

# BEING THERE

## At The Pipe Smokers' Convention

by Ben Cleary

It's a leisurely hobby, a meditative process really." Jim Carrino settles himself into a comfortable leather armchair outside the big room at the Holiday Inn on West Broad Street where the seventh annual Pipe Smokers Exposition and Celebration is being held. "It's multidimensional. There's not only the pleasure of smoking, there's the craftsmanship of the wood...I guess you could compare it to collecting antiques."

Carrino had driven up for the weekend from Raleigh, where he's CEO of The Equinox Group, "a high-tech company." A pipe smoker for 30 years, he needed little encouragement to talk about the finer points of his pursuit.

Pipes are mostly made from meerschaum, a claylike mineral, and brier—connoisseurs differ as to the best countries of origin. Aging is also of paramount importance—a 100-year-old wood is nothing to remark on.

"The older-wooded pipes have a sweeter or nuttier flavor from the beginning. But how can you prove this stuff? It's like bagging air."

Carrino has a collection of "around 100 pipes, with a favorite 12 or 15." He especially favors "the older Dunhills." Pipe aficionados talk about the flavor of "pre-1965 Dunhills" the way rock guitarists talk about the tone of pre-CBS Telecasters.

"Go in there," says Carrino gesturing toward the smoky room with the laboring air conditioner. "The prices will knock your socks off."

Cheap pipes. \$6,000 pipes. Used—"the buzz word is 'pre-smoked'"—pipes.

Pipes that look as if they were hacked from the gnarled roots of the Tree of Life. Pipes a Hobbit would smoke sitting on a stump in Middle Earth. British pipes you can't imagine existing outside a pub.

An 1880s pipe carved to resemble the head of Ulysses S. Grant. Of course, the owner is trying to match it with one resembling Robert E. Lee, which is "somewhere

in the South."

An X-rated pipe depicting the coupling of Leda and the swan—not half so shocking as the fact that there are lady pipe smokers among the meditative hordes passing slowly up and down the aisles of pipe-laden tables.

The pipe Ned Baylor was smoking was like an artifact from his initiation into a Mystery religion.

"This is a James Upshall, a very fine English pipe. It's one of the last pipes that came from Astley's in London, the first pipe shop I visited on my first trip to England—closed now, unfortunately."

Baylor, who works at the Tobacco House Ltd. on Cary Street, was browsing in Astley's when the quality of his interest was noticed. "They said, 'If you're really interested in pipes come downstairs.'"

"There were thousands of pipes of all different shapes and sizes made especially for them."

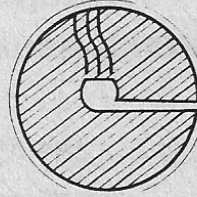


Pipe connoisseur Bob Meinhard fires up the latest addition to his collection.

Baylor bought his Upshall to commemorate the occasion.

In nodding my appreciation of his narrative, I suddenly realize that the back end of my pen has made its way into the corner of my mouth. I'm drawing on it reflectively as I listen to him talk.

William Isenberg won the pipe-smoking contest by smoking 3.3 grams of tobacco slower than anyone else.



"How do you win a pipe-smoking contest?"

"Very carefully."

His winning time was one hour and 20 minutes. The pipe he won with cost \$1. "The hole is at exactly the correct point in the bowl."

"Did you practice for this?"

"No. I just smoke my pipe."

Accountant Bob Meinhard has "about 360" pipes. "Through the course of a year I'll rotate through the entire stock." He especially favors Petersons, "made by Kapp and Peterson, a firm that dates back in unchanged form to 1885."

He settles into a discussion of pipe woods—he's partial to briars from Mo-

### Pipe aficionados talk about the flavor of "pre-1965 Dunhills" the way rock guitarists talk about the tone of pre-CBS Telecasters.

rocco and the Adriatic. "You can definitely tell the difference between them and the Corsicans." The English are big on oil curing—Meinhard doesn't quite register disapproval, but seems to lean toward air drying, which lets the sap exude naturally from the wood.

The talk slides easily to his own favorite pipe, the centerpiece of his collection, a "bent spigot" Peterson with the Irish colors on the band. He's getting ready to tell me what "bent spigot" is when the group is called in to "The Master Blenders Panel."

