

# YOUR LIFE

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Bidders peer into Unit 37 at StorageWorks in north Fort Worth. They get just a quick glance at its jumbled contents from the doorway, and then the auction begins.

STAR-TELEGRAM/RON T. ENNIS



Property-management supervisor Rhonda Tiek unlocks a sealed unit at Aloha Self Storage.

STAR-TELEGRAM/RON T. ENNIS



A bidder pays \$70 for the contents of an Aloha Self Storage unit. Auctioneers accept cash only.

STAR-TELEGRAM/RON T. ENNIS

## AUCTIONS

# Treasure hunters

By ALYSON WARD [award@star-telegram.com](mailto:award@star-telegram.com)

Maybe this abandoned storage unit holds empty boxes. Maybe the boxes are hiding a motorcycle. Even the auctioneer won't know until one of these gamblers places the winning bid.

The door rolls up on storage unit E16, and a Tuesday-morning crowd of bidders pushes forward to peer at what's inside.

It's a mess, but you can see the highlights. A table lamp — no, two lamps. A couple of small tables. Plenty of boxes and crates. A few plastic hangers. A dusty cooler with its lid propped open. And a mattress that sags against the side wall.

"How much for it? Who needs it?" Jackie Sutton asks the group, gearing up into auctioneer mode. The 19 or 20 people in T-shirts and jeans mill around on the concrete driveway in Haltom City, casually sizing each other up, fingering lumps of cash in their pockets.

The bidding starts at \$100, and they're off. Sutton's voice accelerates into the gusty wind, driven by a dance of barely perceptible nods and finger waves.

"One-twenty-five, \$125, \$150, \$150, now \$175, \$175, \$200. Price set at two hundred twenty-five, \$225, \$250,

More on AUCTION on 6G

## Want to attend a storage auction? Here's how:

### www.auctionzip.com

A site that lets you search for auctions in your area. You can search by ZIP code, but it's most effective to click on "Texas" and view the auctions listed all over the state. You'll also find links to local auctioneers and can set up alerts to receive updates about scheduled auctions.

### A few of the auctioneers who specialize in self-storage units

**Jackie Sutton, All American Auctioneers.** [www.allamericanauctioneers.com](http://www.allamericanauctioneers.com)

or call 817-461-6006 for recorded updates.

**Luther Davis, Davis Auctioneers.**

[www.davisauctiontx.com](http://www.davisauctiontx.com).

**John Ashley, Auctioneer.** Find his schedule at [auctionzip.com](http://auctionzip.com) or e-mail [auctioneertx6048@sbcglobal.net](mailto:auctioneertx6048@sbcglobal.net).

## For this dealer, Big 'D' stands for 'diversify'



### THE WEEKEND ANTIQUER

What doesn't appeal to Fort Worth buyers may very well reap profits in Dallas — and vice versa.

By MALCOLM MAYHEW  
Special to the Star-Telegram

This is not a betrayal, Fort Worth. Please do not be angry at me, city of my birth. You will always have a place in my heart, like the chicken-fried steak at Massey's and the cold beer at Fred's. We've had some great times together, you and I. Hey, remember that time over at J&J's Hideaway when . . . oh, that's right — family newspaper. Good times, Fort

Worth!

But I must do what's best for me: I took a space in Dallas.

Now, this does not mean that I am no longer selling antiques in Fort Worth. Matter of fact, I'm still in, gee, one, two, three Fort Worth malls. How did that happen? Did two chests of mine hook up and spawn a bunch of little A. Brandt pub tables, Queen Anne vanity stools and Arts and Crafts bookcases?

More on ANTIQUER on 7G

## TODAY'S AGENDA



Kim Delaney, Sally Pressman, Sterling K. Brown, Brigid Brannagh and Catherine Bell, from left

LIFETIME TELEVISION/MEGAN TANTILLO

### A salute to spouses

Kim Delaney and Catherine Bell star in *Army Wives*, a new Lifetime series about women on the home front at an Army post; it debuts at 9 p.m.

