

On the town



File photos

Stuart, left, and Scott Gentling

Camp Fire auction is almost a sellout

People are talking about An Artist's Christmas, the benefit for Camp Fire headed by Robert and Anne Thaxton Bass.

Every piece of art was auctioned off, except one that the auctioneer somehow overlooked.

Three entries brought top money — more than \$2,000 each. They were *Buon Natale*, a wood construction made in Florence, Italy, of elements from paintings by Fort Worth artist James Blake; a Christmas silk screen by Andy Warhol; and a Frank Duke electric Christmas tree that rotated, giggled and almost danced. The tree lights lit up, and a toy train at the base of the tree chugged round and round.

Frank McCulley, an art teacher in Fort Worth Public Schools, designed the tree. Henry Duke Weaver did the animation. Another attention getter, as well as money-raiser, was the Christmas tree decorated by Fort Worth artists Scott and Stuart Gentling with Christmas cards designed for Ronald and Nancy Reagan last Christmas.

The story, I am told, is that the Gentlings completed the commission for 2,500 Christmas cards for the president and his wife to send from the White House. Nancy Reagan decided that the blues were not blue enough, and the greens were not green enough and returned the cards for a touch-up job. The Fort Worth artists suggested that the Reagans find someone else to do their Christmas cards.

Dr. and Mrs. Raymond Leblanc were high bidders for the Christmas card tree. Maybe the rejected cards will become the same kind of collector's item that Peter Hurd's rejected portrait of Lyndon Johnson became.

The late Peter Hurd told me once that the portrait Johnson called the ugliest thing he had ever seen had brought Hurd far more recognition than any of the dozens of portraits he had painted for delighted patrons, including the late J. Lee Johnson Jr., Sid W. Richardson and Anne Burnett Tandy of Fort Worth.

Other bidders in the crowd were Bill and Mitzi Davis, Chancellor William Tucker of Texas Christian University and his wife, Jean Tucker; Don and Sylvia Otto, Lindsay and

Nicole Holland and Robert and Rachel Gooch.

In addition to the regular party and auction, there was a youth exhibit of some 300 pieces of art made by the boys and girls of Camp Fire on view at the Texas American Bank/Fort Worth. The art to be auctioned was exhibited at the Continental National Bank.

The young artists were given prizes and had their own party. Considering the success of An Artist's Christmas, Camp Fire is expected to have a similar benefit next year.

—CISSY STEWART



Fort Worth artist Jim Blake