Aubrey Evelyn is an expert on blending pipe tobaccos, among the best in the world, according to his introducer. Evelyn's pronunciation—tobacco is "terbacker"—is as Virginian as the weed he knows so well.

A tableful of guys smoking pipes facing a roomful of guys—and one lady—puffing away.

A question and answer period follows the overview of tobacco's history and some suggestions on blending. An earnest pipe smoker in the front row has questions about flavoring tobacco with fruit.

Evelyn cautions the man not to put the fruit directly on the tobacco because that will cause it to mold. "Tobacco will pick up a flavor quick," he continues. "An apple will go right through it. An orange will go right through it." He pauses, then finishes deadpan: "A prune will go right through it."

General laughter.

"And that," says a voice from the back of the room, "will make you a regular smoker."

## 2ND ANNUAL RICHMOND PIPE EXPO CREATES FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

By Rick Hacker

Thanks to a dedicated group of pipe enthusiasts who call themselves the Conclave Of Richmond Pipe Smokers (CORPS), plus the physical support of local tobacconists such as Hilda and Jerry Jones, owners of the Cloverleaf Mall and Regency Square Tinder Box stores in Richmond, Virginia, what started out as a regional pipe meet in 1985 has turned into one of the East Coast's premiere pipe collector's expos in just its second year of operation.

The 2nd Annual CORPS Pipe Collectors Exposition & Celebration consisted of a number of proven events, all of which were blended into one non-stop celebration where smoking was definitely encouraged!

"Because he is known to most of the pipe collectors in America," said Hilda Jones, "CORPS arranged to have Rick Hacker attend the EXPO as contest MC and as our keynote speaker at the banquet.

This in turn drew more people to our event, and also resulted in coverage of the EXPO by television channels 8 and 12 as well as a feature article in the Richmond Times-Dispatch"

The events, as they occurred, began on Friday afternoon with an autograph party with Hacker at the Cloverleaf Mall Tinder Box (where "The Christmas Pipe" book was introduced in Richmond for the first time and immediately sold out), then a "Meet The Author" cocktail party/smoker on Friday night, a packed hall full of pipe collectors and traders all day Saturday, a cigar

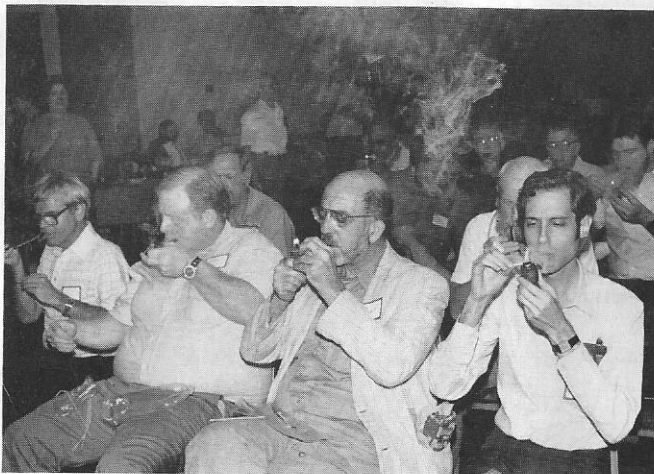
smoking contest at noon and a pipe smoking contest at 2 p.m. and the awards presentation at 5 p.m. Well-known Richmond newscaster Gene Cox from Channel 12 television was the Celebrity Judge for the pipe smoking contest and was presented with a special Ascorti club pipe and pin. Another smoker and cocktail hour commenced at 7 p.m., and the banquet dinner and speaking festivities started at 8 and went on well into the smoke-filled night.

Awards were given for a variety of categories, including Best Pipe, Best Pipe Collection, Best Privately Carved Pipe, and Best Tobacconist's Display. In addition to the two Tinder Box stores, a number of other retail tobacconists, including Earthworks, John B. Hayes, and Old Virginia Tobacco company also supported the Expo by

their attendance and participation, as did other pipe collecting notables, such as Ben Rapaport, who helped judge the antique pipe contest. By conservative estimate, there were well over \$50,000 worth of pipes on display.

"This was one of the best run pipe events I have ever attended," said Hacker. "The secret of its success was in the dedication of the workaholic CORPS members, the unselfish cooperation and participation of everyone who attended, and the fact that there was something for everyone, from free tobacco samples at the door to contests and awards that left everyone going home with something. I was especially gratified to see new pipe smokers in attendance, for they are the key to the future of this industry."