### Hear the cream of the crop

And then there were six. See the final-round performances of this year's Cliburn amateur competition at Texas Christian University's Ed Landreth Auditorium. \$39. 817-335-9000. [www.centricticketoffice.com](http://www.centricticketoffice.com).

### Go for some laughs

The Fort Worth Public Library presents *Tootsie* as part of its First Sunday Film Club. The film, starring Dustin Hoffman as both Michael Dorsey and Dorothy Michaels, was nominated for 10 Oscars. Jessica Lange plays the love interest. 2 p.m. at the David L. Tandy Lecture Hall in the Central Library, 500 W. Third St. in Fort Worth. Free. 817-871-7791. [www.fortworthlibrary.org](http://www.fortworthlibrary.org). Have an item for Agenda? Send it to [ptstone@star-telegram.com](mailto:ptstone@star-telegram.com)

### WHAT'S AHEAD

**MON** The skinny on online diet programs. **In Your Health**

**TUE** How to make your next family trip fun. **In Your Life**



**WED** Boutique bakeries for your special occasion. **In Food**

**THU** Five ways to reduce ATM fees. **In Your Money**

**FRI** The newest Tarrant County hot spots for outdoor dining. **In Go!**



Auctioneer Jackie Sutton auctions off Unit 1 at Aloha Self Storage. Auctiongoers can't look inside those boxes before they bid — this unit's contents go for \$40.

STAR-TELEGRAM/RON T. ENNIS

## Auction: Storage-unit managers have seen it all — including a shotgun booby trap

### CONTINUED FROM 1G

woulda been \$250. \$225, bid, \$250, \$250, \$275, \$300, now \$300, \$300, now it's \$325, \$325, \$350, woulda been \$350. \$325 bid, \$350, \$350, woulda been \$350, anybody with \$350? \$350?"

Nobody's willing to part with \$350. The jumble of boxes and furniture goes for \$325.

"Done," Sutton declares. The winner starts to unroll a wad of bills, and the rest of the crowd ambles away.

Welcome to the self-storage foreclosure auction. For buyers, it's more adventurous than a garage sale, more risky than an estate auction. And it happens over and over, several times a week, at facilities all over North Texas.

A door rolls up and people bid to buy the contents of an abandoned storage unit — no inspecting the goods, just a quick glance from the doorway. Money changes hands. Someone's possessions are gone for good. And a few hours later, the space is cleaned out and ready for a new tenant — maybe one who'll pay the monthly bill.

### The resale society

The Aloha Self Storage facility's orange doors can be seen from Loop 820 as it arcs through Haltom City. Sutton, of All American Auctioneers, shows up here about once a month to auction off the latest crop of units in foreclosure. In fact, he spends two or three days a week moving from facility to facility all over the area, auctioning off units at Access Self Storage, Lone Star Storage, Convenient Self Storage, A-Absolute Self Storage, National Self Storage, All Storage, Village Mini Storage, America's Storage, Simply Self Storage and a few locations of Pack & Stack.

At Aloha, the pickings seem pretty slim this day in May. A cheap Roadmaster bike and a couple of mattresses go for \$50. Some toys, bikes and a pile of broken particle-board furniture go for \$120.

Another door is rolled up. Unit 10. The bidders crowd in to give it the once-over, a few of them shining flashlights into the dark corners.

"They are just throwin' the 'quality' door open," somebody wise-cracks.

Near the entrance, as if it's on display, hangs a sequin-studded black dress from some unknown era.

Farther back, a couple of wooden chairs. A wooden queen-size headboard and bed frame. Cardboard boxes, Christmas tree ornaments.

A half-empty water bottle. A plush toy. A lone crutch.

The whole thing goes for \$350.

Now, who would spend \$350 on a bunch of junk and furniture? A pro who knows what to do with it, knows how and where to sell that stuff and turn a profit.

