

# Neighbors

By Suzanne Veh

## Who'll give him thirty dolla

"I'm bid twenny five, make it thirty dolla, twenny five, who'll gimme thirty dolla, thirty dolla, make it thirty five, I'm bid thirty five, make it forty dolla...."

Speed that up until it sounds like a 33 record played at 45 speed and you've captured the sound of Carson Hill driving his car.

Driving his car???

Carson, a well-known auctioneer, like any good professional practices every spare minute. A good auctioneer has to keep his tongue loose and limber all the time. It's his verbal proficiency that sets the mood at a sale and makes an auction either good or bad.

So, when driving his car, mucking out his barn, or taking a shower, Carson practices. (Drives his wife and kids crazy!)

The sing-song voice, the filler words between the bids, the increasing speed of the bidding — all this creates an infectious excite-

ment that's passed on to those in attendance.

As a teenager, Carson used to do what is called "barnyard auctioneering" for no pay. He and a friend, Stuart James of Edwards (whose father the late Stuart James was an auctioneer), were both impressed with the trade. So ten years ago they went to the Reich Auction College in Iowa and for 14 solid days they talked, breathed, ate and dreamed nothing but auctioneering.

As Carson says, the school's motto was: "Auctioneers are not born, we make them". He highly recommends the course and would like to see Canada raise its standards and make it mandatory that auctioneers pass a test before they hang out a shingle. There is only one school in Western Canada (as opposed to one in every State in the U.S.)

After graduating from auctioneering school, he and Stu

James returned home and worked independently for two years before forming a partnership; today they do all sales together. While one is auctioneering the other watches the audience for bids and keeps track of the numbers.

They do all kinds of sales; livestock dispersal, equipment, liquidations, land, household, and antiques. During a farm liquidation, they are always aware of the great responsibility placed on them for they are selling a man's lifelong business in order that he may retire comfortably.

Carson remembers his first two professional sales in 1970. One was for John Lee and the other for the late Donald Duncan, both of Vernon; he'll always be grateful, for the trust they put in him at the beginning of his career.

He still admits to a few butterflies at the beginning of each sale but says that it keeps him on his toes — in fact few sales go by that he doesn't learn something new.

Carson, wife Carolyn and their three children, Laurie, David, and Steven reside in same white frame house in Kenmore that his father and grandfather before him lived in. Carolyn does all the paper work involved in the business, as well as lending a helping hand on



Carson Hill

the farm where they raise beef cattle.

To date, the highlight for Carson was when he auctioned a painting by A.Y. Jackson for a Montreal-based Art Gallery. His longest sale lasted ten hours and it took almost three days to get his voice back in shape. He has never lost his voice, but does get hoarse after a big sale; he chews gum constantly to prevent a sore throat.

Next to the oral atmosphere, the bidding is, of course, what makes an auction tick. Bidding can get quite hectic, especially at cattle auctions when bids are by the pound, so the pace is fast, and on top of keeping track of how many cents are being bid, the auctioneer has to keep track of all the bidders. Often the bidding is so discreet that an outsider would never realize what is going on.

With no physical movement, the bidders signal Carson with a

look in their eye, and the bidding rises. A different kind of look, or eyes suddenly downcast, and in a fraction of a second bidders signal that they're out of the bidding.

For those who can't control the urge to scratch their left ear during a critical stage of an auction, it's no myth that they may wind up with something they never wanted. Accidents can happen, but the item usually goes up for resale.

The auctioneer has to be alert the whole time a sale is in progress, and some sales run for up to ten hours. As Carson tells it, hours of concentrated effort at fever pitch works him up to a real 'high'; by the time a sale ends, it takes him a few hours to unwind.

So what does he do after a big sale when he has stretched his vocal powers to the limit? Why, he sits around and talks for a few hours to relax, of course!

