



Photo by Kleinfelter's Auction Inc.

A carefully curated stamp collection brought \$537.75 at a recent Kleinfelter's Auction.
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# Antiques and Vintage Facebook Site Booms During Pandemic

**TABITHA GOODLING**

*Central Pennsylvania Correspondent*

CARLISLE, Pa. — Hits on one social media page for antiques sellers and buyers have increased by 300% in recent months.

The Facebook page, Central PA Antique and Vintage Sale, existed 10 years or so before the COVID-19 pandemic. Its administrator, Averi Stevens, grew up in Carlisle, Cumberland County, and now lives in eastern North Carolina. She manages the page, which attracts buyers and sellers from as far as Centre County in central Pennsylvania to Adams and York counties in the southcentral Pennsylvania region.

Stevens and her father, Don Stevens Jr., sell their own vintage furniture and items in North Carolina. That business operates from their home and is known as Fly Guy Vintage.

Growing up in central Pennsylvania gave Averi the desire to buy and sell antiques, and eventually led her to start a social media page to engage other individuals like herself.



Photo provided by Averi Stevens

Shown are items for sale that were posted on the Central PA Antique and Vintage Sale website on Facebook administered by Averi Stevens.

More **FACEBOOK**, page E27



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Averi's grandfather, Don Stevens Sr., owned Cumberland Wood Craft Co. in Carlisle. He produced screen doors, cabinetry, millwork, mantels, bars and other items. Averi describes him as a "master craftsman."

He exemplified passion for the value of good craftsmanship to Averi at a young age.

Averi Stevens and her dad started their business 20 years ago and were actively going to flea markets all over the East Coast.

"I was so excited about it, that I said I got to build something online. This was prior to the whole Facebook Marketplace. I wanted something on there without a cost to sell," she said.

When Facebook Marketplace started, Averi's Central PA page was already up and running. Sadly, she said, some of her members retreated to Facebook Marketplace.

This past year, however, Stevens said she has seen an influx flocking to the page. Prior to the pandemic, she was not sure why this was happening.

"I wasn't sure if maybe the older generation was now getting used to social media perhaps," she speculated.

Since the pandemic this spring, within 28 days, she said the page had a 381% increase in visits.

There are now more than 1,200 members and 23 top contributors active on the Facebook page.

"It's a variety of independent people who enjoy 'picking' for a hobby," she said, along with a small number who operate their own antiques shops.

Stevens revealed some of the statistics from her online antiques and vintage site. She said 72% of the members are female and the majority of members are between the ages of 45 and 54.

"It's interesting, though, because only 11% are between the ages of 18 to 32. It worries me (that) the younger generation is not as interested," she said.

The highest number of male participants falls between the ages of 35-44.

The increase in users due to the COVID-19 pandemic is obvious, since so many more people are following stay-at-home orders to slow down infection rates. She said her own regular business Facebook page has seen a 66% increase in action as well.

"We reach up to 1,000 people. We refinish dressers, buffets, china cabinets and so forth. Our items are relatively inexpensive, from \$50 to \$1,000, and most people do not haggle much," she said, so business has fared well during the pandemic.

"People love buying from do-it-yourselfers, because it's cheap and unique," she said.

Averi's personal favorite items to sell are dressers.

She said she expects it is similar for others using social media as a platform to sell these items in recent months.

Stevens sends her items back to Pennsylvania if someone is interested after viewing either Facebook page.

"We will ship or deliver anywhere in the continental United States. We hand-deliver items for 50 cents per mile there and back, or we can arrange shipment through an app called Uship or Uber Freight."

She said it appears as though most buyers during this season of staying at home seem to be looking for practical, usable items such as furniture.

"Most of what I have seen has been people buying things that catch their eye and they can use it in their home," she said.

Bedroom furniture, buffets and cabinets are "really big" sellers at the moment, according to Stevens.

Within seven days in mid-May, there were 106 posts to the Central PA Antique and Vintage Sale Facebook site, a 49%

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# Online Auctions Offer Bidders New Options

**SUE BOWMAN**

*Southeast Pennsylvania Correspondent*

Longtime auction-goers are accustomed to the fast-paced rhythm of an auctioneer calling bids before his or her gavel slams down with a shout of "Sold!"

