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Restaurateurs Wine Collection

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By Robert Johnson, Editor

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Auction paddles flew and records were shattered in Chicago, as Hart Davis Hart held an historic single-owner wine auction of The Steven Verlin Collection.

The auction showcased a portion of the personal cellar of the late Steven Verlin, one of the founding partners of Veritas Restaurant in New York. It drew the attention of collectors from around the world, with bidders participating from 44 states as well as Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Finland, Iceland, Indonesia, Japan, Monaco, Netherlands, Puerto Rico, Singapore, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

The extensive two-day sale of nearly 1,900 lots was 100 percent sold, and the total hammer price exceeded the pre-auction high estimate. The final tally was \$7,127,613, one of the most significant wine auction results ever achieved.

"It is highly unusual for an auction of this size and value to be 100 percent sold. It's indicative of the importance placed on provenance by serious collectors," noted Vice Chairman Michael Davis.

The auction, held at Chicago's award-winning Tru restaurant, began with a celebratory flourish when Grae Verlin, Steven's widow, presented the capacity crowd of bidders with a Methuselah of Roederer Cristal 1990.

The bubbly was served to the lucky attendees along with Orville Redenbacher popcorn, popped in truffle oil - a signature pairing of her late husband.

The mood in the sale room was buoyant as attendees ordered bottles from Tru's award-winning wine list while vying with phone bidders, Internet bidders and each other for the many rarities being offered. With wine flowing and world records being set, the event was an appropriate celebration of the life of such a passionate collector.

QUICK POLL

When I visit a wine shop, when it comes to service, I want

- no service, just good signs please
- a greeting, little else
- someone available for questions only if I have any
- an active salesperson who knows the wines to guide me
- someone follow me around and hold my bottles

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