A lot of the folks who show up at these auctions are regulars. They buy

### Storage units by the numbers

**5,100** storage facilities in Texas

**360** facilities in the 817 area code

**\$69.37** average monthly rent for a 10-by-10-foot unit in the Fort Worth area

**\$108** average monthly rent for a 10-by-10 foot climate-controlled unit in the Fort Worth area

**70** percent of storage units in Texas rented by individuals (the rest are businesses storing equipment or documents)

**35** number of years the storage business has been around  
Source: Texas Self-Storage Association

and sell full time, making the rounds at every auction in town. They own resale shops, a lot of them, or maybe antiques stores. They set up booths at flea markets, sell goods at Traders Village in Grand Prairie. This, for them, is a job.

The regulars see each other so often, they get to be friends. They become cliquish, joking with each other, ignoring the amateurs and playing games with the less-experienced.

Newcomers do get hazed a little bit, says Tony Fernandez, a regular who owns a resale shop on Mansfield Highway. After all, this is a business, and they're the competition.

"We'll kind of pick on them, might run them off," he says.

Even without the hazing, a storage auction is perilous place for newcomers. It's easy to get carried away. You have to rely on instinct and to think fast, because every unit is a gamble. The rules of the Texas Self Storage Association require that bidders stay outside the unit until after it's sold. You can look, but you can't touch.

"You have to be careful what you bid on," says Frances Kennedy of Fort Worth, who, along with her husband, Madison, is an experienced auction shopper. "Sometimes you get nothing but a bunch of clothes."

And that's what makes a storage-unit auction exciting — and risky. You don't know exactly what you're getting until you've already fought for it, won it and handed over your cash.

Dave Hamilton, who lives in Hurst, sells a lot of his stuff on eBay. He also sells gifts and goods on his Web site, [texasonlinesales.com](http://texasonlinesales.com). At these auctions, he's looking for small household goods. If you're an eBay-er, you're looking for items you can ship.



Sutton, right, takes bids. Some buyers own resale shops.

STAR-TELEGRAM/RON T. ENNIS

Hamilton will bid on boxes, even mysterious ones, because boxes contain that small stuff. An old Griswold cast-iron skillet. China. Jewelry. Computer stuff. Or not.

"It's pretty much a crapshoot," Hamilton says. "And there have been times that you'll find two or three of those boxes empty."

Sometimes they contain clothes, and clothes don't bring in much resale money. Small appliances — microwaves, toaster ovens, breadmakers — are so inexpensive new, they're barely worth the trouble to sell used. But if you're lucky, you might stumble across something collectible, like a Red Wing jug. Put one of those things on eBay, he says, and it'll bring in hundreds.

### Urban storage legends

Everybody has a story about something that's been found inside a unit after the sale. A saxophone. Illegal drugs. A safe full of handguns. A German tea set worth thousands.

Here's a story that everybody who does storage auctions has heard: There was this guy who paid almost nothing for a bunch of boxes, contents unknown. And then? When he moved the boxes? He discovered the hidden treasure: a Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

No one actually saw that happen, but "everybody knows about it," Tony Fernandez says.

In the version Hamilton has heard, there were *two* Harleys. He's also heard about a woman who found \$10,000 in cash. (It makes you wonder: If the tenant had \$10,000 in cash, why didn't he pay the rent?)

"You hear all kinds of stories," Hamilton says. "I haven't seen it, so I don't know if it's true."

He knows one thing: "I have never opened it up and found a bunch of money."

Well, just recently, Hamilton was cleaning out a unit and nearly threw away a stray sock until he realized it was full of 10 Morgan silver dollars.

Those things were minted mostly in the 19th century, and collectors go crazy for them. The most valuable one in that sock, Hamilton says, went for more than \$400.

Fernandez has found some surprises, too. Once, hidden in the junk was a Bible from 1849. Another time, it was a racing poster autographed by Dale Earnhardt. But Fernandez's son still has the best treasure they've found: An autographed photo of Babe Ruth.

