

MUEHLBAUER: THE COLLECTION



Wroda "Customer Appreciation Weekend" and Stacy & Des Wills Visit

"The bidding is spirited and lively," announced the auctioneer. This was in conjunction with a piece of carnival glass that started at \$15. Jim, or was it Mike?, was asking for \$17.50, but finally accepted \$16. And another item was sold. As always, our auctioneers are fun-loving and adept at poking good-natured fun at the crowd and themselves. But believe me folks, prices DID get higher.

I'm not sure how many bidding cards were out at the Wroda Auction Company's *2007 Customer Appreciation Sale*, but those of us who were there enjoyed another premier event. Loads of free food, an outstanding show by Greenville's popular Waveaires, hugs all around from and for, true 'carnival friends' that we sometimes only get to see once or twice a year, AND of course, many chances to add outstanding pieces of carnival glass to our collections. This year's two-day auction glass was provided from the outstanding collections of Paul & Dee Bekemeir and Jackie Poucher of Florida.

The total of 475 lots which included significant amounts of red carnival, Grape & Cable punch sets (in all sizes and colors), and many pieces in the Orange Tree pattern. For the Ohio-based gathering, there were also enough Millersburg rarities to keep even these diehards smiling!



An early shocker was the "Blasting Electric Blue" Persian Medallion bowl sold as lot #28. Well, it wasn't "Persian Blue" as noted in the brochure, but it WAS 'blasting electric blue'! I've never been particularly fond of the pattern, but I did get a crick in my neck the first time I walked by this piece! I snapped my head back so fast it took my eyeballs three minutes to catch up! Regardless of my bias against the pattern, this 3n1 edged bowl was one of the most outstanding electric blue pieces of CG I, or anyone in the room, had ever seen --- I kid you not!

And in true carnival glass style, everyone tried not to be noticed wiping the drool off their chins after spotting this beauty. Everyone except me, that is. I exclaimed, "Holy Moly" rather loudly (or something to that effect.) Tearing myself away from it, I could still hear the, "Holy (expletive)s from other people." Hard to believe I know, but not many of us asked for the bowl to be taken out of its case to be examined for dings --- *it just didn't matter* because even damaged (which it was not) all of us lusted after it! And, of course, most of us never mentioned this piece to our dear and loved friends in the room ever again! We were all secretly hoping nobody else had taken note of it. Ha, ha, ha! It ended up going home with a gentle Pennsylvania couple after being hammered down for a mere \$2300. Yes, the decimal placement is correct. If there are such things as "World Record Prices" in carnival glass, this has to be a "Universe Record" for a cobalt Persian Medallion bowl --- AND in my opinion, one that will not be broken in my lifetime. No Alice, your blue Persian Medallion bowl is NOT worth \$2300!



I have long given up the hobby of writing down the sales prices on all the lots, having realized that after 30 years of doing it, that I never *once* went back to look at them. And besides, if the prices are noteworthy, my good friend Mr. Mordini, will be happy to provide them to you in a nicely-stapled (bound?) booklet at the end of the year for a mere \$12. But, having said that, I hope you will continue reading this narrative to it's conclusion, as I DID write down a few prices on some of the more high-profile items. For instance, #91, the rare (one ova kind?) Grape & Cable spittoon, whimsied from a powder-jar bottom (is it okay to say "bottom" in public?) went back to the Orient for a measly \$7,000. (Or is that Orient, Ohio?)

I apologize for not noting the sales price of #93, the "spankin' electric purple G&C plate." I mean how often do you get a chance to bid on a "spankin'" anything? Aren't our auctioneer's wonderful? I mean "spankin'" electric purple. Isn't that a great description? I love it! In our auction, the operative word was "blasting". And who can argue with the results? Before I forget, immediately after the auction, I heard tell the gross exceeded \$400k. I'm writing this at 38,500 feet over Kansas or somewhere, so I'm unable to confirm this at the present. No Dee, that's NOT \$400k for you, \$400k for Paul, and \$400k for Jackie!

