

Business Professional

BusinessProfessionalMagazine.com

M A G A Z I N E



**John C.
Froelich**

CAI, AARE
PROFESSIONAL
OF THE MONTH



**It was
fun,
spon-
tane-
ous and
I jumped
in with
both
feet.”**

Sometimes it takes a while for life to lead us down the path we were always meant to follow. John C. Froelich, CAI AARE entered the auctioneering world as a second career but quickly found it was where he should have been all along.

“If I’d known about this 30 years ago, I’d have been doing it then,” Froelich said.

Eight years ago, Froelich began down the path that would eventually lead him to find Ohio Real Estate Auctions LLC, and his most recent venture, OhioFarmAuctions.com.

Froelich’s first career was as a manufacturer’s rep in Cleveland, a position he held for 25 years. While the job had been stable and Froelich excelled at it, 25 years of the same work led to boredom. “I was just bored with the work,” Froelich said. “I had recently been through a divorce and I was looking for a change in my life. People kept telling me ‘Why don’t you do something with your voice.’”

While working on his undergraduate degree in business at Bowling Green State University, Froelich had served as president of the BGSU Marketing Club – the largest club on campus – and had spoken regularly while there. People loved his voice and he loved speaking opportunities, but did not find a way to turn that into a career.

“I thought about working in radio, but to be honest, radio never intrigued me,” Froelich said.

Compliments on his voice continued into adulthood, but Froelich never was able to find a way to turn those compliments into a true career until a visit to Arizona and his sister’s art showing.

“My sister, Joyce Nelson, is an artist and she was having a gallery show of her work, but they were struggling with sales,” Froelich recalls. “She asked what we could do to help sales and I said, ‘Let’s have an auction!’ I’d seen it on TV but never done it, so I just went to the front of the room and just started auctioning pieces.”

Froelich made a few sales that day, but more importantly, he made the first steps toward a new career.

“It was fun, spontaneous and I jumped in with both feet,” Froelich said. “Most people wouldn’t have had the gumption to do it.”

Toastmasters International played a role in training and developing both Froelich’s voice and his enthusiasm. His father was an avid Toastmaster who took high school

John C. Froelich

A Cut Above the Auctioning Block

WRITTEN BY AMILE WILSON
PHOTOGRAPHED BY JASON KERESSI

aged Froelich to meetings. “I’ve won local and district levels,” Froelich said. “The man who beat me at regionals went on to the national competition and was named World’s Greatest Speaker, so I don’t feel too bad about losing that!”

While the adrenaline and sensationalism of live auctions is what auctioneers are most known for, the real work of auctioneering is much less romantic. It involves hours – sometimes days or weeks – of talking to clients, finding potential buyers, targeting advertising, and most importantly, cataloging and establishing values for every object before it hits the auction block.

To build up these skills, Froelich knew he needed some additional training, so he turned to the Certified Auctioneer Institute out of the University of Indiana, the official training program of the National Auctioneers Association. The program consists of one week of intense training per year for three years and involves practical and classroom education. Once completed, an auctioneer achieves the status of certified auctioneer and is entitled to put CAI after their name. Each class of CAI is limited to approximately 50 students making CAI status a highly valued and selective position. Across the country there are over 100,000 auctioneers, but only around 800 CAI graduates are practicing the craft for a living today.

“At the end of the third year, they host a competition for an auctioneer’s business plan called the Rose Award,” Froelich said. “The four judges are world-class auctioneers, the best in the country. They reviewed all the business plans and chose mine as the 2015 Rose Award winner.”

That business plan was for the new OhioFarmAuction.com, Froelich’s latest auctioneering venture. “It’s been a dream come true for me to get this off the ground,” Froelich said.

