

More Items Removed From JFK Auction

Controversy May Have Dampened Bidding

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Hours before the start of a highly publicized sale of John F. Kennedy memorabilia, a Maryland collector agreed yesterday to hand over several items to the former president's children, who had threatened legal action to stop their sale.

But once the New York auction started, only a handful of artifacts fetched the sort of astronomical sums seen in the 1996 auction of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis's estate. Many items offered during the sale's first day drew lower-than-expected bids.

A few big-ticket items—including Kennedy's sailboat—were withdrawn after failing to receive the minimum bid, and some suggested the controversy surrounding the Guernsey's auction had scared off buyers.

"People are afraid if they buy things, they might get litigated," said Caryl Traten Fisher, a Wheaton resident who had consigned several items to the sale.

Catonsville, Md., collector Robert L. White, who had contributed about half of

the more than 500 items for sale in the two-day auction, withdrew three items

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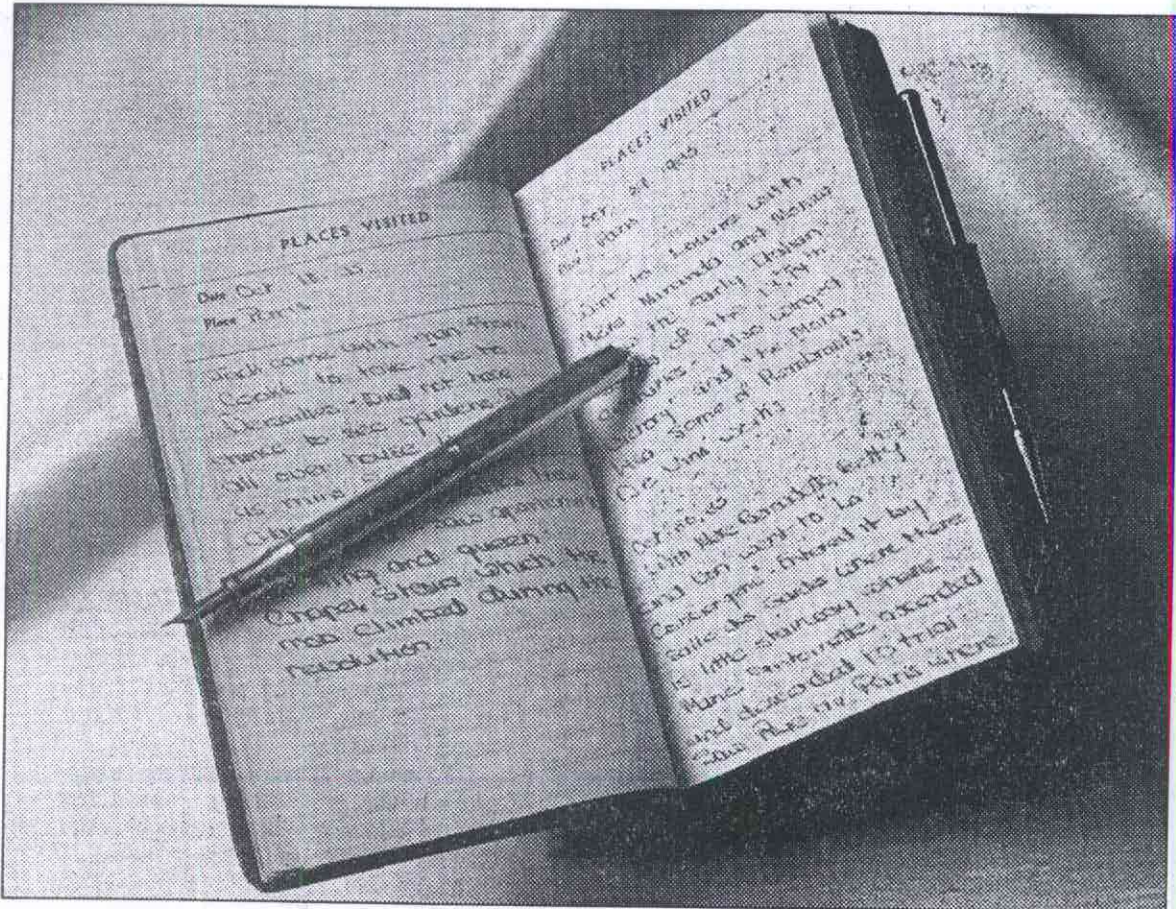
GUERNSEY'S

The Hermes briefcase President Kennedy took to Dallas was included in the sale.



