



NEIGHBORS

Dianna Stampfler

Al Barker (center) and his wife, Betty, from Stanton enjoy the auction activity with Gordon Abvey from Lakeview.

draws many locals as well as out-of-towners. "Residents wait for flea market day to get their flowers, produce or other things because the prices are so good," she says.

Jean Stevens of Jean's Produce has hauled fruits and vegetables from Ravenna to Trufant for 13 years. "I never miss a day," she says. "I've actually been coming here since I was 11, helping out in other produce booths."

Besides fresh produce, you'll also find ready-made salads and a wide variety of lentils, including soup mixes, at Jean's stand. "I'm even working on a bean cookbook during the winter," she says.

A few aisles away, the wind rattles bamboo and coconut wind chimes made by John Rohn of Rockford. A tool engineer by trade, John was let go three years ago during downsizing at Meridian Auto and has called Trufant his Thursday home-away-from-home ever since. You'll find hand-dipped incense, bamboo dream catchers and a complete line of Watkins products here. John is also selling towels, purses, hats, gloves and mittens that are made by his wife.

The area's Amish also take advantage of what Trufant has to offer. Many come by buggy from nearby Coral, Stanton, Lakeview, Stanwood and Morley to sell homemade breads, pastas, jellies, jams and other tasty treats. Their buggies dot the landscape of the flea market grounds, making it easy to find them and their goods.

It's not uncommon to see—or hear—musicians performing and selling instruments or recordings. "Sometimes there will be three or four of them playing," says Mike. "They have a tip jar sitting out and they will be selling their tapes or instruments that they've made."

In addition to the Thursday activities in Trufant, the family operates Petersen's Auction Service, which handles about 20 estate auctions a year. In the spring, they kick off their season with a farm equipment auction on the flea market grounds.

The Trufant Auction & Flea Market is at 2303 N. "C" Street, two blocks from downtown Trufant off CR522 (Stanton Road) near the Kent/Montcalm county line. Restrooms and food are available. It's open from dawn until 4 p.m., with the live auction beginning at 10 a.m. No admission is charged to shop; vendor spots start at just \$10 per week for a 20x25-foot space. For more information, call 616-984-2160.

Hunting Treasures in Trufant

EVERYTHING FROM A TO Z—antiques to zippers—can be found at the Trufant Auction & Flea Market, touted as one of the largest flea markets in Michigan. No matter what you're looking for, chances are you'll find it during this treasure hunt in a town that boasts the title "Stump Fence Capital" of America.

Each Thursday, April through October, the population of this small Montcalm County village nearly triples as vendors and shoppers come from miles away in search of just about anything. With over 300 vendors spread out on 20 acres, a parking spot is sometimes the hardest thing to find, especially after Memorial Day.

Art Petersen came to the Trufant area from Denmark and established a farm just outside of town where he lived with his wife and only son, Maurice. On Feb. 17, 1934, Art held his first auction here. Nine years later, he opened the Trufant Livestock & Flea Market near the train yard—now the site of the volunteer fire department and Petersen Park, which bears his name. In November 1954, Art moved the ever-growing market to its current site west of town.

Involved in the family business early on, Maurice took it over entirely in 1968 following his father's death. Maurice and his wife, Mildred, raised four children here: Mike, Maureen, Mark and Melissa. This third generation remains active in the family business. Mike, 52, lives next door to the flea market grounds and has been an auctioneer since he was 17. Maureen, 51, also lives in Trufant and handles the daily operations. Mark, 46, works full-time as the

assistant to the head bus mechanic at Lakeview High School and assists with the auctions whenever possible. Melissa, 45, lives in Illinois. A fourth generation is now involved, as well. Mark's daughter, Jennifer, helps in the cashier's office.

Nine years ago, Maurice underwent quadruple bypass surgery just months before his wife passed away. While he has stepped back from the major responsibilities of running the business, the 76-year-old can still be found tooling around the grounds in a golf cart, collecting fees and checking on his vendors. In fact, Mike says that people get concerned when they don't see him on any given Thursday.

That's because, in Trufant, it's all about family and friends.

"It's quite a thing when the flea market comes to town," says Virginia Christensen, who has owned and operated a hardware store in town with her husband, Charles, for 33 years. Christensen Farm & Home Center is one of a dozen businesses operating in this small downtown. "The flea market is good for our town," Virginia says. "It has put Trufant on the map."

According to Virginia, the flea market

Paula Turcott of Rockford always has a variety of animals and waterfowl for sale.