That scenario came to an end temporarily in Pennsylvania and many other states in mid-March, when the highly infectious COVID-19 pandemic hit and large gatherings were prohibited. To slow the spread of the disease in Pennsylvania, Gov. Wolf banned gatherings of over 10 people and later put a stay-at-home order in place. What followed has inadvertently helped usher in a new era for some auctioneers and their bidders.

It seems unnatural to hear the sounds of silence at an auction house these days, but that doesn't mean that there aren't auctions taking place there. It may just mean that they're being conducted in a different way.

Online sales have been around for years, starting with websites like eBay and Craigslist that allowed sellers to post their own items for sale to on-



Submitted photo

**Shirk's Auction Gallery in Annville, Lebanon County, Pa.**

line bidders. An increasing number of professional auctioneers have also been moving their sales to the internet in recent years.

Roy Shirk of Annville, Pennsylvania, has been an auctioneer for over 25 years and became the owner of Shirk's Auction Gallery about eight years ago.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, he had been holding weekly live auctions at the gallery, attracting 200-225 bidders and spectators on Tuesdays.

Those auctions involved the use of three auctioneers and typically sold

More **OPTIONS**, page **E29**

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antiques, household goods and the occasional vehicle. He also hosted specialized auctions at the gallery, such as those for guns, several times a year. Otherwise, the 30 or so real estate sales held at the premises being auctioned made up a significant part of Shirk's business.

Shirk admits that he had been considering giving online auctions a try for quite a while.

"We talked about it for years," he said. But Shirk's existing sale schedule was just too busy to allow further investigation.

That all changed when the state-imposed pandemic restrictions gave Shirk's plenty of time to explore options other than the live auctions they could no longer hold.

The process of incorporating online auctions into Shirk's Auction Gallery menu of services proved to be easier than anticipated. Their research led them to HiBid, an integrated web service and bidding platform that is part of Auction Flex, an auction software provider. Shirk leases the software and credits an online tutorial with helping his company get up and running.

Shirk's Auction Gallery went live with its first online auction on April 9 and is now doing two sales per week, mainly of the items that would normally have been auctioned at their gallery.

Although there's a certain amount of trial and error involved, such as knowing how many lots to combine into a single auction, Shirk said, "Stuff is selling really well."

"We just shipped a sign to Alaska," he said as he mentioned sales to other buyers as far away as Texas and California.

Shirk's Auction Gallery has also found another online resource helpful to his business. "AuctionZip has been huge for us," he said about the website that allows customers to search auctions online free; the costs are paid by the subscribing auction.

According to him, Shirk's Auction Gallery has typically been in the top three to five slots among the 10 most-viewed auctions

in Pennsylvania listed on AuctionZip. Typically, Shirk receives 8,000 to 10,000 hits over a two-week period for general merchandise, with somewhat less response for real estate auctions.

"Our presence has really grown in the past few years," Shirk said.

Shirk's Auction Gallery, housed in a spacious 10,000-square foot building along Route 934 in North Annville Township, houses not only a sales room and warehousing, but also a reception area and refreshment stand.

Since his clientele includes older folks, who enjoyed the weekly on-site auctions as a place to meet their friends and get a bite to eat, Shirk wasn't sure what to expect when the pandemic forced his business to go to an online format.

In retrospect, he believes that the unique circumstances made the transition to online auctions smoother.

"People have been really good. We didn't get much kickback," Shirk said. However, he also acknowledged that the switch has been challenging for some older patrons, who either don't have a computer or smartphone, or don't know how to use these technologies. For patrons needing instructions, Shirk encourages them to call his auction gallery, so he or other staff can walk them through the online bidding set-up and process.

Fortunately, online bidding is simple, he said. For those who don't know, this is the process. A prospective bidder logs on to [www.shirksauctions.com](http://www.shirksauctions.com). Then, clicking an on-screen button will lead to the online auction where a log-in is required. Online bidders like this process because each of Shirk's online auctions is open for seven to 10 days.

