



Do I hear two?

Identical twins Jim and Dave McLaughlin’s close relationship started long before they entered the industry, and it has carried right on through more than three decades of selling.

By Nancy Hull Rigdon, contributor

Jim and Dave McLaughlin’s auction audiences love the fact that they’re twins.

Take, for example, the reaction they get to one of their routines. Jim will point to a sale item and say, “When I was young, I had one of those.” The audience will ask, “What happened to it?” He responds, “Well, my brother took it.”

The attention then shifts to Dave, his identical twin. Without fail, the audience erupts in laughter.

“We’ve been telling the same jokes for 33 years, and somehow, they’ve been laughing at these same jokes for 33 years,” Dave says. “We do take our business very seriously, and at the same time we like to have a lot of fun – especially with the whole twin bit.”

Together, Jim and Dave own McLaughlin Auctioneers in Dilworth, Minnesota. They focus on live and online auctions in areas including estates, farms, commercial liquidations, real estate, fundraising – and they’ve found a niche in government fleet.

The story of how they entered auctioneering goes back to childhood. And, in their more than three decades in the business, they’ve yet to run across another set of twins in auctioneering.

Dave remembers being drawn to Auctioneers while attending auctions with his parents. It likely helped that he looked up to a junior high teacher who also was an Auctioneer. The significant moment came one day after graduating from high school, when he’d completed some tech school work. He was talking to Jim,



McLaughlin Auctioneers is now a second-generation auction business after both Jim and Dave's daughters joined the business in the past couple of years.

Pictured on Page 40, L-R: Jim McLaughlin, his daughter, Beth, and Dave McLaughlin.

"We finish the other's sentences," says Jim about his relationship with his brother.

who was in Canada during an eight-week tour with his country rock band. (Jim played guitar and managed the lights and sound system for the band he toured with. Crowd favorites included covers of Alabama and the Oak Ridge Boys.)

Dave told him, "I'm thinking about going to auction school and am filling out an application right now." Jim liked the idea – and told his brother to fill one out for him also. Soon after, they graduated from the Mason City College of Auctioneering.

The music tours ended when they entered auctioneering, even though the twins still now perform occasionally in a church worship band. "If someone twists our arm, we'll do a Smothers Brothers type of thing," Jim says.

The band experience has benefited their auction careers.

"The performing background certainly made us comfortable up on stage at an auction," Jim says. "And I end up running the lights, sound system and other equipment at auctions – just like I did in my days in bands."

Those who know the twins well, maybe even best, think auctioneering fits them perfectly.

"When people would ask our mom when we started selling, she'd say, 'As soon as they could talk,'" Jim says.

While Jim and Dave look the same, they have different strengths. The way they complement each other, as well as how well they know one another, has helped them succeed as business partners.

Jim excels in the early, prospecting stages of a deal. Dave's strong at closing them.

"We finish the other's sentences. We always know where the other guy is going. After all, we've worked together for 56 years,"

Jim says, referring to their age.

As a licensed broker, Dave leads the real estate side of the business. He also has extensive experience in wholesale auto auctions and serves as point on that area. Jim sells truck equipment outside of auctioneering and leads the heavy equipment and government fleet auctions. Plus, he runs marketing and technical projects.

Jim and Dave are proud to say they're now a two-generation, family auction business. Jim's daughter, Beth, joined the business after graduating from the World Wide College of Auctioneering two years ago. Dave's daughter, Dayna McLaughlin, also works auctions on the clerking and cashiering side.

The NAA has played a big role in their success, the twins say.

"The networking opportunities have boosted my career," Dave says.

"I've seen the biggest benefit from the education," Jim adds. "Not only has learning more about the industry helped me, but I also know that if I'm conducting strong business, that's great for the industry overall."

The brothers are grateful for their business because working together allows them to see each other often. While they once lived next door to each other, they now live 15 miles apart. Through the years, they've viewed auctions as a time for collaboration.

"There have only been a handful of auctions where we weren't both there. We always have fun working together on auction day," Dave says. ❖