

Cheerleader - Carnie - Salesperson



Yvette Vanderbrink



VanDerbrink Auctions (VDB Auctions) specializes in collector car parts auctions, older salvage yard liquidations, auto related items, antique tractors, estates, and private collections-conducting auctions of all kinds. Founder/owner Yvette VanDerbrink started her company 10 years ago. Like many start-up companies it wasn't always easy. As a woman auctioneer specializing in Ag and classic vehicles, she had to win over the trust and confidence of not only her sellers but also her buyers. Her strong faith and determination along with her commitment to her sellers have enabled her to overcome seemingly impossible odds and become one of the foremost auction companies. Her company is a faith-based company and this makes every auction a mission.

Yvette grew up in the automotive business and on the family dairy farm west of Garretson. Her mother and father, (Marie and Art Nordstrom) who started Nordstrom's Auto Recyclers, instilled a work ethic in all three of

their children. Art always was a motor head and car collector so cars became a natural part of Yvette's life.

According to Yvette, "To be a successful auctioneer you must be a cheerleader, carnie, and salesperson. You have to think out of the box and have the total package. First you need to sell clients that you are qualified. Next you need to promote each auction in a variety of ways to create an atmosphere of excitement (like a carnival). Last but not least you need to keep the action moving (like a cheerleader). It's our job to get as much as we can for each auction we do. We work 100% for the sellers. Possessing all of these qualities is essential to a successful auction."

Yvette worked at McKennan Hospital for 11.5 years while also working for the family business, Nordstrom's Auto Recycling. "It was hard work, especially while raising small children," recalls VanDerbrink. She bought and sold old tractors, which she really enjoyed. "I loved my work at McKennan but was ready





Model E Rumley Oil pull tractor sold for \$211,000 at the VanDerPol auction

to do something different. One night while I was on my way to work I was thinking about what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. Plain as day it hit me...go to auction school! So I talked to some of the guys I knew in the business and they said Montana is the best place to go to school. I was apprehensive; auction school meant I would be away from home for 21 days and that would be hard with two small children. I filled out the paperwork but never followed through and soon forgot about it. One day my mom asked me if I was going to church the next day. She said there was this modern day prophet from Minneapolis that was going to be there. I arrived late to church feeling bad because dad and I had an argument earlier in the day about his car collection. I had a hard time finding a place to sit in the crowd of 300 people. Little did I know that this night would change the rest of my life. One of the first things he said was "I am not a psychic", but he would call people out by the color of their hair or clothes. He called out my dad and me. He began to ask me questions. He asked me why I hadn't sent in the papers in my kitchen cupboard. I said money. He said the money is in your purse. I had sold some tractors recently and had the

money in my purse. He went on to tell me that I needed to do this to help people. "You need to go where there are mountains" (Montana). I couldn't believe what I was hearing. When we got in the pickup to go home my husband asked me what I was going to do. I said I had to do it. Mom didn't think I should do it but I felt it was my destiny, so I sent in the money and packed up my Jeep and left for Montana. That was in 2001. After completing the course, I came home and got my first sale right away. I called a couple auctioneer friends to help me and I learned a lot from that first sale. I continued to work at McKennan Hospital and later that year I was going to Tyndall to purchase a tractor but thought I should change my clothes before I met the seller. On my way down I purchased some western clothes in Beresford. I spent the whole day with the sellers and I turned that one tractor into an entire sale that turned out successful. I had another sale the next year. Word of mouth started to spread that I conducted good sales. Then I had some sales that were hard. Some of the attendees would call out 'Hey let the boys do this, or they hug you and patronize you'. I knew I

Continued on page 26



VanDerPol auction



Selling in Indiana last year



Dad's auction in 2003



Yvette, Shannon, and Suzie in a cab when Dad was rebuilding vehicles before Nordstrom's Salvage



Continued from page 25

was in a man's world and it took about two years before I was able to convince them that this little girl really knows what she is talking about. Buyers and sellers both expected more out of me. They both tested me. In 2002 I had a stalker and even had death threats. This crazy person evidently didn't think I should be in this line of business. He continued to follow me and even my dad. We eventually hired a private investigator. We finally found out who it was and within a couple of years he quit stalking my family and me. I almost quit because of this pressure. In '03 I sold my dad's '57 Chevy collection. Up until '02 I was still working at McKennan but left in '03. They told me I could come back if the auctioneer business didn't work. It was tough financially at first; there was a time I couldn't pay my bills. I remember walking down the road talking to the Lord saying you got me into this, help me get some business. The next day I got a deal to sell eight tractors. Since then we have had auctions in Ohio and many other states. It just kept growing year after year. We

put together a good crew and established ourselves as being progressive. We were one of the first to do online and onsite auctions in 2004. I work hands on and develop a personal sales plan for every sale. I treat every sale as if I was selling it for family. Any auction that is well advertised with active bidding will bring what the market is that day in time. That is all you can do. We have a progressive website and an email newsletter with 4000 members receiving it. The online bidding is important also. When we do a big sale we can be onsite and on the web selling to people all over the world. For example the recent VanderPol auction was attended by people from far and wide. I write press releases and have relationships with media companies and publications all over the United States and they run our press releases and stories. I am not afraid to get dirty, I work right alongside the laborers to move auction items."

