

Michael P. Bertoia joins Bertoia Auctions' staff in associate role

Armed with a business degree and a lifelong fondness for antiques, 22-year-old Michael Bertoia, son of Bertoia Auctions' co-founders, Jeanne and Bill Bertoia, has joined the family business.



VINELAND, N.J. – Family-owned Bertoia Auctions has added a new link to its legacy. Michael P. Bertoia, 22-year-old son of co-founders Jeanne Bertoia and the late William S. “Bill” Bertoia, has joined the internationally known auction house, where he hopes to build a fulfilling career based on interests he has had since early childhood. In his associate’s role, Michael will implement new technologies while also serving as house photographer in the catalog-production area. Michael said that as his duties expand, he looks forward to being able to travel extensively as a representative of Bertoia’s.

A graduate of the University of Vermont, where he earned a B.A. in Business Administration, Michael said he “grew up in a house full of antiques and learned at a young age to appreciate their beauty,” adding with a laugh, “I remember my mother, father and Uncle Rich (Bertoia) working out of the downstairs of our house. I always wanted to play with my toys in the basement, but my dad always had his toys down there.” Both of Michael’s parents are widely acknowledged for their contributions to the toy-collecting hobby. As dealers, collectors and ultimately as auctioneers, they helped raise the profile of antique toys to unprecedented new heights. Michael’s uncle, Rich Bertoia, is also an antiques collector and enthusiast, and is part of Bertoia’s management team.

Both Michael and his sister Lauren had the advantage of growing up in an environment that constantly exposed them to antiques and enabled them to meet many high-profile collectors. As often as possible during breaks from college, Michael would return home to assist at Bertoia sales, while Lauren, a pharmaceutical sales representative in New Jersey, would actually plan her vacations around auction dates so she, too, could lend a hand – it’s a practice that continues to this day.

“(Bertoia’s) first auctions were held in Philadelphia, and back then my grandparents would take my sister and me to see them,” Michael said. “I remember there were huge crowds of people, and everyone seemed to like toys as much as I did ... My father began collecting penny toys for me as a child, a collection that I still have today.”

“I feel like I have the best qualities of both my mother and father,” Michael said proudly. “I have developed a keen sense of time management and responsibility from my father, and share my mother’s creativity, passion

and enthusiasm. My parents always stressed integrity, honesty and fair dealing as being the most important traits a person could have in this business. This made a big impression on me.”

Michael, who is an avid snowboarder and surfer, knows the feeling of an adrenaline rush, and equates that feeling in some ways to the auction process. “It has an atmosphere similar to that of a roller coaster experience,” he said. “Anticipation and excitement is building while you are waiting in line. Once the ride begins, it is a cycle of intensity and exhilaration. Once the ride is over, you can’t wait to do it again.”

Along with his youthful enthusiasm and familiarity with antique toys, Michael brings many practical skills to Bertoia’s. “Being of my generation, I have a firm understanding of many of the technological advancements of today,” he said. “I have begun to introduce new electronic systems to streamline and increase productivity and efficiency. My involvement in this area really began when I was in high school, doing part-time work for the company. When we went digital with the photography and added a Web site, it seemed like rocket science to many of the adults, but at my age, these things come second nature. I soon began taking catalog and flier shots, which really helped me gain a sense of how auctions work, step by step.”

Michael said he is “very excited to move into the future with the family business” and looks forward to “bringing the best of toys to the best of collectors.” While he might have pursued many other choices in life, Michael stressed that it was his decision, solely, to join the family business. “My parents never tried to sway me toward one day joining the family business. It was something I, personally, knew I would enjoy. My father always advised me to pick something in life that I enjoyed doing, as then I would do it well. Working with toys and antiques was a very natural choice.”

Jeanne Bertoia expressed delight that Michael will now be a fixture at the auction house. She said, “He brings an enthusiasm that is felt throughout the company, which will make his learning curve much easier. His willingness to learn from those who have many years of experience and the knowledge he has gained from earning his business degree pair up nicely.”

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