


Online Angus Auctions

BY MERIDEE WELLS

Include More Than Live Cattle 

They say the first step to curing any addiction is to admit you have one. I freely admit to this one, but I don't want to be cured.

You see, I'm addicted to eBay. Although I've confessed my addiction to others, it has in no way stopped me from continuing. In fact, my admission has caused others to develop an addiction of their own. It must have something to do with our business. We spend an undue amount of time at cattle sales, so maybe our attraction to eBay has to do with the auction format. We like to bid.

The largest online auction company in the world, eBay features more than 4 million items at www.ebay.com. Launched on Labor Day, 1995, eBay is the brainchild of Californian Pierre Omidyar.

Today this publicly traded company, with home offices in San Jose, Calif., is listed on the NASDAQ stock market. At press time

eBay's stock price was about \$69, with a 52-week high of \$122 and a low around \$43.

Angus items

While the choices on eBay are many, my addiction is confined to one specific category within the millions of items traded each day. My favorite eBay location is simply "Angus." I've become enamored with the scope and variety of the 125-150 Angus items.

I can pinpoint the moment my addiction began. I was attending the Deer Creek sale, and our hostess (who I will refer to as "Black-cow-aholic") was featuring some interesting Angus memorabilia as part of her table decorations.

When asked where she found them, she opened the door to eBay, introducing the company and how she located the Angus items. She says her eBay addiction is not limited to Angus, since there are other

collectibles that she trades, but the Angus items were what intrigued me the most.

The first thing I did when I returned home was try my hand at eBay. I didn't register at first. I just scanned the Angus category to get a feel for the items that were available. Photos of every item — from the smallest stamp to the largest cowhide — are available so you can see what you are bidding on.

What I saw piqued my interest. Black-cow-aholic had purchased some first-day covers, which are envelopes that feature a stamp postmarked on its day of issue. This one was of the 8¢ Angus stamp issued to commemorate the 1973 Angus centennial. The covers come in a variety of designs, and even though I'm not a stamp collector, I found the covers to be interesting, frameable Angus memorabilia.

As the mother of a junior Angus member, twice this year I have donated first-day covers, which were purchased on eBay, as silent-auction items. They have been well-received and have sold for considerably more than I paid, which has helped raise money for our juniors.

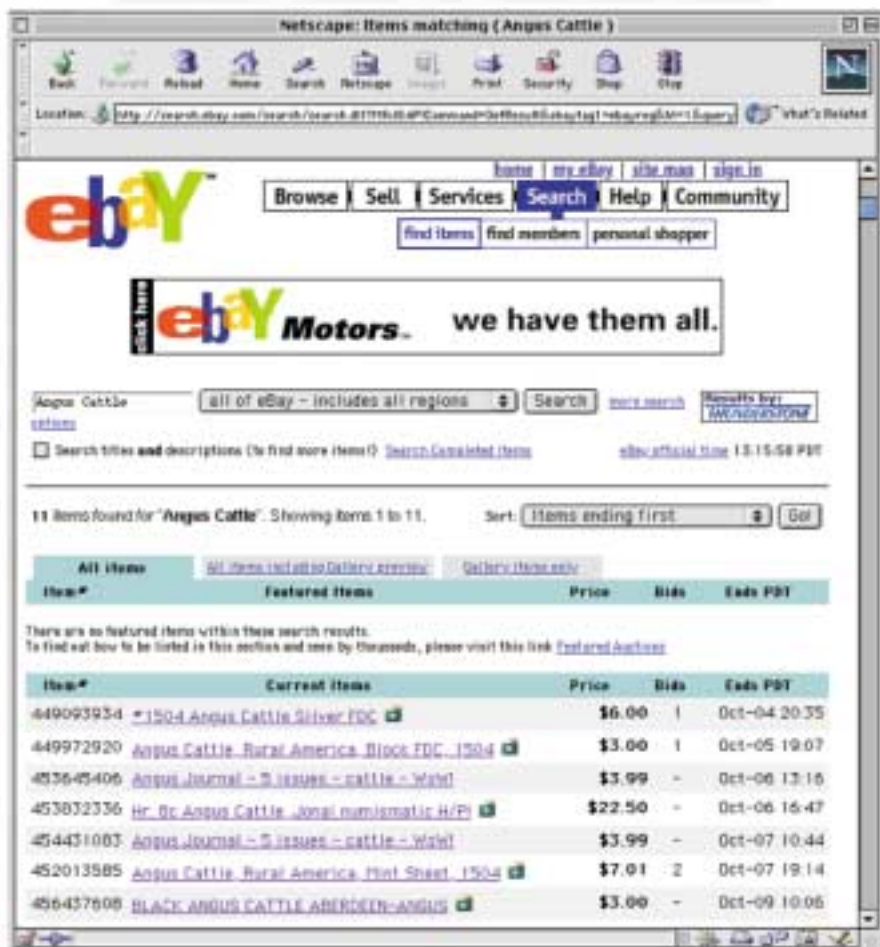
Now, I was not about to keep eBay a secret, and soon I was spreading my addiction. While attending another sale in the Northwest, I infected someone else.