If it's unbelievable stories you want, talk to Rhonda Tiek. The storage-unit property supervisor has been in this business for 19 years. Tiek's the one who goes out to the property when it's time to cut the locks, so she's the first one to peer in at some of this junk from the doorway.

Tiek has stumbled across a unit used as a porn studio, she says, and a space that served as the closet for a drag queen. One time in Dallas — get ready for this — a tenant booby-trapped the place with a shotgun. When the buyer cleaned it out, she moved a piece of furniture and a shotgun shell went clean through the walls of the next six units.

One of Tiek's best stories is about the time she opened up a unit in Fort Worth and saw a casket inside. Inside the casket? A skeleton. The whole thing, it turns out, belonged to a local biology teacher who used it as a prop in the classroom. Unless there's something like a casket in sight, the management doesn't touch the contents before the auction. They peer inside just like the buyers do, estimating the value from the doorway.

Tiek's pretty good at estimating by now. But sometimes even she gets tricked.

Continued on next page



Sutton leads a group of bidders through StorageWorks in north Fort Worth.

STAR-TELEGRAM/RON T. ENNIS



Some bring flashlights for a better view.

STAR-TELEGRAM/RON T. ENNIS

**Continued from previous page**

"About 11 or 12 years ago," she says, "I had a unit over in Dallas. It was a big 10-by-30 and it was full. Full."

There were nice Craftsman tools in that floor-to-ceiling jumble, so Tiek knew the unit wouldn't go for peanuts. And sure enough, it sold for \$2,200 — definitely on the high end. But \$2,200, it turns out, was a steal. Completely hidden amid all that junk? A car.

"It wasn't a real expensive car," Tiek says, shaking her head, "but, I mean, it was a car. I had no idea it was in there."

**The human factor**

"What blows my mind on some of them," says Hamilton, the eBay-er, "is why people would leave their stuff there."

There's usually something sad about the contents. You wonder where that sequined dress was worn, and who might have first plucked it from the department-store rack. You wonder if family photos are tucked away in those lumpy albums. You wonder, above all, why they didn't just give that mattress away — after all, you could buy another mattress for the same money you'll pay to store the old one for a year.

Sometimes, when you see a pile of poorly stacked boxes and piles of stained clothing, you wonder what it meant to the people who chose to store it. At one time, it meant about \$35 or \$70 a month. And then, somehow, it didn't anymore.

What's the story? Maybe those missing tenants just forgot all about that stuff. Moved and couldn't take it along, moved in with someone else, moved into a furnished apartment.

Maybe it was easier to abandon it than it would have been to borrow somebody's truck, load up their junk and take it somewhere else.

Most likely, they just couldn't afford to pay the rent one month. The late fees added up and, before they knew it, they were in a hole too deep.

Because here's the thing about self-storage: it costs money. You pay hard-earned cash to put your stuff in somebody else's garage. It's money that you'd spend elsewhere, if you could — on a bigger house, a new life. Nobody wants to grow up and have a self-storage unit.

"Typically when people put their stuff in storage, it's a distress situation," says Tiek, the property management supervisor. "Mostly they're breaking up, a death in the family, hiding stuff from their spouse. We're not retail. They don't want us; they have to have us."

And frankly, the stuff behind those doors isn't usually all that valuable. Not monetarily, anyway.

"Lots of sentimental stuff," Tiek says. "It's 'Grandma died and the house is full and I really don't want to get rid of Grandma's stuff.'"

That sentimental value is what makes people pay up, month after month. Around \$25 for a closet-size unit. Maybe \$50 for a space that'll hold a couch and some chairs. At least \$150, maybe more, for a 10-by-30-foot unit that can hold the contents of a five-bedroom house.

Every month the payments come, except when they don't. And when the payments stop? That's when the trouble begins, in the form of fees. There's a fee when, after about 40 days of delinquency, the property manager cuts the

lock to seize the property. A fee for the certified letter that goes out to notify you. A fee for the newspaper ad the company places, making a public announcement to tell you your stuff is about to be auctioned off. There's even a fee for the foreclosure sale itself.

