

## AUCTION

## Auction Napa Valley raises record-breaking \$16 million

Million-dollar bid pushes live auction take to \$14.3 million



17 HOURS AGO • [DAVID STONEBERG](#)

ST. HELENA — The live auction that is part of the four-day Auction Napa Valley broke records Saturday afternoon at the Meadowood Napa Valley resort. Its 46 lots raised more than \$14.3 million.

Auctioneers Fritz Hatton, Ursula Hermacinski and Humphrey Butler raised the level in the tent at Meadowood for the estimated 900 attendees by calling the lots at a fast and furious pace. Many of the lots started low at \$10,000 and quickly went

through the roof. The top lots of the day were a comprehensive vertical tasting of Harlan Estate cabernet sauvignon from 1990 through 2009, which sold for \$800,000, and the Dana Estates lot, called “Discover the Soul of South Korea,” which sold to two bidders for more than half a million each.

During the frenetic bidding for “Discover” — which started at \$50,000 and quickly went to \$360,000, then up to \$500,000 — Hatton said that, at that level, the lot had been doubled, and the two trips were sold for \$510,000 each. That was the auction’s only lot that surpassed \$1 million.

The lot included a seven-day trip for two couples to South Korea, a trip for the same two couples to Jeju Island and dinner for the two couples in the Napa Valley. As with all the lots, it included bottles of Napa Valley wine.

As usual, the Fund-A-Need portion of the evening raised a ton of dough, and it, too, broke records, raising \$3.7 million. The donated funds didn’t buy a fabulous trip or experience; instead donors spent money to help Napa County nonprofits implement a program to help detect the need for mental health services in students.

At the beginning of the lot, Auction Napa Valley Chairman Garen Staglin said, “I need your attention. This is about our kids.” Then he turned the microphone over to District Attorney Gary Lieberstein, who spoke about his late son’s struggles with mental illness before a hushed audience.

Hatton started the bidding at \$100,000 and got a couple of takers. He received more when he requested a \$50,000 donation, including one from Napa Valley residents Ginger and Bob Nemerever. More donations came in at the \$10,000, \$5,000 and \$1,000 levels.

Last year, the Fund-A-Need auction lot raised \$1.2 million.

Successful bidder Bill Moore from Laguna Beach spent about \$740,000 on two lots late in the auction, one of which was the Staglin Family Vineyard lot, called “The Glory — and Golf — of Scotland.” It included a golfing vacation in Scotland, a stay at the Staglins’ Steckter House and two nights in London.

Moore spent \$400,000 for the lot. That lot, sold by Butler, started at \$50,000 and soared to \$300,000 nearly as quickly as he could rattle them off. When it stalled at \$380,000, Butler said he’d take \$400,000. “No pressure whatsoever,” he said, but then Moore stepped up and bought the lot.

Moore also bought the lot from Daphne and Bart Araujo and their Calistoga winery. That lot included a five-day trip to Montana via private jet and an imperial, which is 6 liters of their cabernet sauvignon from the Eisele Vineyard from the 2010 vintage.

Another large format bottle, a Balthazar (12-liter bottle) of 2010 cabernet sauvignon from Screaming Eagle got quite a bit of action during the auction. Hatton gave his famous “Screaming Eagle” yell and quickly the bidding went to \$300,000, where it stalled before he worked hard to pull out another \$200,000 from an anonymous bidder. In 2000, a 6-liter bottle of the ultimate cult cabernet sauvignon also sold for \$500,000.

The names of many bidders were not available from the Napa Valley Vintners personnel, as the bidders themselves requested anonymity and the NVV requested that the media refrain from taking photos of the bidders or interacting with them during the live auction.

Bidder Bob Van Dyk, who paid \$170,000 for two lots, was a repeat winner. He spent \$140,000 last year for the Silver Oak lot, where he and Elizabeth Alcott will get married in about three weeks. “I could buy this stuff at a fraction of the cost. It’s about giving back,” he said.

Van Dyk bought the lots from Vineyard 29, which offered a variety of outdoor experiences and, of course, Napa Valley wine, and the Signorello Estate lot, titled “Southern Charm.” It included a round trip for two to Nashville and a number of experiences there.

Jose Nazar from Chile was sitting next to Margrit Biever Mondavi, who represented the Robert Mondavi Winery and its lot celebrating the late founder and the 100th anniversary of his birth. The lot included 100 bottles of wine.

Nazar, who has attended the auction since 1985 and spent \$260,000 for the Mondavi lot, said he was intrigued with it because it represented a touch of Europe. He added, “I don’t remember ever leaving here without buying something.”

## **Auction Napa Valley**

2007 – \$9.8 million

2008 – \$10.35 million

2009 – \$5.7 million

2010 – \$8.52 million

2011 – \$7.3 million

2012 – \$8.1 million

**2013 – \$16 million** (excluding E-auction, due to close Sunday evening)

*Previous record: \$10.5 million, 2005*