Indeed, anyone interested in starting a pipe expo of their own would do well to study the successful formula of the CORPS event, as the third annual Pipe Collectors Exposition & Celebration in 1987 promises to be even better. O



GENTLEMEN... LIGHT YOUR PIPES - Light-up time at the pipe smoking contest, 2nd annual pipe smokers celebration sponsored by CORPS, Conclave of Richmond Pipe Smokers.



# Smokers make new 'friends'

By John Wirt  
Special correspondent

Ah, the relaxing pleasures of the pipe. Gently burning tobacco in briar pipes has fostered peace and contemplation for hundreds of years.

As Thomas Haliburton wrote in "The Clockmaker" in 1836: ... "the moment a man takes to a pipe he becomes a philosopher ... it calms the mind, soothes the temper and makes a man patient under difficulties ..."

"Pipes become old friends," explained one participant in the Pipe Collectors Exposition and Celebration held here during the weekend. The pipe, added Dr. Charles E. Henry, "offers solace in times of distress, comfort in times of loneliness."

"There's something about the wood, the warmth, the tobacco," agreed Richard C. Hacker, guest speaker at the Conclave of Richmond Pipe Smokers' second annual exposition, "that makes you relax."

The spirit of the pipe is "generally one of camaraderie, trust and security," added Hacker, author of "The Ultimate Pipe Book" and "The Christmas Pipe."

Comparing pipe and cigar smoking, Hacker said cigars burn "into ash and there's nothing physical left to remind you of the pleasure you had. But with a pipe, even if the smoking is over, the pipe is still there. It's a reminder of fond memories. You have the benefit of being able to refill it, light it up, and smoke it again. It becomes a friend."

Pipe smokers, collectors and retail tobacconists from throughout the East gathered in the ballroom of the Howard Johnson's Executive Hotel for the exposition. Hundreds of collectible pipes, priced from below \$50 to as high as \$3,000, were displayed in the pipe tobacco-scented room.

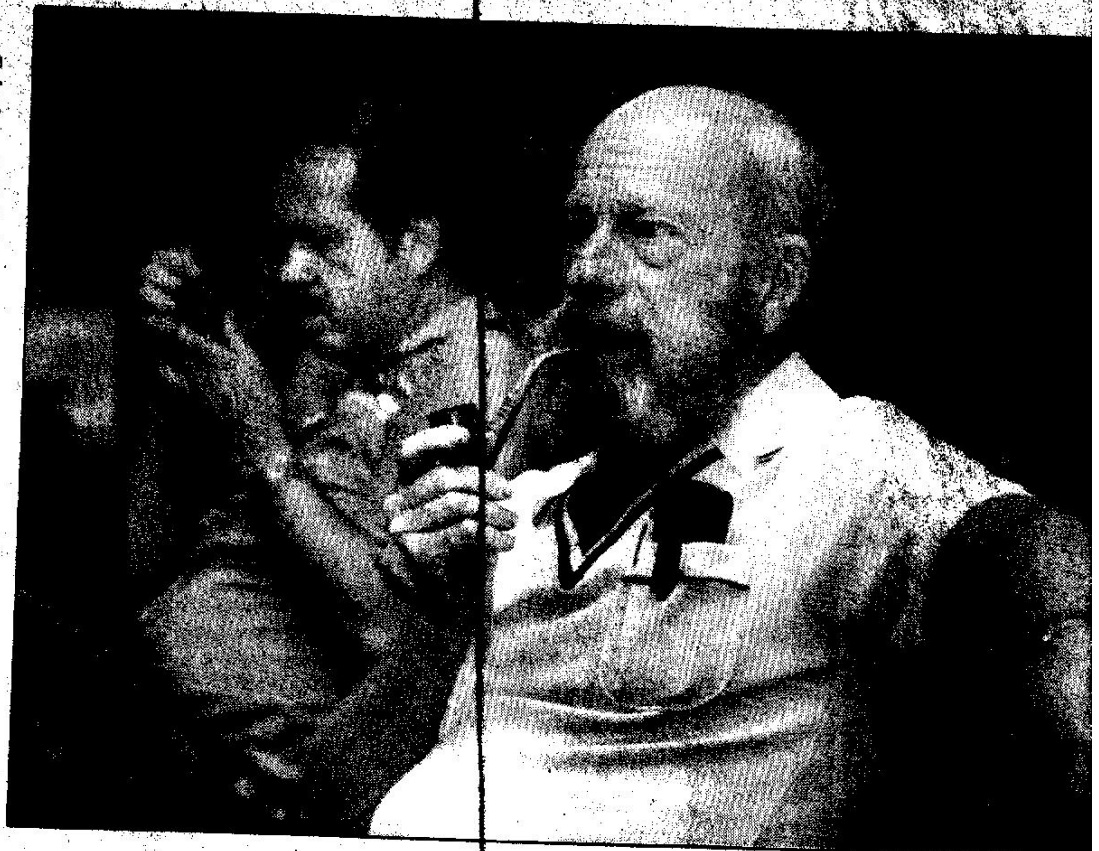
"My wife is going to shoot me in the head," one pipe smoker said after a buying a new pipe friend.