Hamilton remembers being at an auction where a guy showed up to bid for his own stuff. He won it, but he bid several hundred dollars. Depending on how much he owed, the delinquent tenant might have come out ahead.

**Money for nothing?**

Back at Aloha Self Storage, Tiek jiggles the lock on Unit 1 and again, up goes the door. The bidding dance starts again.

At stake this time: A cascade of cardboard boxes. A fading soft-sided suitcase. An artificial Christmas tree, with stray branches scattered loosely on the floor. A pile of clothes — a pink sundress, a blue cap. Dirty socks and a dusty book, its title imprinted with gold leaf: *The Testament for Fishers of Men*.

Bidding starts at \$10 and it doesn't go much higher. Nobody sees much in here.

"I got a dump run coming up for sure," the winning buyer tells Sutton, handing over his \$40 and eyeing what might be worth keeping.

K18, the last unit of the day, goes to brothers Mariano and Mac Vela. They pay \$70 for the unit's two oscillating fans, the baby mobile, the queen-size headboard with a shattered mirror, the little portable grill.

It's their third win of the day. The Vela brothers, who live in Fort Worth, are in business together. Every couple of months, they load up a rented truck and two trailers and lug it all down to a flea market on the Texas-Mexico border. It's a way to earn extra cash, Mac Vela says, because everything sells on the border. "For some people it's trash, but for some it's good," he says.

Yep, it's the old one-man's-trash phenomenon. The bidders know what they're looking for, but to the untrained eye, the stuff inside these storage units looks like a lot of junk. Disintegrating cardboard boxes full of it. Plastic garbage bags and laundry baskets loaded with it.

Fernandez has a theory. He sees his thrift store as a service to the community. After all, he is tracking down used goods and redistributing them to the people who need them.

"You'd be surprised how much need there is for used stuff," he says. "The way the economy is going, there is going to be more and more of a need for used stuff — used furniture, used clothes."

This bidding and buying and selling, then, becomes not just a process of its own, but a part of the whole economic cycle. Somebody's abandoned stuff becomes someone else's new stuff. The flotsam we leave behind is claimed by another, paid for, used all over again. And the self-storage auction is simply a stop along the way. It's the place where the valueless becomes valuable again, where objects once cared for are dusted off and given new attention.

And where there's always the chance that hidden in boxes, lurking behind a crate, is a Harley-Davidson, a suitcase full of money, a safe full of precious jewels.

ALYSON WARD, 817-390-7988

**I DO, I DO**

# Her answer was Greek to him

**Michael and Mary Mavias knew were destined for a big, fat, Greek wedding, but first they had to convince her "papou."**

By SANDY GUERRA-CLINE  
scline@star-telegram.com

When Michael Mavias walked Mary Svokos to his car on their first date, back in 1962, she had no idea she was in for the ride of a lifetime.

Michael had spotted Mary in the choir at a Greek Orthodox church he was visiting in East Cleveland, Ohio. When he asked the "beautiful Greek girl" for a date after the service, he was stunned to be told that he would have to ask permission from her "papou," or grandfather.

"I thought it was a joke," Michael says. "It wasn't a joke. He was sitting there, this old man dressed in a blue suit, with a long, white handlebar mustache. He looked so serious."

Michael looked like a good Greek boy. He is actually half Italian, and Mary's papou would have put a stop to things then and there if he'd known. But Michael, who spoke Greek fluently, made a good first impression, and they soon were on their way to get a hamburger and a soda.

"It was raining," Michael says. "I had my guitar in the car, and I played and sang, and we talked."

He had Mary home promptly by 11, her papou's curfew.

Grandfather was waiting, and he wanted to know Michael's intentions. Michael replied, "Grandfather, I have known her for only three hours. May I take her out one more time?" Mary's papou agreed.

