

Workin' and Fishin'

Anthony Mihalski works hard as a leading auctioneer and sale manager in the beef industry, but he also has a few fish stories.

BY MARTHA HOLLIDAGARRETT

Anthony Mihalski is widely recognized as a leading auctioneer in the purebred cattle industry, but he's also become known as quite a fisherman along the Texas Gulf Coast.

Mihalski's career as an auctioneer started at about the farthest point from the auction block at a sale as possible. He worked his way from feeding cattle and loading and unloading feed in the back to selling seedstock cattle, predominantly Beefmasters, across the country.

But when it's not sale season, you can find Mihalski and wife, Harriet in Port Mansfield fishing. Mihalski's fishing talent is quite documented, also. He has made two catches, one in 2006 and one 2010 that have netted far more than fish for supper.

Spending their summers on the Texas Gulf Coast has been a family activity for many years. They annually participate in the Coastal Conservation Association's (CCA) State of Texas Angler Rodeo (STAR) or summer long fishing tournament.

Mihalski made a catch June 24, 2010 that put him in the record books, again. He caught a tagged redfish, which will net him a new truck and boat, come fall. This was Mihalski's second big win, as in 2006, he won a boat with his catch of a heavy weighing trout in one of the STAR divisions.



It's a long shot to win once in the contest, but to win twice, well Mihalski will tell you that is more than just good fishing.

"I caught both winning fish in the same area of the bay and at approximately the same time of day, 1:30 p.m.," he explains adding that he had taken his daughter fishing that morning, and then told his wife, Harriet, "The wind is right, let's go catch another big one."

The trip out in the bay was a big one! "We got out there and Harriet caught a redfish that had a tag, but it was broken so you couldn't read the number, which is a requirement in the STAR tournament. So we were discussing the bad luck of that happening and I cast back out and caught this fish on the next throw," he describes.

The CCA releases 60 tagged redfish from the north tip to the south tip of the Texas coast annually, and the first five anglers that bring in a tagged redfish are awarded a truck and boat, while the next five lucky anglers receive a boat.

The Mihalskis' realized they had a potential truck and boat in their future.

So they quickly took the fish to one of the sanctioned check points and checked the website to see how many of the tagged redfish had been caught. Only three had been caught at that point.

Mihalski, as required by the rules of the contest, took and passed a polygraph test about the catch. According to Mihalski, "he has been proven to be an honest fisherman."

He will receive his Ford F150, 4 Door, Texas Edition Truck and his Haynie Bay Fishing Boat at the CCA Texas Awards Banquet, October 7th.

"We couldn't believe it. The odds of catching one of the tagged fish in comparison to how many people fish the Texas Coast is rare and to win again is even rarer," but winning seems to happen to Mihalski, who once won \$35,000 on a \$16 bet playing a card game in Vegas as he was dealt a Royal Flush.

Since Mihalski won in 2006, he was required to stay out of the competition for three years, so this was his first year back in the tournament, another interesting point in this story. He is now required to sit out for six years following

Mihalski's career path was set in motion while he was in high school. The rest can be documented in three decades plus of sale reports, which list him as sale manager and/or auctioneer.



In 1968, Anthony Mihalski began working in the back at purebred sales and since 1977, this has been his view, as an auctioneer and sale manager.

this win, but he's looking forward to fishing with his family and friends who participate in STAR.

The CCA Texas is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of Texas' marine resources. Annually it holds the STAR, which awards over \$1 million in prizes for various age divisions and different species of fish. Also included in the prize monies are large scholarships to junior division fishing enthusiasts. The fishing rodeo is sponsored by several companies, including Ford, Academy and Haynie.

Like their work, the Mihalskis' take their fishing seriously. According to Mihalski, "It's a hard way to relax." It's also been a way to spend quality time as a family as Harriet recalls, "After the excitement of getting our first boat when

our kids were little, it wasn't long before the kids got excited when they didn't have to go fishing."

They built a home in Port Mansfield in 2005 that they share with family, friends, and customers and will tell you, "it's a special way to experience so many of God's creations and certainly we feel so very blessed."

The other 10 months of the year finds the Mihalski duo hard at work, auctioneering and managing sales and spending time with their family from their San Antonio home.

They are both San Antonio, Texas natives and their dads even worked for the same company, Lone Star Brewery. They met at local dances, while attending different high schools.

Mihalski's career path was set in



Matt Seymour with Capital Farm Credit, Anthony & Harriet, & Charlie McMillan with the Wounded Service Member project.

motion while he was in high school.

"Like most high school boys, I needed some work. Bert and Ruben Reyes were conducting the Byron Herlong Beefmaster Dispersal in San Antonio in 1968. I went there and was hired to work in the back," he recalls.