Not only can bidders view three to five photos per item and submit bids from the comfort of their homes, but there is no need to sit through an entire live auction in order to bid on specific items.

Online bidders can either submit one maximum bid or opt to

More **OPTIONS**, page E37



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# Barbershop Collectibles Still Hot

**PAUL POST**

*New York Correspondent*

America's most famous barber shop is located in Mount Airy, North Carolina, where the late proprietor, Russell Hiatt, served famous personages from all walks of life including hometown screen and television star Andy Griffith, whose fictional town, Mayberry, was modeled after this one.

Floyd's City Barber Shop is a veritable museum to the barbering business with old-time chairs and equipment, and more than 30,000 photos adorning the walls, showing celebrity visitors from Lou "The Incredible Hulk" Ferrigno to Oprah Winfrey, whose father, Vernon, is still barbering at 93 in Nashville.

He and Hiatt, who passed away at 92 on May 3, 2016, are both in the National Barbers Hall of Fame, in Canal Winchester, Ohio.

But Hiatt's son, Bill, still welcomes tourists attracted to Mount Airy's historic Main Street district, a place seemingly frozen in time.

Russell Hiatt, who ran the business for 70 years, was the inspiration for



Photo by Paul Post

**Kip Dare, owner of Kipper's Clipper's in South Glens Falls, N.Y., holds a photo of Floyd the Barber, portrayed by actor Howard McNear, from "The Andy Griffith Show." Dare's shop pays tribute to the fictional barber with numerous photos of fun Mayberry characters such as Barney Fife and Goober.**

Mayberry's "Floyd the Barber," portrayed by actor Howard McNear.

Floyd's still offers haircuts by appointment, but people don't have to

travel here to enjoy old-time barbering nostalgia, because vintage shops and equipment are skyrocketing in

More **BARBERSHOP**, page E31



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Photo by Paul Post

When Dare took over a barber shop previously owned by the late Harry Betar Jr., he saved many old-time barbering items they used such as a shaving mug and brush, a strap for razor sharpening, lotions and colognes, hand clippers, a pair of shears, an antique glass Barbicide bottle, a miniature barber chair collectible, and small ornamental barber poles.

### Barbershop Continued from E30

popularity in small towns and big cities throughout the U.S.

"It's coming back. What was old is new again," said Kip Dare, owner of Kipper's Clippers in South Glens Falls, N.Y. "There's a lot of young barbers around that are fantastic, doing straight-razor shaves and high-and-tight haircuts. I started when I was 32. I'm the old dog now. These young barbers coming up do amazing work."

"Now it's cool to be a barber," Dare said. "There's a lot of guys who are really artists. Instead of tattooing or painting

More **BARBERSHOP**, page E32

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## Barbershop Continued from E31

on a subway, they can make money doing art in hair.”

Dare’s shop pays tribute to “Floyd the Barber,” with numerous sketches and photos of him and other fun Mayberry characters such as Barney Fife.

Dare learned the business as an apprentice under the late Harry Betar Jr., whose shop he eventually took over. Betar and his father, Harry Betar Sr., had run it for 68 years. Dare saved many of the old items they used in years past such as shaving mugs and brushes, a strap for razor sharpening, lotions and colognes, hand clippers, a pair of shears, an antique glass Barbicide bottle, a miniature barber chair collectible and small ornamental barber poles.

“It’s all part of the collection that I’ve kept for years,” said Dare, who displays them in his shop.

Until recently, he also had an old-time barber’s chair. But Dare’s late father was a policeman. So, as a friend of law enforcement, he recently donated the chair to New York State Police motorcycle officers, to adorn club headquarters.

“They can sit in it and drink their coffee,” Dare said, smiling. “It was



Submitted Photo

**Floyd’s City Barber Shop in Mount Airy, N.C. is a major tourist destination. The late Russell Hiatt, standing at left of chair, gave haircuts to hometown screen and television star Andy Griffith during the late 1940s and early ’50s. Hiatt was the inspiration for “Floyd the Barber” in the Andy Griffith Show, and is in the National Barber’s Hall of Fame in Ohio. He enjoyed meeting visitors from all parts of the U.S. and overseas.**

vintage, all handmade in Italy.”

