



Photo courtesy of Johan Graham

Johan Graham proudly displays a trophy she won in the male-dominated world of auctioneering.

She's a champion chanter

By KATHY YOUNG
Special to the Daily Press

Johan Graham has lived in Apple Valley all her life. She is a roper, barrel racer, standup comic and actress, and she is making headway with her gavel in the all-male world of livestock and auto auctions.

In fact, Graham is a champion in both solo and team selling, with trophies and a belt buckle marking her successes.

She placed third in the World Champion Auto Auctioneering competition held recently in Dallas as ringman and came in second in team selling, where she was both auctioneer and ringman, or the salesman on the floor.

During real auctions, ringmen (even women are accorded that title) work a section of the gallery and estab-

lish contact among buyer, seller and auctioneer until bidding is finished.

Each sale takes place in about two minutes; that's how long the bidding stays hot and heavy.

"Sometimes there is so much going on during a sale, the auctioneer can't see everything," Graham said. "That's where good ringmen are very important."

Graham officially started her auction career in June 1997.

"I went to auction school in Billings, Mont.," she said. "It was a two-week course that basically worked on our speaking skills."

Students practiced saying tongue twisters to improve their chants. The auctioneer's chant is actually full of words, a running commentary among all the ring per-

sonnel, indicating who has the current high bid, who has bids pending, and who the seller is.

Graham was the second woman to enter the auction competition in Dallas and is the only woman to ever place.

She is, at 23, the youngest woman to enter the contest. She admits that the auction game is really learned by attending the school of hard knocks.

"I work the ring at the Pomona horse auctions," Graham said. "I communicate with the auctioneer using hand signals and my voice."

She also runs a weekly auto auction in Arizona. Three days a week she sells between 3,500 and 4,000 cars (returned lease and repossessed autos) a day to dealers.

Recently Graham helped

her dad, Earl Graham, at the Best of the West ranch horse competition and sale at the family's Standing Bar G Productions in Apple Valley. A yearling and weanling sale is planned for October.

Graham also works the weekly feeder beef auction at their facility in Chino, and there are plans to start a pig and goat auction as well.

Graham's ultimate goal is to make the transition from working for others and open her own livestock auction house.

"Sometimes I feel like I'm going nowhere fast," she said. "I worked a lot of years for free, just to get experience. Then I was the first woman involved in auto auctions on the West Coast."

She is making a name for herself in the auction business. It would be fair to say that Graham is sold on selling.