Among the Guernsey's auction items were a stainless steel cigarette lighter created for the 1960 presidential campaign and a 1930s travel diary kept by Kennedy's sister Kathleen, who died in a plane crash in 1948.

REUTERS



PLACES VISITED

Oct 27 - 18 35
Place de la

which some think is the
Louvre to see the
Mona Lisa - Did not have
time to see others
All over Paris
Oct 28 - 18 35
The Louvre and queen
Croix, which is
was climbed during the
revolution

PLACES VISITED

Oct 29 - 18 35
The Louvre

which is the Louvre
Museum and the
Mona Lisa - Did not
have time to see
others - Also saw
the Mona Lisa
and some of the
other works

Oct 30 - 18 35
with the Louvre
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Mona Lisa - Did not
have time to see
others - Also saw
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late yesterday morning—a mahogany clock that once sat in the Oval Office and two journals the then-congressman kept of his 1951 trip to Eastern Europe—after bitter negotiations with the Kennedy family over the proper ownership of items White had received from the president's secretary, the late Evelyn Lincoln.

In addition, White, a former cleaning supplies salesman, agreed to give Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg and John Kennedy Jr. six other items from his vast collection of JFK artifacts that were not part of the auction.

But the family ceded claim to at least one major auction item it had demanded—the black alligator Hermes briefcase Kennedy carried the day he was assassinated.

The briefcase was scheduled to go on the block last night.

The Kennedy family intends to give the journals and the clock to the Kennedy Library in Boston, according to White's attorney, Robert Adler. The other items are expected to remain in the children's possession.

Adler would not detail the non-auction items White agreed to hand over, except to say that one was a Saint Christopher medal that Kennedy is believed to have been carrying when he was shot, and the other was a personal letter from Jacqueline Kennedy to Lincoln.

Other items the Kennedy children had sought from White were two wallets belonging to their father and two medical prescriptions.

Under the settlement, Schlossberg and Kennedy relinquished any claim of ownership to any other auction items that White had received from Lincoln.

Kennedy attorney Nicole Seligman released a statement last night expressing dismay that items passed on by Lincoln to other collectors—including Kennedy's Cartier watch—were still set for auction. However, a spokesman said the Kennedys do not intend to pursue any legal action to claim them.

Adler said White was sorry to lose the items but relieved to have reached a settlement. A day earlier, White agreed to give an Oval

Office writing table and several presidential papers to the National Archives, which claimed they were federal property and historically significant.

"You decide it's better to give up a little to save a lot," he said.

Guernsey's, a maverick auction house that does not have a permanent auction space, opened its sale

yesterday afternoon in New York's cavernous Seventh Regiment Armory on Park Avenue.

About 200 bidders and spectators turned out; none of the celebrities who populated the \$34 million Sotheby's auction of the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis estate were in evidence.

A few items generated surprising prices. A sheet of legal paper with the scrawled phrase "An inaugural is a beginning and an end" and the date, Jan. 17, 1961, along with a photocopy of a handwritten draft of Kennedy's inaugural address, had a presale estimate of \$4,000 but instead sold for \$39,000, plus the 15 percent auction house fee.

A black plastic comb went for \$1,100, well above estimates of \$400 to \$500.

"I was prepared to go to \$2,000," said buyer Guido Ortenzio, owner of a Manhattan memorabilia shop that specializes in Marilyn Monroe trinkets. "The comb was something really personal."

But other items proved disappointing. Kennedy's 22-foot sloop was pulled from the auction after bidding topped off at \$800,000, short of the \$1 million its consignee demanded. White's Tiffany desk calendar commemorating the Cuban missile crisis—a gift to Lincoln from the president—was also withdrawn after bidding fell short.

Some suggested that auction followers are weary of celebrity-driven sales, like the Onassis auction and the recent sale of items belonging to the Duke and Duch-

ess of Windsor. A smaller auction house, Guernsey's was also unable to promote the sale as widely or take as many telephone bids as more established firms like Christie's and Sotheby's.

The auction had prompted fierce opposition from the Kennedys, who charged this week that Lincoln "took advantage" of the family by saving numerous personal items without permission.

Yesterday, White said he felt bruised by the weeks of controversy.

"I think it's terrible they had to characterize Mrs. Lincoln that way," he said. "I'll go to my grave defending that woman."

Judd Tully reported from New York.