Antique barber chairs are the focal point in many vintage-style shops, and some sell for up to \$10,000.

“Modern barber shops today are so

sterile,” said Mike Ippoliti, National Barbers Hall of Fame curator and director. “Basically they have a chair, a mirror and a sink. Back then, they used

More **BARBERSHOP**, page E33

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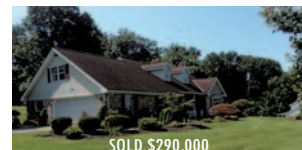


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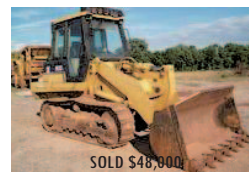
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to have these elaborate back bars made of oak and a lot of chairs were wood, hand-carved. Now there's a resurgence as far as going back to the old ways."

Back bars, made of wood, were usually 10 feet long, with elaborate designs just for barbers, with mirrors and drawers tucked up under.

The Hall of Fame has more than 75 barber poles, nearly 40 chairs and thousands of straight and safety razors in its museum collection.

One group, the National Shaving Mug Collector's Association, is dedicated to the preservation of barbering memorabilia.

"They not only collect mugs, they go back and study the genealogy of the person who had it. It's pretty in-depth," Ippoliti said. "One guy, for years, has been looking for Pat Garrett's mug, the sheriff who killed Billy the Kid. There's a picture of him in a barber shop with his name on the mug. It's probably out there someplace in a collection or antique shop. Nobody knows."



A picture of Andy Griffith inside Floyd's City Barber Shop.

The easiest way to find old barbershop collectibles is online at sites such as eBay and

More **BARBERSHOP**, page E38

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# Antiques Investor Talks Business, Trends

**SHELBY WATSON-HAMPTON**

*Maryland Correspondent*

Shawn Surmick of Boyertown, Pennsylvania, has been an avid collector and investor in antiques and collectibles for more than 30 years. He entered the industry at the young age of 12, and is now a published columnist for *Antiques and Auction News*, as well as a YouTube consultant in the antiques and collectibles trade.

"I was lucky enough to be taught some of the trade's inside secrets by very knowledgeable collectors and dealers way back in the 1990s," Surmick said. "I also have a love of economics and finance, so it was a natural fit to combine both passions and become active in the business side of the antiques and collectibles trade."

Surmick started going to flea markets and antique fairs at a young age.

"It stuck with me and when I was in high school, I started to buy and sell. When eBay premiered in 1995, I became successful buying and selling pop culture collectibles online," he said.

Surmick personally collects myriad different categories, with his primary

interests being U.S. coins, U.S. currency, ancient coins, vintage comic books, video games, and traditional antiques. Surmick said he loves the pursuit of learning and is now studying the contemporary art market as well.

He said he does a lot of buying online, whether it be eBay or other online auction sites, but also loves attending flea markets and regional auctions.

"I get a lot of great deals at local auctions, estate sales and flea markets," Surmick said.

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, he said the auction world has changed a bit in the last six months.

"I have not been attending any auctions in person, but I hope that will change soon," Surmick said. "I am an avid addict of Heritage Auctions and am getting back into buying vintage comic books through ComicLink — both online auction venues. I do miss attending auctions in person and Morphy Auctions in Adamstown (Pennsylvania) is high on my list to attend whenever the pandemic ends."

Right now, Surmick sees a massive speculative bubble occurring in vintage video games as well as "Magic the



Submitted photos

**Shawn Surmick**

Gathering" collectible game cards and vintage Pokemon cards — showing that pop culture from the 1990s is on the up and up at the present time.

"Currently, there are a lot of buyers coming into the antiques and

More **TRENDS**, page **E35**

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## Trends Continued from E34

collectibles trade with an investment mindset. This is good for the health of the market overall, but anyone coming into these markets for financial returns needs to understand how these markets work before spending significant amounts of money. Speculation runs rampant in the antiques and collectibles (market) and not everyone can make money in these markets all the time," Surmick said.

