



Milton J. Wershow at a Pasadena machine shop auction in 1962.
Times photo

Auctioneer Found Bidders for Just About Anything

It is the measure of a good salesman is his ability to sell anything, then auctioneer Milton J. Wershow must rank with the best. During his 44 years as an auctioneer of property and real estate, he conducted highly publicized sales of some unusual merchandise:

—His Milton J. Wershow Co. auctioned the railroad car used by President Harry S. Truman in his whistle-stop campaign against Thomas E. Dewey. The car was sold for \$78,000 to a Kansas City banker who planned to use it as the centerpiece of a Truman memorial.

—In 1968, the company auctioned the Himalaya Ride, the Flight to Mars, Neptune's Kingdom and other attractions at Pacific Ocean Park in Santa Monica after bankruptcy forced the closure of the park. The auction brought about \$250,000 in bids.

—Wershow presided at the sale of property from the Fat Jones Stable, a supplier of animals and properties for Western movies. Among the items sold were a stagecoach for \$40,000, and Michael Landon's horse from the "Bonanza" TV series for \$10,000.

—Another sale involved the auctioning of orangutans, elephants, camels and other wild animals after the closing of the Jungleland amusement park in Thousand Oaks.

Wershow, founder of Milton J. Wershow Co. and its president until illness forced him to retire two years ago, died of cancer June 15 at his

home in Beverly Hills. He was 69.

A native of Lansing, Mich., Wershow graduated from UCLA during the Depression and began his career by auctioning industrial machinery and equipment, earning about \$12 a week.

His firm grew into a giant in its field and recorded more than \$60 million in sales last year.

The company has auctioned property and equipment for major U.S. industrial firms and supervised the sale of the homes of such Hollywood notables as Shirley Temple and Harold Lloyd. The Lloyd estate, Greenacres, was sold for \$1.6 million.

In 1960, Wershow shook up the Orange County real estate market when he auctioned the Santa Ana Army Air Base in Costa Mesa for \$4.7 million. Until that time, the bottom limit on Costa Mesa property had been \$10,000 to \$12,000 an acre. As a result of the air base sale, The Times reported, the asking rate shot up to \$19,000 an acre.

Wershow once became co-owner of the town of Westwood in Lassen County. "It was the only way I could buy its mill," he explained. He later sold most of his interest in the town.

A gregarious and athletic man, he was a regular participant in the Los Angeles Open and the Bob Hope and Bing Crosby golf tournaments.

He was a member of Hillcrest Country Club and a charter member of Tamarisk Country Club in Palm Springs.