

# Town & County

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*The Free Lance-Star*

## The Auction Man

For nearly four decades, auctioneer Stacy Raines was a fixture at Fredericksburg-area auctions, entertaining the crowds and selling to the highest bidders. Now 90 years old, Raines looks back at his career and lifelong connection with Hartwood in Stafford County.

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## Witness to War

During the Civil War, Beaumont was the home of the Guest family. Donna Chasen remembers the house that used to be.



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## Civil War Author

Bowling Green native Sid Hite writes a novel about a 16-year-old boy with a ringside seat for the Battle of Fredericksburg.



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## Canine Calories

If someone says your dog is too fat, it may be time to put your canine on a doggy diet. So says columnist Sarah Ferrell.



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# THE Singing Auctioneer

*For 35 years, Stacy Raines was the voice at Fredericksburg-area auctions*

■ By PEGGY WESTON

**I**T WAS JUST BY CHANCE that Stacy Raines, while helping at the Berea Elementary School May Pole Day in 1949, was thrust into the position of auctioning the baked goods. His children remember volunteering his services: "Daddy will do it!" Thus began Raines' "moonlighting job"—which lasted 35 years.

Hearing Raines colorfully describe his life experiences is like flipping the crisp pages of a history book, relishing his stories and feeling the transition of time. He is a storyteller, like many of his generation.

His grandfather's family left the Shenandoah Valley in the early 1800s to settle and farm in Stafford County. Raines has lived his 90 years in the beautiful countryside of Hartwood, located in the southwestern part of the county. He was born on Truslow Road, affectionately referred to as "Grandma's road" by the family. The changes he has witnessed from his porch are impressive.

He remembers ox carts slowly traversing the dirt country road and the first rumbling cars with their revolutionary fascination, yet recently he counted 468 cars whizzing by his home in a day. The contrast of "ox carts to astronauts in orbit" in his lifetime, he says, is startling.

Stacy Raines and his wife, Mary Grimes, married in 1939. They had four children, Ann, Nancy and twins Donald and Donna. Mary died in 1993. Today Raines, known as

"Papa" to everyone, has nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

During a time when the Sylvania Industrial Corp. cellophane plant was the backbone of the Fredericksburg community, Raines worked full time as a pipe fitter. The plant was acquired by American Viscose Corp. and then FMC Corp. Raines recalls working "44 years, six months and three days" in the local industry. He also continued to farm for years.

When auctioneering became a serious interest, Raines attended the Fort Smith Auction School in Arkansas and received his diploma. He learned the importance of singing from the diaphragm for breath support, correct vocal placement and the skills of auctioneering.

There are two systems of auctioneering, he explains, "number" and "musical." In the number system, the bidder is given a number to use when bidding. Raines' system was musical. This was an ideal choice with his vocal experience. The musical auctioneering style is a delightful display of entertainment. The auctioneer starts his

pitch at middle C and creatively soars up the scale, sailing his voice through musical runs and crescendos, accenting consonants and including whimsical personal greetings to his audience.

Raines would spice his sales pitch with rhythmical, witty lines of banter, such as "a beautiful lady with a stingy husband" or "I'll take anything."

"He might sing a line or two and then go back to bidding," says friend and longtime



**Stacy Raines used this business card to promote his auction business.**

# Cover Story



Stacy Raines (center) works the Fredericksburg Dog Mart in the 1950s. The Hartwood resident was a well-known longtime auctioneer in the Fredericksburg area.



Raines with his mobile auctioneer sign in 1959 (left) and 1960 (right).

RAINES FAMILY PHOTOS

county resident Milton Christy.

There were certain words or numbers he avoided, because when projected they often were misinterpreted to be other than polite words.

His tremendous memory served him well. He could remember people's names and address them on a personal basis within his style of auctioneering. That is not done in the number system.

You had to "get your crowd," says Raines. "I never forgot a beautiful face."

He always addressed people as "Mr." or "Mrs." "Well, I just don't feel right" to do otherwise, he says.

As the years went by, the region's population growth impacted the close-knit community feeling. There were many new faces appearing at the auctions, and Raines eventually had to use the number system.

Raines was auctioneer at sales throughout 16 counties, including Orange, King George, Westmoreland, King William, Fauquier and Essex, and in the city of Fredericksburg.

He would receive a call from an organization or individual requesting his auctioneer services. He would look at the goods to be sold and take care of business. Auctioneers charge a percentage, although Raines would take into account the charitable organizations or families in need. He placed advertising for the events in The Free Lance-Star. Handbills or fliers were distributed at the country sales.