He advised: "If you are looking to learn the antiques and collectibles trade, take it slow, control your emotions, and learn about the risks first, then start to buy. Building a collection slowly over the long term is much better than spending a lot of money over a short time frame. Dollar-cost averaging works just as well in the antiques and collectibles trade as it does on Wall Street."

Surmick believes that auctions can be one of the best places to find good deals, but said that buyers have to control their emotions.

"I have seen a lot of amateur collectors and dealers overpay at auction simply because they had to have the item they were bidding on, when they could

have gotten it for less either online or directly from another dealer," he said.

He also reminded buyers that most high-profile auction houses do charge a buyer's premium, which is paid in addition to a bid.

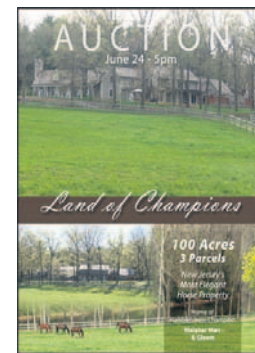
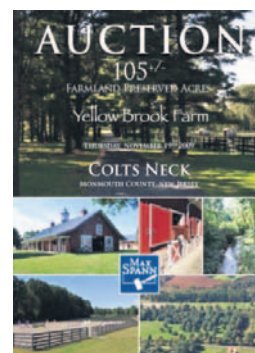
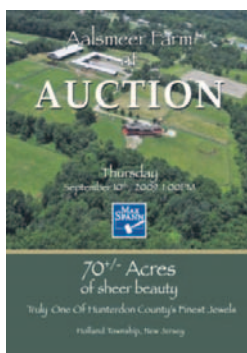
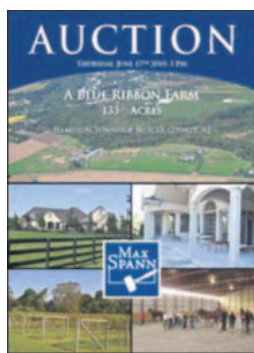
"Novice buyers need to be aware of the total costs of the items they are bidding on as a result," he said. "But,

the buyer's premium should not scare away a potential bidder. Auctions are something every collector needs to get used to and understand as they are a big part of the trade today."

*Shelby Watson-Hampton is a freelance writer covering Southern Maryland.*



**A collectible bill Surmick picked up at auction.**



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## VW's Continued from E22

VW clubs and local groups across the country sponsor both small and large events for VW collectors. One is a popular three-day gathering for VW buses and vans called the Jerome Jamboree, attracting participants from across the country. It is held each September in Jerome, Arizona, and is sponsored by the Arizona VW Bus Club.

Janiszewski said that today, most club members also are members of VW social-networking sites. Online they share information about their vehicles and events planned for specific vehicle types throughout the year.

Leroy "Buck" Mortorff owns Buck's Custom Auto Center in York, Pennsylvania. He got hooked on fixing and restoring automobiles as a high school vo-tech student in the 1960s. Although he had planned on a career as a mechanic, he spent more than 50 years in the family roofing business. However, he always kept his hand in the automotive field, rebuilding engines and restoring VW vehicles in a garage that housed his roofing trucks.

Mortorff's restoration work over the years has included complete restorations of a 1955 Beetle, a 1963 Beetle

and a 1963 VW crew cab pickup. He also rebuilt a 1967 VW Beetle as a street racer.

Mortorff's daily drive is a 1978 VW van he purchased for \$1,500 a few years ago. It was in bad shape — rusty and with a crushed roof. He rebuilt it as a modified vehicle with a truck bed and huge toolbox. The custom VW vehicle has streamline 1966 Chevy Impala tail lights, 17-inch BMW wheels and was repainted in its original lime-green color.

"Most of the work I do is for owners," Mortorff said. "They bring me their vehicles, sometimes in boxes, and ask me to restore or just put the vehicle back into driving condition."

His latest project, which has taken almost two years, is the restoration of a Karmann Ghia sports car that is nearly complete.

