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THE PRINCE GEORGE CITIZEN

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Bea's Tree nets record donation at festival

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Shirli-Gene Sadowick was overcome with emotion at the Festival of Trees live auction.

Bea's Tree, a three-foot silver Christmas tree which 104-year-old Bea Dezell bought in the 1950s for her brownie/girl guide Christmas parties, was auctioned off for a record \$52,500 to Janet Holder, who won the friendly bidding war with Jim Rustad.

The record bid Friday night touched off roars of appreciation from the sold-out crowd of 300 at the Civic Centre and helped drive the live auction receipts of the 19-year-old event to an all-time high. More than \$310,000 was raised, all of which will be donated to the Spirit of the North Healthcare Foundation to pay for medical equipment to be used at UHNBC.

"I was just in tears, I get so emotional even now, thinking about it," said Shirli-Gene Sadowick, chair of the Festival of Trees committee. "This tree was in my mom's



Tom Truefit, Ann Lee and Daphne Truefit look at Bea's Tree, which brought in \$52,500 at the Spirit of the North Festival of Trees tree auction.

[Shirley Gratton's] garage sale and my mom gave it to me. She bought it from the Spinners and Weavers Guild at Studio 2880 because she knew the history about it and it

took us a few months to figure it out and we decided to do something about it because it has history behind it and we put in a nice vase and named it Bea's Tree. It just

evolved from there."

Bea Dezell bought the aluminum tree from Perry's Pharmacy in Prince George in 1953. Since it became part of the live auction

in 2004, the tiny tree has raised more than \$125,000. The winning bidder gets to keep it only through the holiday season and then has to return it for next year's live auction.

"It's showing that people are giving, and they're not getting anything for it," said Sadowick.

A half-hour before Bea's Tree was sold, Brent Marshall shelled out \$40,000 for the Finning Canada tree, Dozing Off, which featured a horizontal tree set amid the outline of a dazzling Christmas light tractor. Two other trees – A Very Good Year (sponsored by Marcotte Kerrigan Real Estate Lawyers) and Dream by the Fire (Tropical Pool and Spa) each sold for \$10,000.

Marshall's bid was a record-setter as well, until the gavel fell on the Bea's Tree bidding.

Last year's live auction raised about \$180,000 and the previous all-time high for the evening was in the \$200,000 range, according to Spirit of the North chair Darren Masse.

"It was an amazing evening," said Masse.

— See **FESTIVAL**, page 4

Political activist Bob Martin remembered

Ted CLARKE Citizen staff

The love Bob Martin had for his wife Anne was immediate and everlasting.

They married each other three weeks after they first met and, 52 years later, nine days after Anne's passing, Bob joined her again.

He died on Tuesday at age 79 after an extended illness.

At his funeral Saturday, Bob was remembered for his love for his family, his fierce independence, his strong political ideals, his homemade machines, his honey bees, and his beloved tractor Bertha.

Known for his gruff exterior and booming voice, Bob Martin's heart of gold never failed to outstrip his ability to intimidate.

"People fought with him and argued with him, but they loved him," said Lois Boone, who had Bob as her sidewalk advisor in her successful run to the provincial legislature in the late 1980s. "He was never short of ideas or opinions and he made sure everyone knew about them. There wasn't a subject he wouldn't tackle.

"I'm sure by now, St. Peter is calling his boss to say he's got someone called Bob who wants to speak to him as he's got some ideas on how he can clean up the mess on Planet Earth."

Former cabinet minister Paul Ramsay



Bob Martin measures the gap between his floor and wall in his house on Pulpmill Road in February, 2008.

vowed he would never follow his alderman father's lead and become a politician himself, but Bob convinced him to move beyond being president of the College of New Caledonia Faculty Association and run as an MLA.

"Bob and Anne demonstrated in Prince George that there's an opportunity to do things in politics that would help the community I was from, once you got past the usual ranting and raving of B.C. politics,

and he was right," said Ramsay.

"Bob set me straight on how to do politics. By his own example he taught me the importance of talking not only to your supporters and listening to what they're saying but talking to everybody, particularly your enemies, the people who don't support you and never will. That gave you a much better view of what's going on in the community."

— See **MARTIN**, page 5

Liquor licences lobby council

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Those looking for answers about the delay in setting up a liquor store operation in a downtown may get them Monday night.

Rebecca Hardin, a representative from hotel owners S&B Management, will be on hand for the public hearing regarding the issue at the Dec. 3 city council meeting.

The owners of the Coast Inn of the North have submitting a rezoning application to make permanent a temporary allowance for a retail liquor store on site. The temporary use permit granted to the proponents in 2010 to turn the former Sergeant O'Flaherty's pub into a store expires in November 2013, but so far no retail operation has been put into place.

The city's planning department has recommended council approve the application as it fits with the Official Community Plan's decree to "revitalize downtown as the commercial, cultural and civic heart of the community."

During the 2010 process, the Downtown Business Improvement Association spoke out against the application, but current president Rod Holmes said the DBIA has no plans to oppose the zoning amendment before council.

— See **CROFT**, page 4

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Today's Weather

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Low -5°

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