Warm and pleasant temperatures greeted those showing up for the third annual edition of “Scottsdale Come to Florida” when the folks at Barrett-Jackson set up shop at the South Florida Expo Center in West Palm Beach. However, before the weekend was over the weather would change both in the sky and in the mood of some of the people who attended. In just its third year, this sale has become a big one, and if plans stay on track, it will grow only larger. After-all, the catch phrase at this sale was “World’s Fastest Growing Collector Car Auction”.

Prior to the start of last year’s sale, we had a private conversation with Jackson, at which time he told us it was his goal that within five years the West Palm Beach sale would grow to the size and importance that his Scottsdale event has become. More than just a collector car auction, these have become extravagant life-style events of the highest caliber, and this area of Florida is ripe for those who have earned plenty of money and need different ways to spend it.

Kicking off the weekend was a lavish gala reception featuring food stations from several of the area’s top restaurants, with all proceeds benefitting the Daryl Gwyn Foundation. A champion drag racer who was tragically injured in an exhibition race several years ago, Daryl now dedicates his efforts promoting awareness of spinal and other debilitating injuries. Hot music, great food and open bars lightened the mood for everyone in attendance.

On Friday morning, April 1st, there was no “fooling” around by the crew consignors or bidders as it was time to get down to business. Throughout the day every car that came across the auction block was given its time and when the hammer came down the word “sold” followed the bidding. As with his sale in Scottsdale this past January, Craig Jackson, President and CEO of Barrett-Jackson, had decreed that this sale would also be presented as a full-blown “no-reserve” sale, meaning that each and every car that was offered would be sold for the high bid.

For this Florida sale a wide selection of vehicles were offered, with plenty of muscle, performance and street and hot rods to choose from. Also in the mix were several celebrity cars and from the General Motors collection came a number of prototype and specially prepared cars used in promotional campaigns and pace-car duties.

The star of this event was the 1953 Buick Roadmaster sedan that had been purchased new by Howard Hughes, and fitted with an elaborate air-conditioning/filtration system. Showing just 5,400 miles from new, it has been owned by the Jackson family since it was purchased directly from the estate of the multi-billionaire. Sensing the time was right to sell a car so closely related to the character portrayed by actor Leonardo Di Caprio in the Oscar winning film the Aviator, this car had been given pre-sale estimates in the $400-500,000 range. However, when the bidding started at $100,000 and quickly shot up into the $800,000 range, no one knew where it would end. After just a couple more minutes the bidding peaked out at $1,500,000 when the hammer was brought down and called sold. Attaching the eight-percent buyer’s premium to this bid brought the total sale to $1,620,000, a record for any previous Barrett-Jackson Florida event.

Looking at the raw numbers, one can see just how much this sale has grown over the past three years. A total of 406 lots were offered over the three sessions, all at no reserve. Total bid sales were recorded at $20,511,250 plus the commission, which brought the sale total to $22,152,150. This was close to double the $11.7 million seen last year and close to four times the dollar figures seen at the first event in March 2003.

In the wake of this sale, there has been some talk from some consignors expressing dissatisfaction with the absolute “no reserve” rule. We have also heard that the possibility this sale may grow to four full days in 2006.

In the end, despite the critics, the people keep coming, the bids keep getting called and new records continue to be set.
AMC

Red w/white stripes, black vinyl bucket seats, Magnum steel wheels, 390-360hp, 4-speed, side pipes, AM-FM, 30,128 miles. (seller advertising hp at 412). Older cosmetic restoration but needed plenty of detailing. Above the hood and on top of the dash this car was decent but needed lots of touch-up, under the hood was really in need of help. Car was straight but no real sparkle here. Overall cond. 3, bid to $14,900, SOLD! For the price paid, the seller should not be saddened, the AMC muscle is strong and appreciated by fewer people than a Ford, GM or Mopar, which allows more bang-for-the-buck.

Austin-Healey
1959 Austin-Healey 100/6 roadster. VIN: BN4L068716.

Light blue metallic and white, dark blue leather seats, black top, silver painted wire wheels, tonneau cover, 78,035 miles. Professional restoration done back around 1996, very straight body, natural patina seen on the paint and the trim, under the hood showed a bit of use and minor seepage of lubricants, ran out well without excess smoke or roughness at idle. Overall cond. 3, bid to $27,500, SOLD! Lagging behind the 3000’s, these cars are starting to move upwards in value, this car needed $10-12K in detailing and cosmetic help, and then might be pushing the $45-50K even if not at a BJ sale.