OhioFarmAuction.com is exactly what the name indicates – a new website and marketing tool that taps into the specific market of farm auctions in the state of Ohio. “There are a huge number of farm auctions in Ohio every year and over 3,600 auctioneers in the state,” Froelich said. “Ohio is a big auction state and I’m in Cuyahoga County, where ‘city folks’ don’t usually think of auctions as a first resort. Honestly, this is the county that an auctioneer is least likely to succeed in, so it’s been great that

I’ve been able to build the business here.”

The parent company is JF Marketing/Auction & Real Estate Services Ltd, a business Froelich has built around marketing his auctions.

“Anyone can call bids,” he said. “The trick is to market the auction. The more people come, the more people bid. The more people bid, the more money everyone makes.”

Technology offers so much advantage to the industry these days I’m very excited about all the opportunity this allows us.”

Froelich repeatedly comes back to the idea of marketing the auction as the key – the most valuable part of an auctioneer’s job. The success or failure of an auction is always based on the attendance. Froelich’s niche has been carved not simply by building a rolodex of people who will actually show up to an auction, but by finding new people and companies that are already looking for what he is selling. This advantage comes through the proper use of technology.

“Technology offers so much advantage to the industry these days,” he said, clearly excited about the technological boom of the digital age. “I’m very excited about all the opportunity this allows us.”

Froelich’s love for technology is revealed as he recounts one of his favorite and most

inspiring “history-of-auctions” stories. Years ago, Rasmus auctions was one of the leading auction companies in Washington, DC. The father-son team were successful but Chris Rasmus, the son, saw an opportunity. Chris bought six fax machines for the Rasmus offices much to the confusion of his father. The younger Rasmus kept one for their office and gave the other five to their five largest customers, making communication between Rasmus and their top five quicker and easier. Sales soared.

“We’re incorporating all types of technology,” Froelich said. “Not only online auctions, but things like live streaming video. In 2009, I was the first – and to this day I believe the only – auctioneer to do a live streaming auction to sell racing pigeons on the internet.”

That 2009 auction included 24 bidders at the live auction in Florida and 23 online bidders, selling 40 racing pigeons for over \$70,000. “That was bleeding edge technology back then,” Froelich said. “Technology has always excited me and I’m always incorporating new things into my business.”

Based on his business plan, OhioFarmAuctions.com will be the most technologically savvy online auction platform, but will also make use of a healthy amount of traditional marketing. “Along side things like email and text alerts, we’ll do things like sponsor Future Farmers of America and 4H students and various high school groups,” Froelich said. “We’ll even be looking for barns to paint with our logo. It’s going to mix old school face to face marketing with the best of new technology. We are going to be laser focused on building relationships with people rather than being just another fly-by-night online auction company.”

Building the brand of Ohio Farm Auction will be a major push for quite some time. Froelich sees the local county fairs that are so popular in Ohio as another avenue to “spread the gospel” about how Ohio Farm Auction will work hard to earn the local residents respect and trust.

The new website platform will work with hand-picked and carefully screened and selected auctioneers throughout the state. Every OhioFarmAuction.com auctioneer will be a graduate of CAI and will be joined through the online network. “We believe we have some of the most creative ideas to come to online auctions in terms of brand-



ing,” Froelich said. “Our goal is to be the No. 1 brand for farm auctions in Ohio in five years. We’ll work with CAI graduates to ensure local and trustworthy representation throughout the state. We’ll use every state-of-the-art tool available on the internet and off-line to promote the brand and sell people’s land, personal property, collections and farms for the highest price possible.”

In addition to the quality training of CAI, auctioneers who sell real estate of any kind at auction must also be licensed by the State of Ohio as qualified real estate salespeople.

“Anyone can call themselves an online auctioneer, anyone,” Froelich said with an emphatic warning. “It’s the Wild Wild West. People get scammed every day. Sellers need to work with trustworthy auction companies with sterling reputations for excellence based on historically satisfied customers. We want to be that trusted resource – that trusted auction company that develops long term relationships with generations of farm families.”