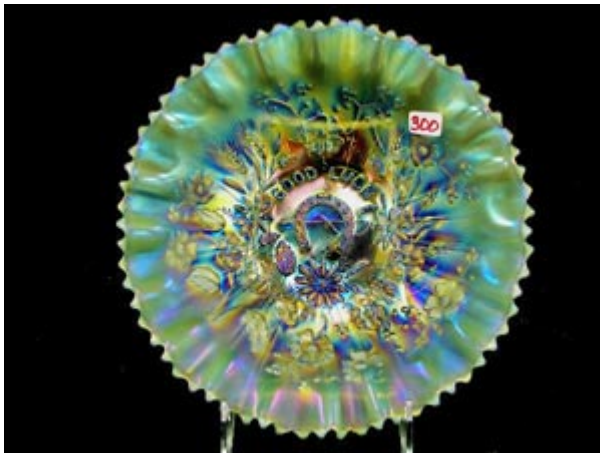
One particularly happy table was 'manned' and I should add 'wo-manned' by as odd a collection of characters as has ever been seen in the carnival glass world. There was a tow-truck driver and his 'good buddy' wife from Ohio (local boy makes good!), a financial captain of industry (with a minor in self-taught veterinary medicine) from Michigan, a quiet (kinda) farm-supply store owner and his wife from Pennsylvania, a quiet, demure Texas judge and her boy-friend and an "ex" rocket-scientist from Oregon (Go Ducks!) This Damon Runyon collection amidst all the heckling and unfounded acquisitions, managed to do some serious damage to the sales listing. I'm not sure of the final count, but at the last summation it was in excess of \$107,000! You're welcome, Dee, Paul and Jackie! We are happy for you!



Some noteworthy items included #148, the badly damaged lime/ice green footed Orange Tree water pitcher at \$1900 (as Tom Burns would say, "Where ya goin' at find 'em?", #287 the gorgeous and humungous white Grape & Cable master punch set at \$5,000. The local police department was summoned at this obvious thievery, but they failed to make an arrest when the judge's vanity license plates were spied or their Rolls Royce.



The show-stopping aqua opal Peacock at the Fountain Punch set (missing flute) managed to eek out \$30,000. Big EEK! There was one very happy *Desiree* heading back to the Orient after the auction!



I was out-gunned in my quest to take the aqua opal PCE Good Luck bowl back to the beach. Out-gunned is a gross understatement. I was hoping for something in the \$5k neighborhood and it sold for \$15,000 or something close to that! I was on the floor in a dead faint when the hammer fell.

But the long trip was not in vain. Friday night I managed to snag my 'new' number one target, #199, the simply gorgeous aqua opal Peacock at the Fountain compote with the base chip (as Jim noted in the brochure, "Who cares?") I can tell you for sure, NOT ME! I was, and am, elated to own this gorgeous example of aqua opal.



The one of two known amethyst Big Thistle punch bowls (and bases) set was a titanic battle between a certain gentleman (?) from Michigan and an on-the-phone bidder. Here's the happy winner either asking for contributions to help him with the \$24,000 winning bid or maybe it was, "Waiter, can I please get a refill?"

After the catered buffet dinner, prepared by the Greenville Fairlawn Steak House and provided free by the Wroda auction Company, the Greenville Waveaires presented an awesome singing and dancing show. The entertaining show featured Wroda's own Matt Wroda along with 29 other outstanding performers. A surprise announcement in the way of a singing contract for Matt followed the show to the delight of all present. Think mom and dad were proud?

All in all, I thoroughly enjoyed my trip to the auction AND my visit with Stacy & Des Wills. If you haven't yet been lucky enough to have seen their collection, put it on the 'must do' list. I can tell you it's outstanding. And after 38 years in the hobby, I think I can speak from experience!



As I told Stacy & Des, their collection reminds me of the 'tone' of the fantastic collection of carnival glass accumulated by Don & Connie Moore, in that it's composed of a very high percentage of rarities. Their display now numbers some 150 or so pieces, down from some 500 a few years ago. Of course downsizing from 500 to 150 displayed in the same space allows for much better visibility of the individual pieces and with the glass that the Wills have, that's very important. Everywhere you look there's a rare piece, often from their favorite manufacturer, Millersburg. The outstanding collection is beautifully lit and displayed and has outstanding color. The Wills themselves are most gracious hosts and I encourage all of you who can, make the effort to see it. Thanks, Stacy and Des.

What with the Wroda's great generosity in feeding us all weekend, the great auction provisioned by the Bekemeirs and Jackie Poucher and the warm hospitality of the Wills towards me, This will go down in my memory files as one heckova a carnival experience. Isn't our hobby great?