

Old shop equipment yields cash for school

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New London — New London High School made a little money for the city Saturday, when all it really wanted to do was make a little room for its students.

Trash became cash Saturday morning when Petrowsky Auctioneers hawked the school's obsolete, old, unsafe and in-the-way machine shop equipment. More than three dozen bidders, from machinists to motorcycle builders, were on hand for the deals.

"It would have cost thousands to have all of this stuff hauled away," said John Seidel, New London's School-to-Career coordinator. It was his idea to offer the more than 50 pieces of industrial arts equipment, including wet and dry shop vacuum cleaners, electric sharpening wheels, drill presses, lathes and milling machines. "This way we benefit twice," he said. "We don't have to pay to have it moved, and we get paid for people taking it away."

The buyers paid close to \$20,000 for the equipment, capped by the \$1,800 that one person paid for a never-used automobile painting booth that several seemingly savvy shoppers said could have fetched 10 times as much if purchased new today.

The auction took on the feeling of nostalgia for those familiar with the school and the equipment.

"I was looking to see if my name was

on any of them," said a school employee who didn't want to be identified, as he scrutinizing the carvings on three workbenches that sold for \$50 for the lot. "I remember using half of this stuff when I was in school."

Seidel said that John Jaczinski, who purchased much of the equipment when he ran the department in the 1950s and 60s, had visited the school earlier in the day. Jaczinski pointed out to Seidel the 1963 automobile engine that he had students rebuild in 1966.

Others who showed interest included Brian Haynes, of Haynes Motorcycles in Ledyard, which specializes in manufacturing custom bikes and accessories. Marshall Schulman, from West Babylon, N.Y., who rebuilds repairs and resells industrial machinery, competed on several bids but ultimately bought just a couple of pieces. He was frequently outbid by a man, who would not give his

name, representing a Bethel, Vt., company called Plaza Machine. He bought a lot of seven lathes for \$1,000 each, among other purchases that totaled more than \$12,000.

"I don't want anyone to know I was here," he said.

"He paid way more than they were worth," Hayes said of seven lathes.

The sell-off of the machine shop equipment did not spell the end of industrial arts at the high school, Seidel said. Across the hall from Saturday's bidding battle is a classroom with 12 new drafting tables and a dozen Dell computers equipped with computer-aided design software. Next door to the auction room is a fully equipped restaurant kitchen. The carpentry classes will soon begin to build a scaled down — but architecturally accurate — house.

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