The resources that have gone into developing the online portal are largely the result of one of Froelich’s largest and most successful auctions: A July 2017 auction in which 750 cars were sold over a two-day period resulting in a net sale of about \$2.4 million for Mr. Ron Hackenberger of Norwalk. Hackenberger’s successful trucking business had underwritten his love of cars for five decades after he bought his first car – a 1948 Studebaker – when he was only 15. His collection included over 250 Studebakers as well as some microcars, motorcycles, and a Cadillac ambulance.

“The success of that auction gave me the financial wherewithal to launch OhioFarmAuction,” Froelich explains.

“Ron’s dream was to build a museum for rare, unique and orphan old cars,” Froelich explained. “When he realized that wasn’t going to be possible, he decided to sell off his cars rather than leave that large collection which would create a burden on his six daughters and his wife, Eunice.”

For four months Froelich and his team from JF Marketing/Auction & Real Estate Services and VanDerBrink Auctions poured hard labor into cataloguing, researching, documenting and advertising the vehicles, all culminating in a week-long event both selling the collection and celebrating the life of Ron Hackenberger.

“I promised Ron the auction wouldn’t just be an auction, but an event to remember,” Froelich said. “The first event we had was a big banquet in Ron’s honor,” Froelich added. “People got to get up and speak

about Ron, and Eunice – his wife of 55 years – tell stories, and he and Eunice got to be there to witness it all together. Then on Preview Day, Ron got the chance to walk around a full mile long line of his cars, talking to friends, old and new. Then one-by-one we sold the collection at the racetrack in Norwalk. He had a week to walk around and talk to everyone and tell the buyers stories about his cars.”

“At the end of it, we handed him a check and Ron said, ‘John, you’ve given me such a peace of mind, you have no idea.’ That peace of mind was because it took the burden of selling them off his daughters and allowed him to use the money to help them with their mortgages and finance his grandchildren’s education. There was a sense of closure and relief.”

The Hackenberger story was not only a huge business success for Froelich, but it highlights what he considers to be the most important parts of the auctioneering world: “The biggest attraction of auction to me is the ability to help people alleviate pain,” he said. “Hackenberger is a perfect example of that.”

“A big part of my success in this business is the ability to listen to someone’s heart,” Froelich added. “People normally have something to sell because of a pain in their life. I’m there to help ease that pain. I listen to their problems and, most important, I listen to their pain. I help them see that I can make their life easier and take away some of that pain. It could be as simple as being assigned to be the executor of your brother’s estate, for example. You didn’t ask for it, then suddenly you’re six months into probate and your life is consumed and you’re exhausted.”

“If you put a house up for sale with a real estate agent, months may go by,” Froelich said. “With a JF Marketing/Auction & Real Estate auctioneer, you set a date and after that date you get a check and the headache and pain are gone.”

“For smaller items, such as a deceased parent’s home furnishings and collectibles, selling things little by little on Ebay would take months or longer, and each and every item require a mental decision,” Froelich said. “How much time do you want to spend selling grandma’s things on Ebay? Within a few days an auction company can come in and take care of everything and by the end of the day the house is empty. The seller gets one big check without having to lift a finger.

We come in and help people move on with their lives and restore normalcy after a tragedy or the anticipated loss of a loved



one. Our job is to convert assets to cash at fair market value so that people can move on with their lives.”

Many of Froelich’s clients also have private businesses to liquidate upon retiring, the desire for a partner to cash out or the death of a principal in the business. Businesses come and go, and in order to best address helping these clients, Froelich and his team have recently launched Max Asset Liquidation Services (www.max-asset.com) an online auction platform with an international audience.

“Many times the remaining family members or employees are drowning in complications and have no idea who to turn to in order to convert remaining assets to cash. We step in and handle the entire process, start to finish, so they can focus on other important issues.”