More than one date followed, and later that year, they became engaged. They were married Feb. 17, 1963, on a snowy day in Cleveland. Michael's rock band played at the reception, and despite his promise to Mary, he was soon up on the stage singing with the band. He says the ouzo might have had something to do with it. Fine by Mary. She rounded up the members of her group, the Olympettes, who performed professionally in the area, and they put on a show, too.



Michael and Mary Mavias have been married 44 years.

STAR-TELEGRAM/JILL JOHNSON

**Tell us your story**

Would your courtship, engagement proposal, anniversary or marriage make an interesting story? If so, we want to consider it for our Sunday feature "I Do, I Do." Send your story to features@star-telegram.com (put I Do, I Do in the subject line) or include it on the *Star-Telegram* wedding announcement form.

That evening set the pattern for their married life. Michael is the man for whom the phrase "never a dull moment" was coined. He has never met a stranger, and more important, he has never met a stranger that he didn't invite home for dinner. There really isn't much he won't say or do, including wearing a cowboy hat with Bermuda shorts and beating younger couples in jitterbug contests.

Mary, who is quieter and "more conservative," using Michael's words, still matches him stride for stride. There's never been a stranger that Michael invited home that Mary didn't wow with her cooking. When Michael began moving up the ladder at Boeing Co., Mary studied the front page of *The Wall Street Journal* every day, so that she could converse with Michael's co-workers, including CEOs and visiting dignitaries. And those

dance contests? That was Mary executing the winning steps backward and in high heels.

"It's amazing that she puts up with me. I've moved her 13 times all across the country," Michael says. "We've lived coast to coast, and we've seen a great deal of the world. I'm so proud of her."

Michael retired from Boeing twice, in 2002 and 2005. He has written a book about his business experiences, and he works with students in the business program at Texas Christian University. He volunteers Fridays as a greeter at Dallas/Fort Worth Airport, where he's equal parts troubleshooter and jokester. Mary works at Grapevine Country Florist and takes aerobics classes. They live in Trophy Club and have three children, Deena, John and Lisa, and three grandkids.

"He's my best friend," Mary says of her mate of 44 years. "We can talk about everything and anything. We have more fun now . . . than we ever had."

Michael and Mary Mavias have come a long way from that first date, sitting in the car in the rain, singing and laughing.

And they both agree: It's been a very sweet ride.

SANDY GUERRA-CLINE, 817-390-7545

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

The Volunteer Center has thousands of volunteer opportunities at more than 1,700 nonprofit agencies. Call the Volunteer Center at 866-797-8268 to speak with a volunteer counselor about these and other opportunities, or send e-mail to [vcnorthtexas@volunteernorthtexas.org](mailto:vcnorthtexas@volunteernorthtexas.org).

**River Legacy Living Science Center**

**Time:** Four-hour shifts Monday-Friday, through August.

**Description:** Assist with a variety of programs that offer an interactive, engaging way for students to learn about wildlife, ecology and the environment. The minimum age is 15.

**Location:** 703 N.W. Green Oaks Blvd., Arlington

**Volunteers needed:** 24 per day

**Contact info:** Alma Pohler, 817-860-6752 or [alma@riverlegacy.org](mailto:alma@riverlegacy.org)

**Web site:** [www.riverlegacy.org](http://www.riverlegacy.org)

**Literacy Instruction for Texas (LIFT)**

**Time:** 10 a.m.-noon or 6:30-8:30 p.m. Monday and

Wednesday and/or Tuesday and Thursday

**Description:** Instruct and tutor adult literacy students. Training is provided; the minimum age is 18.

**Location:** Fort Worth

**Volunteers needed:** 25

**Contact info:** Regina Williams, 817-834-2727 or [regina-williams@lift-texas.org](mailto:regina-williams@lift-texas.org)

**Web site:** [www.lift-texas.org](http://www.lift-texas.org)

**Bridge Christian Education for the Blind**

**Time:** Flexible

**Description:** Read and record books, magazines and articles on tape for the blind. Training is provided; the minimum age is 18.