All sorts of people, Hacker said, from truck drivers to bankers to construction workers, are pipe smokers. Women make up about about 10 percent of pipe smokers.

The pipe creates a "a common bond," Hacker continued. "I refer to it as a wooden magnet. It's a little piece of briar, but the pipe attracts all these people, and they have nothing in common other than the fact they smoke a pipe."

Saturday, 21 participants in a pipe-smoking contest were each armed with 3.3 grams of tobacco, two matches and standardized pipes. The smoker who kept his or her pipe lit the longest would win. The world's record is two hours, 23 minutes and 10 seconds.

"Light your pipes now," sparked the first light. Matches flared above bowls, resulting in only modest puffs. Afterward, though, the second and last lighting sent clouds of white smoke curling into the ballroom ceiling.



Staff photos by Alex

Dr. Charles E. Henry was winner of the pipe smoking contest during week



Ed Showwalter  
One of 21 contestants

ing. Dr. Henry, winning a trophy and ribbon, placed first at 1 hour and 12 minutes. John Thompson of Ridge, Md., smoked second at one hour and six minutes; Martin Anderson of Hampton placed third at 54 minutes. Thomas R. Thomas of Newport News took the cigar smoking contest with an ash at 4.375 inches.

The exposition and celebration of the pipe ended Saturday evening with a banquet dinner, a speech by Hacker and, naturally, a lot of smoky camaraderie. "Once they start smoking a pipe," Hacker said following the contest award ceremony, "very few people stop. It's becomes part of your enjoyment of life."



Connie Hill was another contestant

# Piping up for smoking

By Keith C. Epstein  
Times-Dispatch staff writer

The official rules for the smoking contest at Saturday's Pipe Collectors Exposition were as follows:

1. Each contestant will be issued 3.3 grams of burley tobacco.
2. Contestants will have five minutes to load their pipes, as signaled by the timekeeper.
3. Each contestant will have two wooden matches. The first match is for the false light (to improve the odds that the second light will work.)
4. The main judge will give the signal to "light up."
5. There should be no conversation between the contestants and the spectators, as this contest requires a great deal of concentration by the smokers.
6. As each contestant's pipe goes out, he should stand up and declare himself out.
7. If a judge is in doubt, the judge may ask the contestant to blow some smoke.

The challengers were hoping to set a new world's record, though their hopes were likely to go out. A Japanese man is the world titleholder, at two hours, 55 minutes, 22 seconds.

Winners won expensive pipes.