Froelich’s friendly, approachable, and genuine desire to build relationships with



clients has sparked a few client-turned long-lasting-friend instances. Hackenberg and his wife, Eunice, have become dear friends of Froelich and his family, even taking vacations together in the wake of the enormous auction.

To date, the vast majority of Froelich's business has been built upon the personal relationships and the care he shows for people.

While Froelich shows a special care for all of his relationships, he has a special skill at observation and noticing when people have a need for his services. "About 80 percent of my work comes from cold calls," he said. "I've done five auctions for a client because I saw a gas station with a 'For Sale By Owner' sign on it and I called them. That location had been vacant for a long time, and I sold that station for \$65,000 and went on to do four more real estate auctions for them."

Observation finds him the leads, but his genuine concern and belief that auctions can help alleviate pain are what builds those relationships and keeps people coming back to him time after time.

Froelich and his company are involved as members of the Ohio Auctioneer Association and the National Auctioneer Association. "Participation at the state and national levels is so vitally important to an auction company. We receive advanced training from premier auctioneers around the country and learn state-of-the-art techniques for bringing bigger and better crowds to our auctions. Maybe most important are the friendships and connections made at functions and gatherings, knowing we can count on these same friends to step up and help make our auctions the very best they can be."

Among the charity auctions they support, Froelich has a special place in his

heart. For the past five years, he has conducted a live charity auction for his alma mater, the Black Tiger Gridiron Alumni Club. The club supports the Cuyahoga Falls High School football program and provides college scholarship assistance for senior football players, band members and cheerleaders.

"One of the reasons the club fundraiser has grown so much over the last five years is the excitement that a live auction brings to the table," Froelich said.

Froelich has stepped up in his own community of Westlake, Ohio, to support the Youth Challenge program as the auctioneer for their newly established "Brackets, Beers and Brats" fundraiser. YC supports physically challenged children in the community to stretch beyond their personal limitations through participation in a wide variety of sports and hobby activities, like basketball, bowling and even fishing on Lake Erie.

"Witnessing the value this program brings to the lives of its children and their parents is life changing" says Froelich. "To me, it proves God has a plan for each and every one of us, regardless of perceived limitations. We could all learn a lesson from these glorious and brave participants."

Froelich is a U.S. Air Force veteran and celebrated four years of marriage on Valentine's Day. He and his wife, Michelle, each have two children and Michelle's daughter and son-in-law, Kaitlin and Michael, have blessed them with two grandchildren. All of the family lives close by so they are able to spend plenty of time together. Froelich has fallen in love with travel and recently took his wife to Austin, Texas, where the two spent a weekend with his college roommate. "We haven't seen each other in 36 years," Froelich said. "It was a blast catching up!"

Travel gives the Froelich's a chance to spend time both with friends and family and has so far included a trip with his son, nephew and a close friend fishing for king salmon and lake trout on the Niagara River in New York in the snow. He is now planning a trip with his son fishing in Canada and recently bought a new rifle for Elk hunting out west.

"I owe my wife Michelle a trip to Italy," he adds. "We love traveling together, and since we crossed Paris off the bucket list by going there, Rome is the next obvious place for us."

Froelich also has a rather ambitious item on his bucket-list: a cross country bicycle ride from Florida to San Diego. "I guess I better get on that one soon!" he said.

JF MARKETING, LTD

Auction & Real Estate Services

3105 Dover Center Road

Westlake, OH 44145

(440) 454-1121

www.AuctionJohn.com

john@auctionjohn.com

EDUCATION

Certified Auctioneers Institute,
2015

Walton School of

Auctioneering, 2011

Bachelor of Science, Marketing
and Sales, Bowling Green
State University, 1983

PROFESSIONAL

AWARDS

Toastmasters International

Champion Speaker

Certified Auctioneers Institute

Rose Award (CAI)

Accredited Auctioneer of Real
Estate (AARE)

AT A **GLANCE**

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Ohio Auctioneers Association

National Auctioneers

Association

Rotary International

Toastmasters International