"My customers have to have patience," Mortorff said, "as I am usually working on multiple vehicles and engines at one time, and I'll get it done and done right, but not next week."

Mortorff and countless collectors like him across the country have had a long fascination with Volkswagen Beetles or the boxy and beautiful Transport-



Photo by Art Petrosemolo

**Buck Mortorff with a VW van that ultimately was restored.**

ers. For them, the restoration work is a labor of love, and they just won't let these iconic vehicles fade away or pass into history.

*Art Petrosemolo is a freelance correspondent and photojournalist in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.*

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## Facebook Continued from E27

increase.

Not just anyone can be a member on the Central PA page. Participants must have a sincere interest in antiques.

Criteria is listed when someone clicks the button to become a member.

"I use questions for folks to (be able to) enter the Facebook page — to filter out potential bots and scammers. Once you've

been accepted into the group, anyone can post their items for sale or purchase an item that's already listed for sale," Stevens said.

The first vetting question asks if the viewer understands that the page is for vintage and antique buyers and sellers only and then explains what makes something vintage or antique. It also asks if the person is a buyer or a seller.

*Tabitha Goodling is a freelance writer in central Pennsylvania.*

## Options Continued from E29

follow the auction and submit multiple bids in response to the offers being made by other bidders. Shirk points out that, at the start of an online auction, the price increments generally increase slowly.

Unlike eBay auctions online, where a bidder can click in at the last moment to become the successful buyer, the Auction Flex software features a "slow close." If any bids are submitted in the last two minutes of the auction, the close of bidding is automatically extended by three minutes. Shirk said this feature also works to the advantage of the seller.

Once the bidding is final, the successful online bidder is notified, pays by credit card and makes arrangement either to pick up the item at Shirk's establishment or have it shipped by Shirk. Those customers picking up items bring along the invoice that was emailed to them; social distancing is observed during pickup from Shirk's Auction Gallery's warehouse.

Shirk believes that online bidding is proving advantageous to his business in several ways. First, it has opened his marketplace to a whole new clientele, from the entire country and beyond.

There is also less labor involved than for a live auction, which

requires a clerk, multiple auctioneers and runners, as well as staffing for the snack bar and office. The fee schedule for merchandise sold online is the same as for Shirk's live auctions.

As for online auction disadvantages, Shirk cites the difficulty in selling box lots of assorted items. He also finds that bidders prefer to see and touch items before they purchase them.

While his online auctions now use display photos, when coronavirus restrictions are lifted, Shirk plans to hold preview times when bidders can visit the auction gallery to see the merchandise in person.

A personal disadvantage of online auctions for Shirk is that he misses calling bids and working with the crowd.

"I'm anxious to do it again," he said.

In the meantime, he continues doing print advertisements to keep his auction gallery's name in the public eye and refer customers to a full listing of items at the Shirk Auction Gallery's website.

*Shirk's Auction Gallery may be reached at info@shirksauctions.com or 717-685-4226.*

*Sue Bowman is a freelance writer in southeastern Pennsylvania.*

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Orange, California-based Mantiques Network is an industry leader.

"People just want to go retro," co-owner Jim Schafer said. "Young barbers are taking their one-, two- and three-chair shops and decorating them with antique stuff. They're looking for cast iron and porcelain chairs like Koken and Koch from the '20s, '30s and '40s, hanging up antique advertising and installing antique back bars. It just makes a more Disneyland-pleasant atmosphere for patrons."

Mantiques features all kinds of barbering equipment.

"I deal in everything that's cool, from antique hand towel warmers to ceiling fans," Schafer said. "What's also pretty hot right now is little chrome lather machines that heat up and give you hot foam, and sanitizing equipment that would heat up tools to keep them clean. There's so many things that went in your typical, old-time barber shop."

His business also specializes in refurbishing old chairs.

"Vintage shop owners like porcelain chairs because they're sturdy, they still work fantastic," Schafer said. "Nobody really goes for the turn-of-the-century wooden oak chairs. Most of those end up in a house as decorations. They're old, they aren't going to take the punishment a cast-iron porcelain chair can take. Vintage shops are trying to give patrons a step back in time. They can easily buy all kinds of new equipment, but that's not what the 30-, 40- and even 50-year-old customers are going for."