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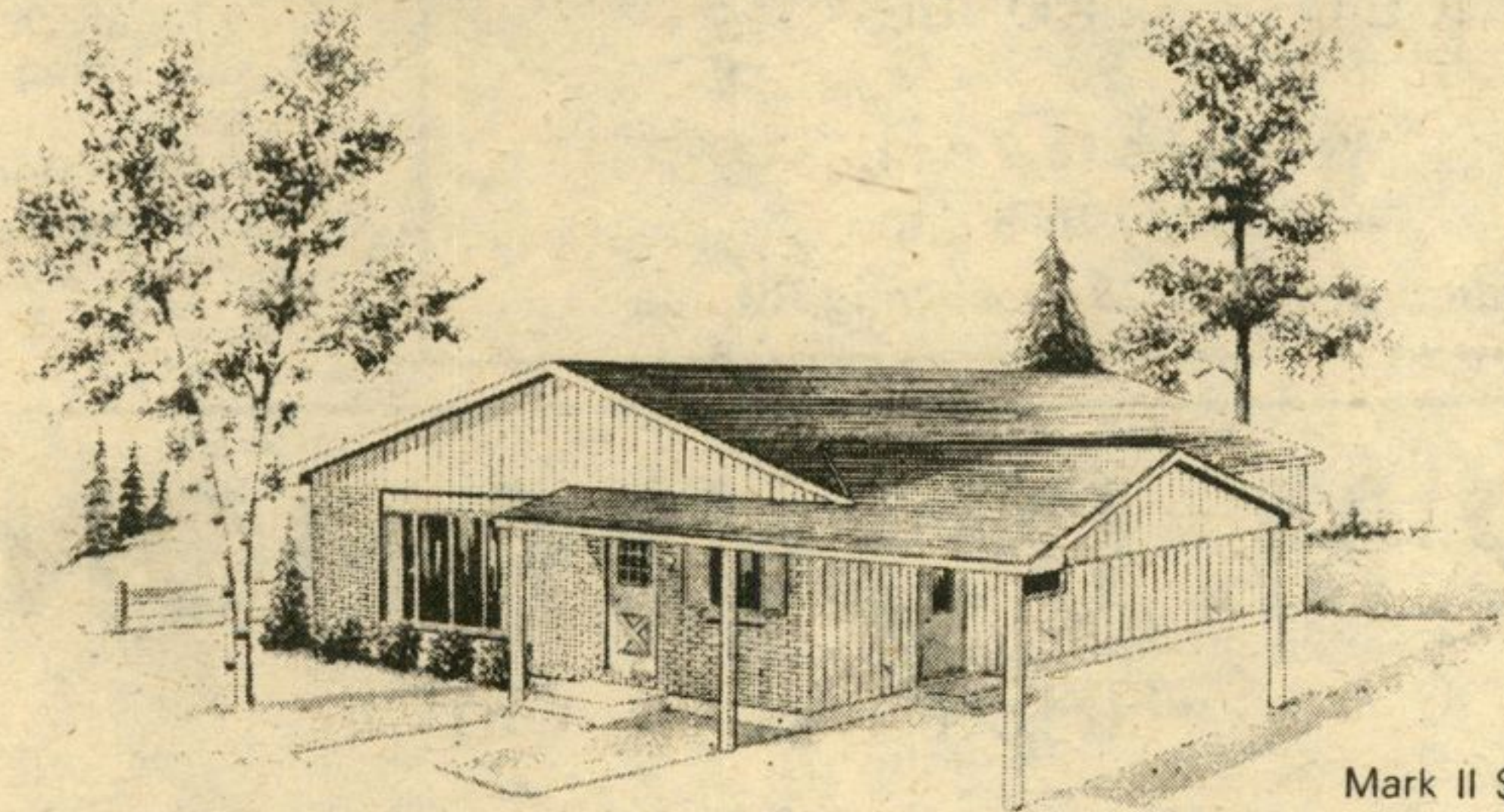
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## 64 years hitched



(Suzanne Veh photo)

Married one day, up milking cows the next.

That's how things were 64 years ago when Mr. and Mrs. Herbert James, R.R. 2 Russell, tied the knot.

When Miss Jesse Quail of Edwards accepted Mr. James' proposal in 1916, she was aware that a honeymoon was out of the question, and unlike many contemporary women, she says she didn't mind one bit. And that, says Mr. James is the reason for their

marital success: "We care for each other a great deal," he says.

The James' live with their daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Clelland Hamilton, who along with friends and neighbors helped celebrate the happy couple's anniversary June 28th.

The story was told of a young groom travelling to Ottawa by horse and cutter to purchase a gold ring for his intended. The same gold band which adorns Mrs. James finger to this very day.

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