Mihalski's hard work ethic was not lost on the Reyes brothers and they began asking him to work sales regularly. Then in 1972, they asked him to hold out the fall semester at Tarleton, as they had a very busy fall season. Mihalski



Anthony Sr. & Anthony Jr. at the Violeta Ranch Sale, Hebronville, Texas. Anthony Sr. auctioneered his first sale there in 1977, Anthony Jr. auctioneered his first sale at Violeta in 2004.



Anthony Jr, Marci, with Isabel, Harriet With Ainsley Harriet, Anthony Sr. with Anthony III (Trip), Candace with Shiner Christian, and Christian Hildebrand.



The Mihalski's grandson, Trip, also likes to auctioneer, like his dad and grandfather.



Port Mansfield Sunrise

loved the purebred auction business and didn't return to Tarleton. The rest can be documented in three decades plus of sale reports, which list him as sale manager and/or auctioneer.

"I remember packing my bags for what was supposed to be a four day trip and I returned home about a month later," recalls Mihalski,

Then in 1976 he graduated from Superior School of Auctioneering in Decatur, Illinois.

"At that time, Bert and Ruben were involved in several breeds and going across the country. They began to each specialize in a breed(s) and they put me to working primarily Beefmaster sales. I had moved from being the high school boy in the back to managing and auctioneering some of the top sales in the industry with them," he says adding that it was a great opportunity afforded him by the Reyes brothers and he was able to learn all aspects of the business.

Mihalski's first sale on his own was at the Violeta Ranch in Hebbronville, Texas in 1977 and it's a sale he has done every year, since. Shortly afterwards, he and Harriet began their own company and Harriet has been along side him the entire way. She runs the office and handles many of the management details. The 2004 Violeta sale marked another first for the Mihalski family, as their son, Anthony, Jr., auctioneered there as his first sale, also.

"Luckily I was traveling when Harriet and I met, so she understood that aspect of the business. Teamwork has been key to our success as we enjoy the same things, whether its work or play," he describes.

Today Mihalski manages and auctioneers Beefmaster sales across 14 states and the San Antonio Livestock

Show and Rodeo All Breed Bull and Heifer Sale. He can be found screening cattle and tending to many of the details, along with his long time friend and employee Ruben Guerra.

"I love working with Beefmaster cattle and people and because the sale season is so defined, I have never really had many dates open to consider other breed events, but that's not to say I wouldn't," he explains adding that he has done real estate, deer and horse sales in his career, too.

Beefmaster breeders have shown their appreciation to Mihalski over the years also. He has been recognized with the Junior Beefmaster Breeders Association (JBBA) Helping Hand honor, the Beefmaster Breeders United Member of the Year, the Live Oak Beefmaster Breeders Association Legend award and recently the Lone Star Beefmaster Breeders Association presented the couple with their Howard E. Hunt Memorial Award. Plus, annually a scholarship is given to a JBBA member in his name—through a fund established by predominantly Beefmaster breeders and others in the purebred marketing industry to honor him on his 50th birthday. The scholarship recognizes a young JBBA member who exemplifies Mihalski's character, hard work ethic and love of the breed.

The Mihalski's are proud parents of Anthony Jr., and Candace. Both are now married and with kids of their own, but they grew up attending Beefmaster sales and events and can still be found helping from time to time. Anthony, Jr. does assist with some auctions.

He and his wife, Marci are parents to three and a half-year-old, Anthony III, "Trip", and eight-month-old Isabel. They live in San Antonio. Trip is known to grab

the microphone on a pretty regular basis and begin emulating his dad and granddad.

Candace and her husband, Christian Hildebrand, are parents to twins, Shiner Christian and Ainsley Harriett, born in January 2010. They reside in Pleasanton, half way between San Antonio and Pearsall, where Christian is involved in his family's business, The Shiner Ranch.

In addition to auctioneering for a living, Mihalski auctioneers a lot for others. He and Anthony, Jr. are involved in a number of charity auctions for churches and other local organizations. He also has been involved with auctions at the South Texas Children's Home (STITCH) in Beeville. The home has a herd of registered Beefmaster cattle and the Mihalski's conducted two sales at no cost to the home, as well as promoting their cattle and efforts at other sales.

In recent years, he has become active with the Wounded Service Member program. This group raises money to help support service men and women who have been wounded in service to our country.

"One thing the program does is bring wounded service folks, who are in San Antonio's Brook Army Medical Center, to the San Antonio Livestock Show and treat them and their families to dinner, a rodeo performance and the show. I also work with my son-in-law's family, as they host another group of servicemen for a deer hunt on their family ranch. I raise money to provide some gifts to them and help them in their recovery process," he explains.

Mihalski also finds time to raise awareness and offer support about cancer. He was diagnosed with colon cancer in 2004 and just recently passed the five-year mark of being cancer free.

"I recommend everyone have regular checkups and routine screening. Over the past five years, the colonoscopies have been the easiest things I've been through," he stresses.

What started out as a day job pushing cattle has resulted in a lifetime of commitment to the beef industry by Mihalski and a couple of very good fishing stories to tell, too!