Schafer said it costs about \$5,000 to restore an old chair.

"There's a lot of work to restoring a barber chair," he said. "You knock it completely down. The porcelain goes out for

sand blasting and comes back with car paint. The chrome and upholstery also goes out and it all has to come back and be reassembled. There's a lot of man hours in one of those things. But they fly out of here because when we're done they're a perfect 10, they're beautiful."

"It's hard to buy a professionally restored chair for less than \$6,000, but they're worth that kind of money," he said.

Vintage shops and private collectors are the two main types of buyers. Sometimes, people may find items at auction houses as well.

"A family might have had a chair forever, it's been pushed from house to house, setting in a garage and they want to get rid of it," Schafer said. "With barber chairs, people didn't have the heart to throw them away. They didn't just put them out on the curb, and if they did, somebody else would take them home because they're that cool, right?"

"If you're auctioning it, there is no price," Schafer said. "An auctioneer's job is to market and advertise his product. Then the general public or dealers come and it's a bidding war. Whoever pays the most money gets it. I sold a unique barber pole recently to a lawyer back East for 15,000 bucks. The rarity is the price."

But, as with any collectible, Ippoliti urged buyers to verify the authenticity of items before completing a purchase.

"You just have to be careful to make sure it's not a reproduction, that it's an original," he said. "There are a lot of collector's sites out there, and people who will help you out."

*Paul Post is a freelance writer in eastern New York. He can be reached at paulpost@nycap.rr.com.*



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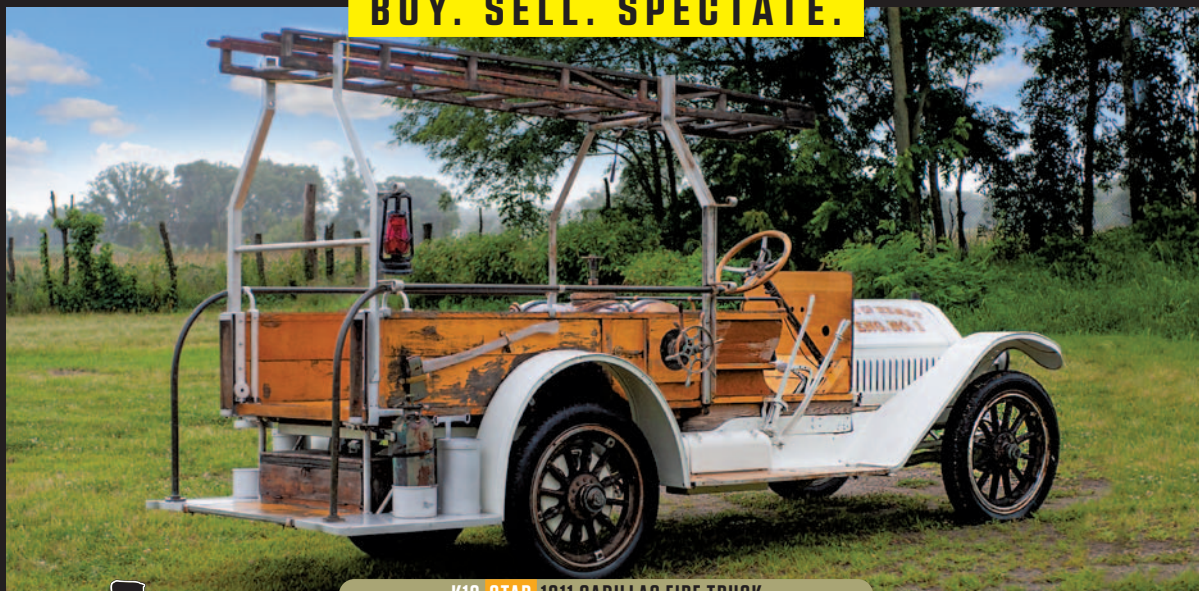
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