Infectious

I told Flying T about eBay, and soon Flying T actively was pursuing a number of Angus items — many times in competition with me! But that's half the fun.

Again, Flying T was most interested in Angus items. Vintage sale books, which represented an era remembered by some members of the Flying T family, were of special interest. It was not unusual for Flying T to check eBay listings at least twice each day to check the status of an item or to view new things as they became available.

I also have become interested in vintage sale books, as well as other Angus publications. A seller in Great Britain recently featured *Superiority of the Angus Breed*, a book published by one of the European Angus societies. Since eBay is international in scope, it is not unusual to bid on or to purchase items from foreign sellers.





From commemorative postage stamps and first-day cancellations to 40-year-old brochures produced by the American Angus Association, Angus enthusiasts can purchase just about anything online.

I have purchased from Canadians. Other than some additional shipping and perhaps a request that you send a money order instead of a personal check (which is standard practice), trading between countries never has been easier. There are no trade barriers or tariffs on eBay.

It's not unusual to see items priced in foreign currency with the exchange amount in U.S. dollars listed. I recently admired a Beswick Angus bull. Beswick is a European company that specializes in fine china and collectible figurines, many of which are very expensive.

This particular model, while it was of no interest to me, was being offered by Decogattic of Aberdeen, Scotland. Decogattic's location piqued my interest, and through the convenience of e-mail, I asked her if she was an Angus breeder.

Unfortunately, the location was just coincidental. Decogattic was in the business of selling estate items. She had just added eBay to her marketing channels, but she was happy with the contacts she had made and felt it would increase her business.

Those of you who attended the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) and spent any time at the silent auction or the Iowa Angus Auxiliary tables saw items that are featured regularly on eBay. Tonigart, an Iowa artist, has been a regular seller on eBay since January. Not only has her art been purchased by eBay addicts across the country, her Angus prints are now featured fund-raiser items for the Iowa Angus Auxiliary.

"It (eBay) has really opened up doors for me," Tonigart says. "I'm looking forward to the Christmas rush."

Other Angus items I've purchased on eBay include Angus salt and pepper shakers and the centennial commemorative plate that features the Angus bull and Longhorn cows — the same picture featured on the Angus stamps.

I've purchased several vintage Angus sale

books and newspapers that have Angus articles. The vintage sale books have been great entertainment at home, since they offer not only insight into the breed, but an education via owners' letters.

I have P.J. Donohoe's 1918 sale book. Donohoe, Holbrook, Iowa, stated in his introductory letter that "this offering is the silkiest thing I ever tabulated. After last year's splendid sale, I found myself with some money and more credit than I had for sometime. I rode both of them at a fairly good clip, bought liberally of the best Angus blood in the country, and now must realize on the ventures." He must have been quite an operator.

Seller's history available

I've found the sellers on eBay to be forthright and honest about the condition of items and prompt with shipments. Most sellers, if they have been trading on eBay long, have a seller's history available, with a feedback forum and rating system in place. The same goes for buyers. If a transaction fails to be handled properly by either party, you can report the failure to the entire eBay community. Both positive and negative comments are listed.

The site works from the principle that participants are honest and should be trusted until proven otherwise. When you make a purchase and send your money order to a seller, you trust those on the other end to handle their business in a prompt manner. While the buyer traditionally pays for the shipping of the item, it is the seller's responsibility to make sure items are packaged in a way to avoid damage. Some sellers also will offer insurance as an extra precaution.



Everything Angus

One word of caution about the Angus category: While we think there is nothing but Angus cattle, there are many popular items traded under the Angus heading. Angus Young is the lead guitarist for the rock group AC/DC, and while I personally can't understand why anyone would want his records, books and memorabilia, they are quite plentiful and must be popular. You'll have to wade through much of his stuff, as well as plush toys, knives and book titles — all carrying the Angus name. And many of the folks who sell on eBay wouldn't know an Angus from a Jersey, so sometimes you find things that are misidentified.

Since I've only experienced the buying side of eBay, I will close with this thought. As an eBay addict, I've had one ulterior motive in writing this commentary. I hope all who read it will clean their closets and become eBay sellers. Who knows how much Black-cow-aholic, Flying T and I will pay for old issues of the *Angus Journal*, badges, show pins, dishes, pictures, old toys and books? Everything Angus has a value on eBay.

