



Photo by Paul Loofburrow, VP Marketing, OPB



Once I had Mark Walberg's signature (above), the appraisers were happy to sign



Eagle Point resident has shoes that may someday be valuable antique.

Tale of Two Shoes at Antiques Roadshow

By Andrea Jansen
for the Independent

Three episodes of the Antiques Roadshow, taped in Eugene last June, began airing on PBS stations January 23rd, and I'm one of the blue-shirt volunteers running around in the background. Assuming my email invitation to volunteer was SPAM, OPB was serious: I'd be fed, given a blue polo shirt to keep and permitted two items for appraisal. They advised wearing comfortable shoes so I hit the local Goodwill, where a brand new pair of white Keds, a size-and-a-half too large, beckoned. Once home this artist decorated their white canvas with Roadshow icons, leaving space for some autographs, possibly.

At Friday evening's orientation we learned that of 22,000 online entries, only 3,000 were selected to attend, 2 items each. Three episodes would result from Saturday's taping. Entry times were assigned to prevent bottlenecks, and 118 blue-shirts would help sort and escort visitors to their appraiser, and maybe on to fame and glory.

Executive producer Marcia Bemko ultimately decides which items are aired. Appraisers make their pitch to her just as guests pitch to them. There are several qualifiers, including the possibility that a similar item, no matter how spectacular, has already been shown. Some people are bound to be disappointed but whatever happens, keep smiling. No problem.

TALE OF SHOES

The sorting process followed. Four areas needed help: front-of-house greet guests and VIP's; reception escorts them to their first, general, appraiser; triage guides guests through the internal maze of lines to their proper category and the production set manages the lines and assist black-polo'd crew. Production needed sixty-five. The room emptied quickly; still short one person, this short person stood up. Good choice, the fellow whispered as I walked through the doors to the Emerald City.

The production set was divided like a pie, with four inner areas set aside for rotational filming. Long tables for the appraisers lined the perimeter, with colorful banners as backdrops. Volunteers were assigned to categories; I was the lucky recipient of Furniture. Before being released for the evening we received a few more instructions, including the prohibition of photography on the set, and most importantly, not to assist (forewarned) guests with transporting their objects. Good Samaritans were warned against being responsible for family heirlooms. Afterwards, I asked about obtaining appraiser's autographs and was advised to try towards the end of the day's taping.

Saturday morning began with an outstanding buffet followed by a rousing Roadshow kick off, after which we scurried to our places. Furniture had

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its own mini-set with several pre-arranged, oversized pieces. Reading their descriptions, I surreptitiously peeked around the set. Oh-so-familiar-looking appraisers joked with one another. They often travel to the same shows.

Suddenly I spotted host Mark L. Walberg walking in my direction. Smiling at my hanging jaw, he waited for my impressive, "Would you please sign my shoes later?"

Glancing down, he declared, "Those are great! Why not now? I've got a pen!" I gushed while he chose a spot, received a hug, and floated back to my station. How could anyone else refuse?

The Lane Events Center was nonstop buzzing with folks laughing and telling stories. Appraisals averaged 500 per hour. Thinking

ahead some brought portable chairs. In the furniture line, people wheeled in armoires and sideboards, eyes glistening as they entered the inner sanctum for the first time. Depending on the size of their items, two or three were on deck at any given time so to pass the time I told jokes, pointed out items of interest and showed off my shoes.

Appraisers drooled over the most unlikely looking objects. I couldn't help eavesdropping now and then, but after all that waiting in line, guests deserved some private time, like a confessional. One of the day's treasures tied for the second most valuable item discovered during the show's 15 year history, but you'll

have to watch to see which one (previously aired programs can be viewed on the PBS website).

The furniture line was finished early, so I trolled for autographs. An eccentric-looking appraiser at first refused to sign my feet, then boomed it was the best thing he'd seen all day, while his neighbor joked, "We'll probably be appraising those in 20 years!" Good, because as for my own treasures? Let just say I can't retire yet, but that's alright. It was one volunteer gig I'll never forget!

The Eugene shows air through Feb. 6, reruns can be watched at pbs.org. And finally, I highly recommend volunteer work. You never know what surprise is in store.