1965 Austin-Healey 3000-Mark II/BJ8 convertible. VIN: HBJ8LZ9873.

Dark green, black leather seats, black top, chrome wire wheels, factory radio. 35,900 miles. This was a nicely done restoration completed in the late 1990’s, minor orange peel in the paint and wheels were showing some light surface tarnish, no rust, just not shiny. Under hood very clean, hidden recesses did show long-time dirt accumulation, but still a very clean car. Overall cond. 2, bid to $39,000, SOLD! This is the hottest British sports car from the 1960’s, if you discount Aston-Martin’s and E-types, affordable to a point up to a few years ago, the common-man sports car has moved to the elite status, leaving the po’ folk looking at MG-TD and Bugeye Sprites.

Bentley
1959 Bentley S1 Continental Hooper Saloon.

VIN: BC16GN. Medium blue metallic, tan leather seats, mahogany wood trim, radio, heater, RHD, 69,332 miles. An economy re-do at least 10 years ago revealed A-pillar stress repairs, left door adjustments and patching in the rear fenders. Some of the problems are starting to reappear and the chrome looked to be from the factory with vintage acne and scuffing popping up. Overall cond. 3, bid to $22,000, SOLD! This would have been a bargain if the car had LHD or if its British heritage was better revealed, still a custom-bodied Bentley for way under $40K could be considered quite a bargain for the buyer.

Buick

Red, tan leather seats, tan top, 1970’s era Buick 455 cid V8/auto, 23,131 miles. Completely gone through with decent body work, chrome was good but not top-notch, interior replicated factory patterns with modern materials, top was better than most but still showed minor ill-fits around base. Engine and drive-train installation professional leaving exterior appearance as stock. Overall cond. 3, bid to $44,000, SOLD! Even with stock in-line eight and Dynaflow this price would have been in line for the condition, "Resto-Rod’s" are becoming ever-more popular and even big-classics are being subjected to these conversions, future values unclear vs. pure-stock.

1953 Buick Roadmaster 4-dr sedan. VIN: V1317897.

White over light blue, deark blue cloth seats, factory a/c w/filtration system, 24-volt electrics, continental kit, 5,339 miles. Originally owned by Howard Hughes this car was extremely well documented and preserved by the Jackson family since the late 1970’s, kept in perfect running condition by Hughes Corp until the passing of Howard, unique vehicle that was in factory delivered status. Overall cond. 2+, bid to $1,500,000, SOLD! Okay, this doesn’t mean all 1953 Buicks are now in the 7-figure range, and it doesn’t mean that other cars associated with Hughes will equal this money. It does mean Jackson has excellent market sense, selling this car at the height of interest in the "Aviator" and finding just the right pair of bidders who both "had" to have this car. Gee, I wonder just how much resale personal attention potential bidders got on this one? Now, there is a little ’54 Chrysler sitting in Las Vegas, what will happen to it?


Light green with white interior, two-tone embossed green vinyl bench seats, white top, V8, Dynaflow, chrome wire wheels, factory radio, heater and clock, 53,071 miles. A near perfect restoration that was sporting all the right stuff in all the right places. Had not undergone any AACA type judging but from our inspection this would be a top-dollar winner. Straight body, professional chrome and under the hood was ready to eat from. Overall cond. 1, bid to $175,000, SOLD! This not only set a new high record, but a standard other cars will be measured by for a long time. Not even an original ’53 Eldorado has approached these numbers on the auction block. Savvy, folly, or the buyer has so much money it just doesn’t matter?

1957 Buick Special 2-dr hardtop. VIN: 4D7009802.

Black, green vinyl with cloth bench seats, heater-defroster, radio delete, V8/3-speed manual, chrome wire wheels, 1,997 miles. Very well preserved car with nothing changed but the fancy wheels, which contradicted the entire theme of austerity, but seller did have the factory wheels and base hub-caps included in the deal. Straight body with some minor chrome pitting, interior very fresh, weather-stripping was supple and no dry rot, car appeared to have been stored inside. Overall cond. 2, bid to $30,000, SOLD! Before the sale the sellers had hoped for something closer to $50K, but this was closer to real value, it was the bottom-line car without options or toys. A neat time capsule but value is limited, had this been a Roadmaster with lots of toys, then
$50K+ might have been seen.

**Cadillac**

1953 Cadillac Eldorado convertible. VIN: 5362-69173. Red, red-white "Jenkins" leather seats, white top, power windows, top, seats, radio, heater, chrome wire wheels, parade boot, 53,720 miles. A fairly fresh restoration sporting new rubber all around as well as new soft trim inside and in the trunk. Left door did have a slight need for alignment, some of the windshield installation looked amateurish, under the hood also showed signs of use since a re-do from a few years ago. Overall cond. 2, bid to $100,000, SOLD! '53 Eldos broke the 6-figure mark back in the mid-1990s when the market was in a slump, and have continued to do well even though authenticity is sometimes over looked as to color, materials, etc. Top values on this model can go another $30-40K which the seller was probably hoping for, maybe the new owner can get that out of it.

