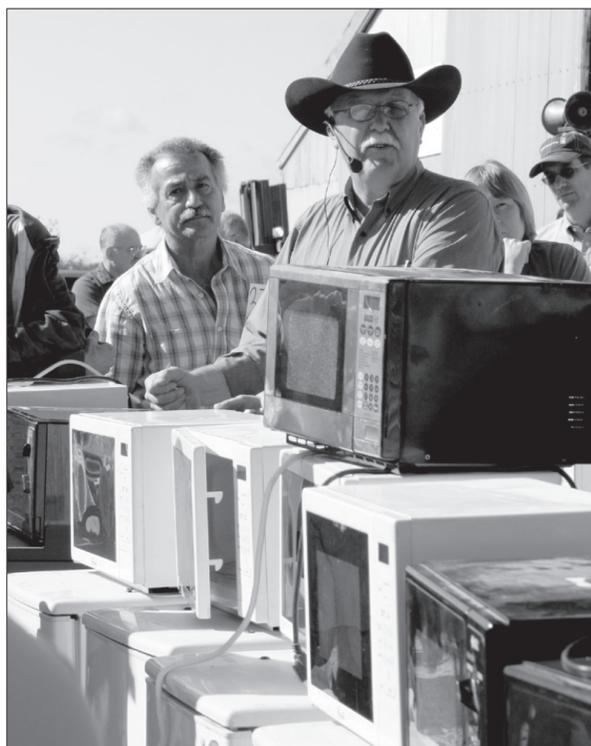


Surplus auction offers deals



Customers bid on items ranging from bikes to furniture to computers

BY BRENNA MCDERMOTT
Editor in Chief

Darting eyes, nods of the head, quick sleight-of-hand and a competitive focus filled the air outside the Delaney/Baldwin Building #4 as patrons from near and far gathered to find their own treasures from Truman's trash.

Retro stationary bikes, hundreds of twisted cords, old soccer goals, typewriters and a motorized scooter without a key were up for auction at the Surplus Auction Saturday.

What started as a sparse, quiet crowd at 9 a.m. grew to a buzzing mass surrounding guest auctioneers Jerry McMain of McMain Auction Company and Bob Jones of Truman State University.

It's early in the day, but alumni Tom and Rachel Barhorst and Kristen Gillette are observing the bidding outside on a heap of bicycles, metal shelves and some benches.

At previous actions, Tom said he has bought office chairs, tables and filing cabinets.

"I guess I'm looking for deals more than anything," Tom said, although he said he probably wouldn't buy anything today.

Tom's wife Rachel comes along, although not to buy anything.

"I come to keep him from spending money," Rachel said.

Gillette said this is the third auction she's attended. In the past she has bought an end table and a computer monitor. She said she comes to auctions with specific purchases in mind but also likes to look around.

"I find it fun," Gillette said. "I like to go to auctions. I do like listening to the auctioneer. Just kinda look around. You never know what's gonna be here."

Today, she said she might purchase some CDs or a cooler she's been eyeing, but she and the Barhorsts won't stay all day.

"If it takes forever to get inside, I'll buy a cooler at Wal-Mart, it's no big deal," Gillette said. "It's just if it was for a dollar."

When the auction moved to chairs of all kinds — wooden, plastic, metal — with different upholsteries and frames, Columbia residents Ben Parsons and

Josh Nunez bought four of the retro chairs they'd come to Kirksville searching for.

"We knew that this school had this kind of chair," Parsons said, describing the Eames chair. "[We] didn't know that they were gonna be necessarily in this auction, but so when we saw them ... We pick them up and sell them."

Parsons and Nunez sell on Etsy, a marketplace for homemade crafts. Their site on the marketplace, Comod Classics, sells chairs from \$15 to \$600.

"We'll try to clean them up," Parsons said. "You'd be surprised how much you might be able to get back on them. Those are pretty rough, I doubt they'll come back all the way. But in this case we could rip off all the fabric and just take it down to the plastic shell, and it could still be a decent looking chair."

Parsons said they keep their eyes open for retro chairs that have a little more style than modern office chairs.

Although it is one of the first auctions they've gone to looking for chairs, Parsons said they try not to get caught up in the competitive nature of the bidding process.

"Sometimes you get somebody who you know is not gonna let you win," Parsons said. "Some of these guys are career people who really do it."

One career auction attendee is Columbia resident Bogdan Stroescu, who resells vintage bikes, vintage furniture, restaurant equipment and other items on Ebay. He's been going to auctions and surplus sales for more than 20 years.

Today, he has his eye on some bikes he wants. Stroescu said he believes in recycling and reusing.

"[I want] to give the item another life," Stroescu said.

He's traveled all over the Midwest giving treasures second lives.

"I covered usually, in my best years, from Chicago to Atlanta and from Omaha to Tennessee," Stroescu said.

Stroescu said he is trying to keep his bidding as cheap as possible,

but strategizing is more than just bidding low.

"The strategy is very complex," Stroescu said. "Depending who is here, how they sell, if the auctioneer knows you or not... You can't change too much by strategy because people are smart, and if they want something they bid high. But you can do some tricks."

Although he can get competitive in the biddings, Stroescu said it is bad for his business. He tries to buy items at 50 percent of the price he can get for them on Ebay, although sometimes he'll buy items as high as 20 percent less than what he can make off of them.

A lot of stress and thought goes into the bidding process. Stroescu said it can be exciting and challenging, but he doesn't enjoy auctions as much as he once did. Today he didn't get the bikes he was eyeing.

"I'm not here to enjoy, it's my work," Stroescu said. "Sure, I like what I am doing but I prefer to be, I don't know, on a lake."

Everything claimed here is a victory, from a Truman State University van to eyeglasses and cases collected from lost and founds throughout campus. Bidders gleefully compare even the smallest of prizes bought, comparing frames, whether women's or men's glasses, some even without lenses, and attempt to one-up each others' winnings or, in some cases, barter or trade.

Senior Joyce Wong got her boyfriend a bike for \$55 that she estimates actually costs about \$120.

She said she attends the Truman surplus auctions often, but getting the right item at the right price takes practice.

"If you don't know what you're doing, you have to pay attention or you'll lose the bike or whatever you're trying to get."

"It's also kind of like a game," Wong said. "So, if you've already lost an item and you know that someone's interested, you just continue to drive the price up."

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Joyce Wong
Senior



Brenna McDermott/Index
Above, guest auctioneer Bob Jones (right) auctions off a row of micro-fridges. Below, a customer inspects laptops for sale.

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