

## Auctioneer appraises items, says he's always learning



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GALVEZ — Sports memorabilia appraiser Freddie Phillips was all smiles as he carefully turned the pages of three German books containing photos from the 1932 and 1936 Olympic Games.

As he flipped through the pages, Phillips soon realized he was looking at valuable publications, and started thinking about the research needed to properly appraise the find.

The books' owner, Elke Berube, brought the books to the Ascension Parish Library's sports memorabilia appraisal program Saturday to discover their value.

"I've never really seen anything just like this," Phillips said. "This is exciting to see something like this.

"By helping her, I'm helping myself," Phillips said, adding that he is "always learning something new in this business."

Berube, who was born in Germany, said the books were her father's and she was curious about their value. Two of the books record the 1936 winter and summer games held in Germany. The pages included photographs of Olympian Jessie Owens and Adolf Hitler.

The books, in pristine condition, were part of a German cigar company's promotion that required people to collect cigar wrappers and return them for photographs that were pasted down in the books.

Phillips, president of Premier Auction Services, said the actual photographs, some in color, might have more value separately than the books alone.

Berube joined a dozen other Ascension Parish residents who brought their sports memorabilia and antiques to the library Saturday for appraisals.

In addition to providing appraisals, Phillips talked about the different types of appraisals and how to properly store and document valuables.

Phillips, a member of the Certified Appraiser Guild of America, suggested photographing or scanning items and digitally storing copies of memorabilia.

He said items with autographs should be stored away from light and suggested avoiding touching the items. He said even items kept in safe deposit boxes should be insured.

He said more detailed appraisals are needed in many cases in order to properly insure items.

While appraisals are “not cheap,” Phillips said a professional appraisal can help people if an item is lost or stolen.

Phillips, who is also an auctioneer and pastor, warned those attending against talking about their items to “just anybody.”

“People are taken advantage of every day,” he said.

Phillips, who has a collection of Archie comic books, said collectors need to be careful about phony autographs when purchasing items.

“You have to be careful ... because people are swindled every day.”

He said collectors should acquire a certificate of authenticity when purchasing an item.

One local couple provided Phillips with a certificate of authenticity they received when they acquired a basketball signed by Larry Bird. Phillips estimated the ball’s value at around \$250.

Another resident, businessman Rhett Bourgeois, wasn’t so lucky when it came to getting an estimate on his collection of baseball memorabilia.

However, Phillips was able to confirm his belief that what he had “was worth more than others were telling me.”

A few years ago, Bourgeois acquired a collection of postcards signed by baseball players and other baseball memorabilia collected over the years by a local lawyer.

He found the items in a desk drawer while cleaning out the man’s office.

Bourgeois, who keeps the items in safe deposit box, said he’s been trying to find out their value for a few years.

“I know it’s valuable, but it’s hard to get a price,” Bourgeois said.

Phillips said he would have to do more research, but said the collection was worth more than the quotes Bourgeois had received.

“Everything has value, but the value of an item is not determined by what it is alone,” Phillips said. “You need a willing seller and buyer.”

Phillips said Bourgeois’ items may be worth more if sold in the New York area because most of it deals with the New York Yankees.

“Geography is important when trying to sell something,” he said.

Phillips said more research was needed to properly insure the collection.

Research was also needed, Phillips said, to value a baseball signed by members of the New York Yankees in 1932.

Phillips said he turns to other appraisers and the Internet to value items. He warned that while the Internet is a good tool for research “be extra careful ... because it can be used for bad.”

A spokeswoman for the library said they are hoping to have another session of appraisals.

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