1957 Cadillac Fleetwood 60-Special 4-dr hardtop. VIN: 5760-099813. Light blue, dark blue leather w/matching brocade cloth inserts, full-power, deluxe radio, 40,114 miles. A true unmolested survivor. Paint showed some signs of use with minor stone chips and wear around hood and door handles, soft trim showed some drying and side bolsters were starting to split, headliner was just excellent. Undersides typical driver appearance, but no signs of oil, leakage, accidents or cosmetic touch-up. The chrome could have used a little help. Overall cond. 3, bid to $13,000, SOLD! This bid was well within the market guide values, not a convertible, missing air-conditioning and a rather plain (but I like it) color, this car did exactly what it should have, seller should be happy, buyer quite satisfied, at least the windows went down for Florida flow-through ventilation.

**Chevrolet**

1940 Chevrolet Special Deluxe 2-dr "Coach" sedan. VIN: 14KA0543230. Medium green, green striped cloth seats, base radio, heater and clock, deluxe hood ornament, tools and storage pouch, 2,856 miles. A really super preserved time capsule here, tools were still in wrappers, spare tire never used. Did have some signs of back-road use with stone chips in front sheet metal and on rear fenders, soft trim supple but moths had found some of the covering rather tasty. Still, a great pattern car for authenticity or AACA type preservation judging. Overall cond. 3, bid to $16,000, SOLD! Sellers were not that happy with the result, car might have had $20-24K on a perfect day, but they were looking for $30-40K and someone had told them they might even hit $70K. final bid a little light in our opinion but closer to reality than pre-sale hopes.

1955 Chevrolet Corvette roadster. VIN: E5SS001296. White, red vinyl bucket seats, tan top, 265ci/210hp/pg, spinner wheelcovers, 98,123 miles. Older restoration from mid-1990's, typical body waves, right door marring was good at best, under the hood clean and complete, except for electrical. Signs of body work detected in front clip area, top fresh with minor spider webbing on back-light. Overall cond. 2, bid to $82,000, SOLD! One might think that with this being the first year of the V8, and a low point in 'vette production collectors would give this year a premium, but they still seem to like the '53 more (for its obvious rarity and significance) and '54s just as much.

1956 Chevrolet Corvette convertible. VIN: E56S004063. Red w/white cove, red vinyl buckets, white soft top, 265-225hp, 4x-bbl., 3sp. radio, heater, spinner wheelcovers, 7,194 miles. Looks to have had a full-restoration back in the late 1980's that is starting to break down. Body checking and chrome trim pitting starting, under the hood has had some recent work, touch-ups also found in several areas. Overall cond. 3+, bid to $50,000, SOLD! At first glance this might have looked like a bargain and with the dual-quads plus the other right parts, the seller probably came up a little short on his investment. Car had appeal but needed some work which had to be figured into the equation. It really needed an honest collector to go home with.

1957 Chevrolet Belair convertible. VIN: VC57FL199001. Light yellow, yellow with silver insert vinyl bench seats, white top, 283-220hp/automatic, radio, heater, power steering and brakes, 41,960 miles. Very well documented car, from S. Calif., with all previous owner papers. Restored about 10 years back in pleasant colors. Straight body and trim, top showing a little aging, under the hood clean but not spotless. Overall cond. 3, bid to $76,000, SOLD! Use to be that this was the economical 1950's convertible icon, but prices have long since escalated beyond that. This price was very good for the car presented, not a perfect car but all the docs helped.

1958 Chevrolet Impala convertible. VIN: F58B124196. Fire Engine Red, red-white-black vinyl bucket seats, white top, 283-4V/220hp/pg, radio, heater, rocker moldings, 91,404 miles. Restored in the early 1980's, some of the chrome trim was a bit wavy from the replating process, interior was holding up but minor stains on the top were found. Color was anything but what GM offered that year, more of a restoration to please the owner rather than the authenticity judges. Overall cond. 2, bid to $60,000, SOLD! For years the '58s were over looked due to their one-year only styling and scarcity of parts, however, smart collectors started gathering these cars in the early '90s during the slump and have done well with them. While it may never hit the '57's mark on a regular basis, often a tri-power 348 pulls an upset.

1960 Chevrolet Impala convertible. VIN: 01867T220143. Red, white w/black houndstooth insert vinyl bench seats, white top, 348cid, 3x2-bbl/280hp/pg, radio, heater, 49,760 miles. Restored several years ago using all the right parts, top was showing a little wear and springs had the car up a little higher than stock. Seating area clean but top-bow storage area revealed restoration short-cuts. Paint starting to show some fading, no cracks or crazing, just a little hazy. Overall cond. 2, bid to $31,000, SOLD! We think the seller was probably in the line of bidders for this car as the price was on the low side for a performance equipped car of this caliber. No numbers to match for original drive-train, but all parts were vintage.