"One of the rarest pieces I ever sold was a 427 Ford Hemi 'Cammer' motor. Ford built it to compete with the Hemi in NASCAR but NASCAR soon banned them. Ford only built

about 500 of the engines. We sold two of them in 2007. One sold for \$41,250. Another fun item was the big tractor at the recent VanderPol auction, a Model E 3060 Rumley Oil Pull, which sold for \$211,000. We have had many memorable sales over the years. We once sold a car to Reggie Jackson. Dad's auction of 60 '57 Chevy's was another memorable sale." Her most unique sale had to be a collector car auction in Missouri. "We were in hillbilly hell in northwest Missouri. It was hard to convince them a woman could do the job but when we were done he was happy. It was a good sale."

You have to know the value of what you are trying to sell. It is fun to do the research and educate yourself on the many items we have sold over the years. After ten years you are familiar with most of the items but what you don't know about you read up on. I also talk to people about items I want to learn more about."

A funny event Yvette experienced as an auctioneer was at an auction in Ohio. "There was a guy spending a bunch of money on Ford parts. Every time he bid he slapped my butt. Pretty soon he wasn't bidding but he was still touching my butt. I told him to start bidding or get his hand off my butt." There are quite a few woman auctioneers in Minnesota but not many in South Dakota. "I am proud that, through my accomplishments, I have been able to convince men that a little girl from South Dakota can sell collector cars, tractors, and parts."

When asked what her favorite car of all time was, Yvette replied quickly, "a 1935 Ford because it is just cool". When asked what her professional goals are Yvette answered, "Before I croak I want to sell in every state in the continental United States. I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2008. I continued to work through the chemo, radiation, and surgery, doing 19 sales in

Continued on page 28

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Continued from page 27

five states that year. I just stayed focused on what was important in my life. Having breast cancer put everything in perspective for me...faith and family. I want to continue to work to fight this terrible disease. I have written a book for talking with kids about cancer called *My Mom Looks Like a Turtle.*"

Yvette has received some notoriety over the years. In 2003 she won a marketing award from the National Auctioneer Association. In 2010 she won the Sales and Marketing Executives "Woman of Excellence" award for women breaking barriers.

VDB Auctions has been regionally and nationally recognized for their collector car auctions in 12 states. Their unique marketing program and passion for their clients are the main reasons for their success. VDB Auctions promotes all of their auctions, nationally and locally, through various types of medias. "Print, online, radio, TV, are just some of the outlets we use to promote your auction," says Yvette. "We also research other medias and see if they will work for your auction." VDB Auctions utilizes national and local magazines and newspapers, and has gained many contacts among the collector car hobbyists. VDB Auctions also goes to local and national shows and hands out flyers to promote their auctions. VDB Auctions provides press releases to the media, stories about the auction, seller, and work to get your auction as the "story of the day". According to Yvette, "The more people know about your auction, the more successful it will be. The Internet has dramatically impacted my business. It has increased my sales by 15-25%. People have less time to travel to auctions today and the Internet gives people from all over the world a chance to bid."

VDB Auctions works as a team with personal service for their clients. They will sit down with you and develop a plan that is

tailored especially for your auction. Whether it is an on-site or an Internet auction team members Dale Pavlis, Slayton MN, Aaron Williams, Williams Auction Service Trent SD (auctioneers) and clerks Kara Duncan, Beth Ramm, Judee VandenBosch take pride and are all driven for a successful auction, no matter the size.

Yvette's parents have been a tremendous influence on her. "My parents taught us kids a lot. Dad would say 'do you want to drive the bus or ride the bus'? We have learned to work since we were small. We had chores. I cleaned cars, chased cows, cleaned feedlots, drove tractor, fixed fences. We never sat around. One time my sister and I were trying to nap after school and my dad threw a pail of water on us so we would get up because there was work to do. I am thankful for both mom and dad and what they have taught me over the years."

"I love what I do. I love going in the barns and working. I love people and working for them. I have done auctions for families that had no idea of the value of the items they had. It makes me happy to be able to help them get full value at auctions. Word of mouth is very important. We will work as hard as possible to do the best we can for our sellers. We will be there for them through the whole process. We will make it a personal and fun relationship. Auctions are the only way you can have a chance to sell for more than you anticipated. Marketing is the key to the success of our auctions. Our auctions are fast fun and wild. They are not boring. Sometimes we have music and sometimes BBQ. We had birthday cake at dad's sale. It depends how big you want to go."

Yvette and her husband, Steve, have two children, Emily and Johnathon. They also collect and own several old cars, trucks, and many tractors. They farm and raise cattle on their farm by Hardwick, Minnesota. Life is good for the cheerleader, carnie, salesperson, wife, and mother. TMM

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