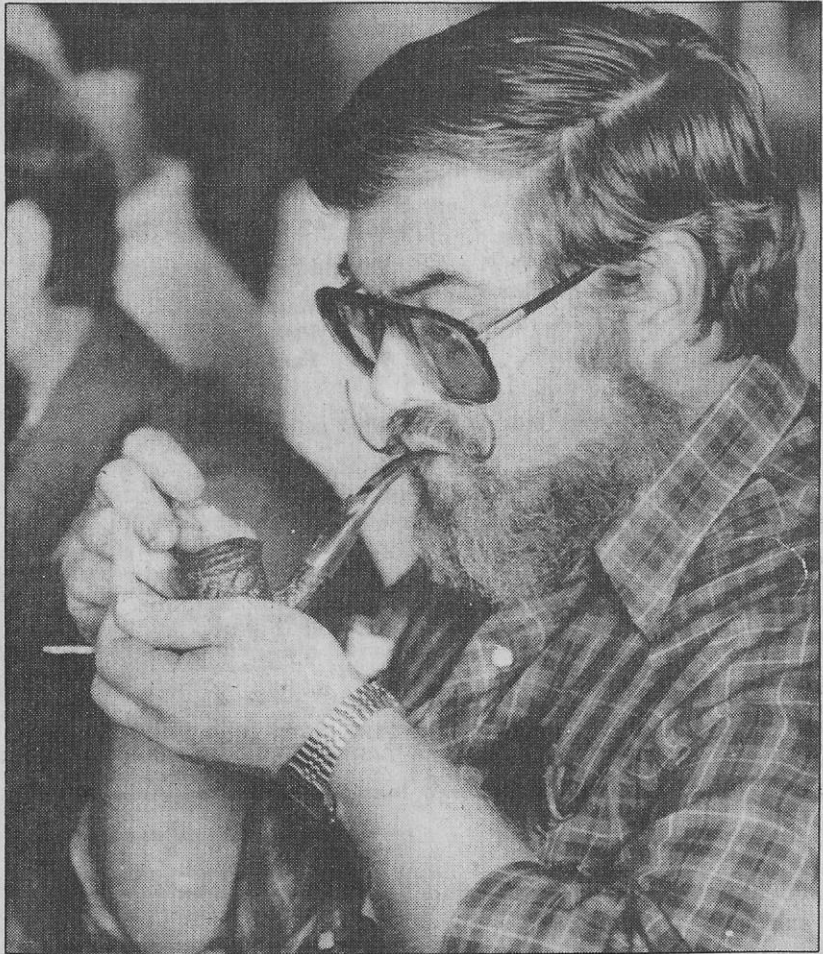
Losers received booby prizes. The booby prize is a lighter.

"A man who can't keep his pipe lit needs a pipe lighter," explained Jerry Jones, owner of two pipe shops in Richmond.

But the smoking contest was only part of the festivities at the day-long exposition at the Econo-Lodge-Central on Robin Hood Road sponsored by the Conclave of Richmond Pipe Smokers, a group of 35 or so who like to meet at restaurants to smoke and talk about pipes, pipe-makers and tobacco.

Conclave president Linwood Hines said there is plenty to talk about.

"What fascinates people is the design," explained Hines, an engineer at Philip Morris, not a sponsor of Saturday's show. "We can talk for hours about this or that pipe made by some guy in England. Plus it's an opportunity to relax and the wife doesn't



Staff photo by Wallace Clark

## Martin Anderson of Hampton lights up for contest

scream at you for smoking up the house."

Pipes: On tables in the banquet hall there were round pipes, square pipes, wooden pipes, clay pipes, pipes with faces on them, pipes with short stems, long stems, hardly any stems, Barling pipes, Charatan pipes, briar pipes, Merschaum pipes from Turkey, Dutch delft pipes, Bent Bulldog Author pipes, corncob pipes from who-knows-where.

There was a lot of smoke, too.

And some wives.

"It used to bother me, Warren buying all these pipes," Cathy Blatz said as she looked up from her needle-

work. "But it's OK. As long as I don't know, that is. I mean, he could be doing other things."

Larry Smith, a 40-year-old food service director at Columbia University, drove down to trade, sell and show off his 140-pipe collection, worth \$7,000, minimum.

Virginia Commonwealth University music major Mike Harrah, 23, plays the French horn but also makes pipes, including some that look like French horns.

"It's the romance of it," he said. "The Romantic Ephemeral, the art. Some pipes are simply too good to smoke."





## The 10th CORPS CONVENTION

**By: Lowell Bernd**

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If you weren't in Richmond, Va. the weekend of October 7, 8, and 9th, you missed a great gathering of pipe smokers, pipes, and all the trappings that go along with the ancient and honorable art and sport of pipe smoking. The Conclave of Richmond Pipe Smokers (CORPS) held their Tenth Anniversary Exposition, and for a change, smokers had their day in the sun. The festivities began Friday night at 7:30 PM, in the "Smoke Filled Room". In a wood paneled setting, complete with free tobaccos and a choice of beverages, 35 to 40 like minded people renewed old acquaintances and estab-

lished new ones. Volts Jegermanis of CORPS had transcripts of Internet pipe doings for those interested, and the Past President of CORPS, Linwood Hines, was presented with gifts for his work in organizing the show. The dottle was smoked some time after I left at 10:30, a tired traveler.