He used the same clerk, Shorty McGhee, and cashier, Glenn Jordan, for 15 years. Barbara Lewis was an excellent cashier who worked with Raines for the last 20 years of his auctioneering career, he said.

There were "all kinds of sales," he recalls. Many were charitable sales. There was Dog Mart day at Maury stadium, as well as antiques, estate and real-estate auctions, including Crow's Nest. Perhaps the most unusual sale was "Slave for a Day" in the late 1960s at Stafford High School, where the students were able to purchase the services of other students to carry out various tasks such as carrying their books.

Raines once sold a country outhouse, and when he "opened the door, there was a man sitting on the throne!"

Raines' sales schedule "stayed full," with sometimes two sales a night, on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. He could do a sale in half the time of other auctioneers. A well-recognized figure in the region, Raines looked sharp in his bow tie and gentleman's hat. His entertaining reputation preceded him.

"If people knew Stacy was going to be the auctioneer, they'd plan on going. He had quite a following," says Christy.

Raines had a sound system mounted on his station wagon for auctioneering. This also

# Cover Story

## STACY RAINES: THE SINGING AUCTIONEER . . .

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provided a timely advantage when he was at a game in 1962 at Stafford High School. The bleachers broke, quickly causing fear throughout the crowd. Raines drove his station wagon down the football field, talking through his sound system and calmed the crowd.

His children say their mom was Raines' "helpmate. She got things ready, his clothes and meals" and took care of the accounts. Together they were also very supportive of their children's activities, and were involved in the Band Boosters Club and chaperoning at the proms.

During the 1960s, Raines enjoyed taking an RV with friends and to go camping at Big Meadows on Skyline Drive. They would sing around the campfire and cook country ham, oysters, salt fish, beans and catfish chowder. They made friends with park rangers and tourists and shared their cooking.

Raines' strong tenor voice has been heard in churches and singing groups for many years. He was a member of the Stafford Four Quartet, also known as the Berea Quartet, singing throughout Fredericksburg and the surrounding counties with then-teenager Milton Christy and Christy's dad and uncle. His life and Christy's would intertwine musically throughout the years. Christy sang for Raines' children's weddings.

Christy, who grew up on a farm across from Raines, remembers that as a boy he took his new trombone out onto his front porch to practice. Christy says his playing startled a little gray mule, Ol' Ida, so much that "she went galloping across the field heehaw, heehaw, heehawing! I guess she thought she'd found a mate!" Raines recalls observing that hilarious moment.

W.H. Snellings of Fairview Beach compiled years of documentation of Raines' auctioneering career into scrapbooks, including articles, sale ads and photographs. He showed them to Raines, who offered Snellings \$200 for the collection. Raines said Snellings responded with: "When I die, you'll get them." And Raines did.

Raines is fortunate to have many individuals, along with his loving family, who enjoy him and recognize the unique history he has created. Two of his best friends are David A. Major Sr. and his wife, Genevieve "Sissy" Major, who check on Raines regularly. They also work his fields and clear the snow from his driveway.

Today, Stacy Raines continues to exude his wonderful sense of humor, charm and love for storytelling. When he reminisces about his auctioneering years, he can impressively recall which sales were most successful. He sits up on the edge of his chair and demonstrates his strong, resonant auctioneering voice, and effortlessly the words split the air and playfully weave in sound and rhythm. His evident pleasure in entertaining leads him to a hearty laugh, and he leans back in his chair.

Raines celebrated his 90th birthday on April 24. Thirty-two attended the surprise party given by his children at Paradise Diner



**'If people knew Stacy was going to be the auctioneer, they'd plan on going. He had quite a following.'**

**Milton Christy**  
Stafford County resident



**A composition book (top) contains clippings of auction ads for auctioneer Stacy Raines. Raines (above right), shown in this 1952 image from The Free Lance-Star in bow tie and hat, auctions off dogs at the Fredericksburg Dog Mart.**

on U.S. 17.

But first they took Raines into his yard to take photographs. A black limo came down his road and he remarked, "Look at that thing comin' . . . What is it comin' in here for?" His twins from New Jersey and Florida stepped out of the limo. Raines was shocked and fell a little into the arms of his family. His daughter, Nancy Verburg, says: "It was a very emotional day, especially for his children. There were so many memories."

Gary Snellings, a member of the Stafford

County Board of Supervisors, started the evening with a proclamation for Stacy Raines, recognizing him as a lifetime resident of Stafford County who has lived 90 years within a 3-mile radius, and acknowledging him as an outstanding citizen and for his contributions to the community.

Raines was very surprised by the entire day. He remarked: "I've done everything now. I've been in a horse cart, a plane, a train, a limo. I've just about gone full circle. I've done it all."