**Location:** 4200 South Freeway Drive, Suite 702, Fort Worth

**Volunteers needed:** 4-8

**Contact info:** Tim Gil, 817-920-0444 or [rdyer@bceonline.org](mailto:rdyer@bceonline.org)

**Web site:** [www.bceonline.org](http://www.bceonline.org)

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT THE VOLUNTEER CENTER OF NORTH TEXAS WEB SITE AT [WWW.VOLUNTEERNORTHTEXAS.ORG](http://WWW.VOLUNTEERNORTHTEXAS.ORG).

## CROSSWORD ANSWERS

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Puzzle appears on 4G.

## Antiquer: Oak furniture gathers dust in Dallas

CONTINUED FROM 1G

But in an effort to, let's be honest here, make more money doing this, I have taken a spot at an antique mall in Dallas' design district, a drag strip of antique shops on Industrial Boulevard that cater to high-end buyers and decorators and designers scouting for pieces for photo shoots and fashion spreads. The Lost and Found twins are down there, along with the White Elephant and about a half dozen more.

Now stands before me a huge challenge: How to buy and sell in both Fort Worth and Dallas. Even though the cities are separated only by a 45-minute drive, when it comes to the antique market, they are worlds apart. The things that sell in Fort Worth would gather more dust than they already have in Dallas, and vice versa.

Here's what you, the savvy buyer, need to know: The markets are vastly different. American oak and Victorian furniture are "out" in Dallas, but it remains popular in Fort Worth. If you're looking for Italian, French, Asian, midcentury modern, deco and anything, really, really old or unusual, the market's hotter in Dallas.

The good thing about this is that when pieces come up for auction in the towns in which they don't sell well, you can get them fairly inexpensively. I loaded up on a bunch of midcentury modern stuff at Billy Caraway's auction house in Sanger a few weeks ago, and I would have gotten the stuff a LOT cheaper if there hadn't been another dealer there from, you guessed it, Dallas.

On the flip side, I was at Miles Autry's auction a few weeks ago in Dallas, and he had this huge African coffee table that had an age crack about the size of the concession area, so I figured I'd get it cheap. I put my card down at \$800. I think it went for more than a grand. In Fort Worth,

people would have just looked at that thing funny.

Now, I'm making all these sweeping generalizations about Fort Worth without acknowledging that there indeed is a market for high-end and beyond-the-norm antiques in Fort Worth. Matter of fact, the strip of independent antique shops on Camp Bowie Boulevard — Leigh-Boyd, Carter Bowden, K. Flories, etc. — specialize in such pieces. I've been in most of those Camp Bowie shops and, I'll tell ya, they have some of the most wonderful antiques I've ever seen; it's like driving to Dallas without having to drive to Dallas.

And, of course, you'll find pieces of this ilk scattered throughout the big antique malls in Fort Worth and Arlington, too.

But, perhaps to Fort Worth's dismay, I'm going to give Dallas a shot; if it doesn't pan out, I might have to rename my column the Week-end Wal-Marter. If I wind up selling \$2,000 a week, me and Fort Worth are going to have to have a long chat.

**News and notes:** Many of you have asked me how Jack Van Hauen of Auction Depot is doing, and I'm happy to report that he has finished his chemo treatments and is recovering. Hopefully, he'll be back up there barking orders in no time . . . Alan Jones' monstrous Brit-USA auction is happening Friday at his Antique Auction Center, at 2470 N.W. Dallas St. in Grand Prairie. Jones always gets good stuff, but his Brit-USA auctions are good-stuff blowouts; these auctions usually break me . . . Keep an eye on Ransberger's Web site, [www.ransberger.com](http://www.ransberger.com), for information on their next day-long auction; the Ransbergers just scored a Hickory, N.C., estate jammed with Victorian furniture, some great glassware and, of all things, meteorites. The auction is scheduled for June 23.