

# Going, going, gone

## Top auction customer buys for yet another reclaimed theater



At the top: Ed Cleland of Farmington Hills was the top buying customer at Saturday's theater auction. He was buying to help stock a theater in his hometown in Ohio.

BY TIM SMITH  
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No one can accuse Ed Cleland of not being "Civic" minded.

Cleland was the top customer at Saturday's auction at the Farmington Civic Theatre, spending nearly \$1,900 for a dozen items — mostly old cardboard cutouts and photographs of vintage movie stars.

In total, approximately \$10,000 was generated at the auction, with the money to help fund further renovations and pay any remaining expenses connected to last weekend's "Grand Re-Opening."

But the Farmington Hills resident also is helping out another Civic, namely the Huber Opera House and Civic Center in Cleland's hometown of Hicksville, Ohio. The auction items he bought will be loaned to the Ohio center for its lobby.

"I had so much fun you wouldn't believe it," said Cleland, president of Livonia-based Dentemax and a veteran coach with South Farmington Baseball Inc. "It really got my adrenaline going."

Being active at the live auction somewhat made up for Ed and wife, Kate, not being able to score \$50 tickets for Saturday night's sold out gala, he said.

According to Cleland, who tries to "do a lot of things for the community," taking from one Civic to give to another made perfect sense.

"This is a double duty," Cleland said. "I'm just swelling with pride over this because I'm helping two theaters."

### Determined buyer

Similar to the story of the Farmington Civic, which was bought by the city for \$316,500 last summer, a Hicksville community group (including Cleland's sister) shelled out about \$140,000 in 1999 to buy the vacant facility, which most recently had been a youth center.

"They told me they were putting money together to buy it, and they did," Cleland said. "But my sister (Corinne Hurn) told me there was nothing in the lobby."

"So when I got to the (Farmington Civic) and saw all these marvelous things, I decided I was going to buy as many of these items as I could."

He figured those items would help spruce up the Huber center, which



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRENNER

Up for auction: An item, the original capacity limit sign, is displayed for auction Saturday at the Civic Theatre, while a cutout of Stan Laurel waits its turn.

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Ed Cleland  
—Auction's top customer

dates back to the early 1900s. It originally featured silent movies. In those days, Cleland's parents (Bill and Audrie, who played instruments) were stationed in the orchestra pit to help provide musical backing for the flicks.

For each of the first few items he bid on, Cleland had to up the ante about six times. After that, people "gave up," realizing how much he wanted the memorabilia.

Cleland purchased about a dozen movie star cutouts, featuring John Wayne, Laurel & Hardy and the Wizard of Oz, as well as caricatures of the Marx Brothers and others.

Soon, Cleland will load the items into a car, make the 150-mile drive to Hicksville and fill the barren lobby. The Huber center is expected to feature the Hicksville Village Players and family movies, and host civic organizations.

Of course, not everything is headed to Ohio. Cleland plans on keeping the photographs of John Wayne and Marilyn

Monroe.

### Knows his roots

Cleland's residency in the Farmington-Farmington Hills communities dates back to 1979. Ed and Kate have three children: Eddie and Abbey attend Harrison High School; Michael is a third grader at Beechview Elementary School.

But he acknowledges his Hicksville roots. Several family members, including his 94-year-old mother, still live in the "little rural community" of 3,590 people.

Meanwhile, also firmly rooted is Cleland's interest in furthering the arts and entertainment. He studied for a potential career in speech and drama at Ohio State University and The Defiance College before earning a degree — albeit in a different field — at the University of Detroit.

## Art deco mural heralds Civic Theatre reopening

BY TIM SMITH  
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Artist Beth Newman's official Civic Theatre front lobby mural had been dubbed a secret, not to be made public until Saturday's "Grand Re-Opening" celebration.

Those who saw it for the first time couldn't help but be spellbound by the colorful art deco-themed mural of downtown Farmington and the Civic marquee. It featured spotlights shining over skyscrapers, with a "Farmington" street sign above the city.

"It took me two and a half weeks" to complete, said Newman, a Farmington Hills resident who was invited to create the mural. "They basically just said they wanted an 'art deco.' But, beyond that, it was my idea."

Newman said the "art deco" period took place during the 1920s and 1940s.

Even people who might have seen it prior to Saturday, such as city council member Jim Mitchell, were happy with Newman's work.

"I think the mural is beautiful," Mitchell said.

He was among those who watched as Mayor Bill Hartsock cut a strip of film for the official unveiling.

"The search lights give it the impression we want to convey," Mitchell said. "This is a special theater and a special situation for the city to own a theater. We're establishing something we can feel proud of for the entire community."

Newman also created a portrait of dancers Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire at the top of the stairs to the Civic upper auditorium.

The artist said she was thrilled with how the paintings turned out and that they will be part of the theater's lasting legacy.

"A lot of people teased me that



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRENNER

Art deco: Artist Beth Newman painted the mural for the theater. The work is in the stairwell leading to the upstairs theater.

"they don't have skyscrapers in Farmington," Newman said, laughing. "But it's just an art deco theme."

The program for the gala

included a similar version of the mural, sketched by Newman, who also works with Mary Pat Speck at Spectacular Interiors.



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