The ballroom was opened promptly at 9 am the next morning, with coffee and danish for a donation for those anxious to find that first bargain. Pipes and gadgets filled 96 tables, up significantly from last years count in the 60's. There was a nice split between new pieces and old wood, with some choice specimens seeing daylight for the first time in years. The stalwarts of the hobby were all present, including PCCA, the Old Virginia Tobacco Company, Levin Pipes, Edwards Pipe and Tobacco Shop, and Lane, Ltd., among others. Several tables were filled with tobacco artifacts and books. A raffle for door prizes continued throughout the weekend.

At 1:30, the pipe smoking contest got underway with 18 stalwarts including a most appreciated female contestant. *CORPS Continued on page 6*



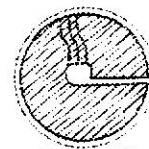
At 4 PM. another raffle was held. and at 4:30 PM. Annual Awards were given. as follows:

- Best Pipe - N. Winokur
- Best Motif - S. Menkin
- Best Collectors Display - S. Menkin
- Best Meershaum Collection - Anthony Spere
- Best Tobacciona Display - K. Merendino
- Best Antique Pipe Collection - F. Burla
- Best Pipemaker - Steve Weiner

That evening the Smoke Filled Room again was warmed by friendships and pipe bowls until cooler heads prevailed. Sunday morning the bargaining and trading began again. with a good portion of the estimated 400 visitors still prowling the exhibits. Later a charity auction was held. and the crowd finally began to thin. The picture of happy smokers. carefully packing their treasures. smiling and waving their good wishes to their fellows. will linger with us- until the next time.

*CORPS Continued from page 5*

Third place went to Charles Montgomery. second to Dr. Chuck Henry. and Bill Amatto contentedly puffed away for 1 hour. 7 minutes. and 58 seconds to take his choice of prizes.



**CORPS**

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# Pipe lovers smoking over move

*Valentine collection  
soon to waft away*

BY MICHAEL PAUL WILLIAMS

TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

A group of Richmond pipe lovers wants to keep a "fabulous collection of American tobacciana" — a 130-piece collection that includes a yard-long pipe — from leaving this country.

But Frank Jewell, director of the Valentine Museum, said last night that the so-called Half & Half Collection is leaving the Valentine for the Vienna Tobacco Museum in Austria.

The turn of the century-era collection was commissioned in New York by William C. Demuth, founder of the Demuth Tobacco Co.

## Puffs to the chiefs

Among its carved figures, floral relief and art deco are the Presidential Pipes — busts of the first 29 presidents of the United States.

The collection's centerpiece is the 3-foot-long, 10-inch-tall Columbus Pipe, which depicts the landing of the explorer.

That one is already in Vienna. The rest of the collection is soon to follow, Jewell said.

Jewell would not say how much the Vienna museum paid for the collection, but acknowledged it was more than the \$130,000 minimum that the Valentine was willing to take to part with it.



The Valentine, which received the pipes from the American Tobacco Co., has been systematically examining its collection and removing items it deems inappropriate, Jewell said.

"The museum is to interpret the life and history of the city of Richmond," he said. "There's no real particular connection with Richmond."

But Linwood S. Hines, a past president of the Conclave of Richmond Pipe Smokers, said the organization hopes someone will persuade the Valentine that the collection should stay.

As for the appropriateness of the collection, "Richmond's the tobacco capital," Hines said. "I think it's entirely appropriate."

## Museum asked around

Jewell said the museum asked the U.S. Tobacco Museum and several large U.S. tobacco companies if they were interested in obtaining the collection. "The only people who were interested were the Austrians."

Jewell said the Valentine's policy is to use money it receives for "deaccessioned" items to maintain its collections or acquire new objects.

He said the Valentine doesn't have a tobacco press and other items "much more related to Richmond than these pipes. We undoubtedly will be trying to acquire these pieces with money from the sale."