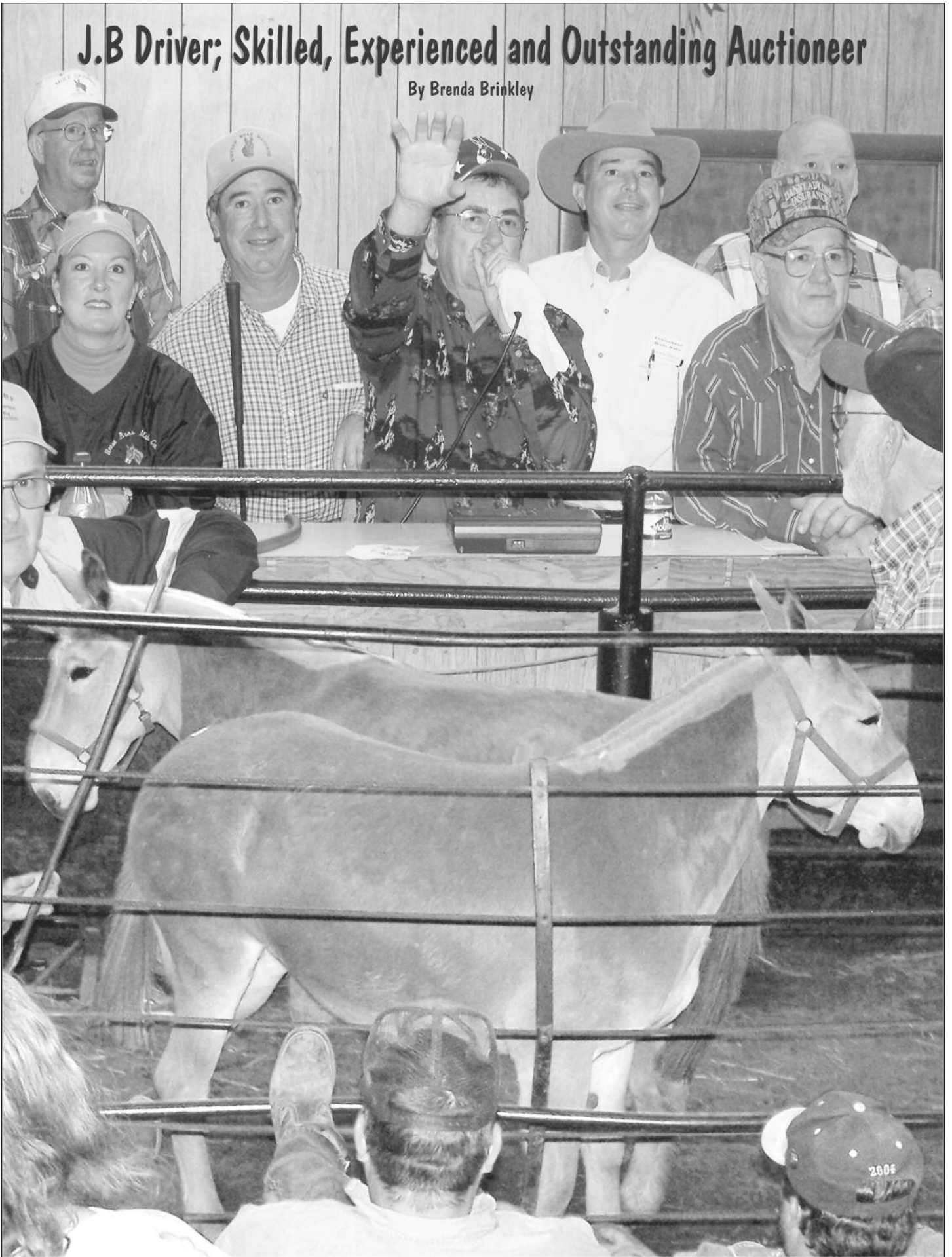


J.B Driver; Skilled, Experienced and Outstanding Auctioneer

By Brenda Brinkley



J. B. Driver is the best mule auctioneer I know.” That is high praise from the mouth of Ben Tennison, Editor in Chief of Western Mule Magazine. Mr. Tennison said he wanted to add his two cents to this article “Because I consider J.B. Driver a legend. I’m glad to make that statement while he’s still alive to read it. Not that J. B.’s failing or anything. J.B. Driver would never tell you he’s a legend; he’s just too modest. But I don’t have a problem speaking up when I see something or someone who is good for the mule industry, and J.B. Driver is great for the mule industry.”

J.B. Driver was born and raised in Lafayette, Tennessee. He moved to Indiana around 1948. He said, “My dad was working for General Motors and moved up here. Being raised on a farm, us kids thought it was the worst thing in the world. He moved us right into town.” But apparently that old saying is true: You can take the boy out of the country but you can’t take the country out of the boy. His love for the country way of life has steered the direction of his life to date.

J.B. and wife, Alice, have been married for fifty-two years and have lived in their present location in Indianapolis, Indiana, for twenty years. Before that he owned Driver’s Riding Stables “across the interstate for about thirty-five years.” When he had the stables he used to keep around one hundred head of horses. J.B. said, “I was the only one in Indianapolis who had horse and mule drawn hay rides.”

J.B.’s interest in auctioneering began when he was very young. He said, “Ever since I was a little boy the auctioneer’s chant sort of made chills run up and down my spine.” He started in the auction business in 1962 and went into the business full-time in 1965. He said, “In 1965 I went to Repperts School of Auctioneering in Decatur, Indiana. I knew I didn’t know anything so I went to auctioneering school.”

He graduated the then three-week course in December 1965. Now it is only a two-week course.

Becoming a good auctioneer takes a lot of work. J.B. said, “You have to know the product you’re selling and a little something about it. You gotta work at it.”

Apparently J. B. has mastered the art of “knowing the product” he is selling.

Rufus Reese, of Reese Brother’s Mule Company, said, “He knows within two dollars what a mule is going to bring.”

J.B. started calling auctions for Rufus and Dickie Reese in 1982. He said, “I’ve known them (Rufus and Dickie) all their lives. I helped sell mules for their dad.”

Rufus confirmed, saying, “I’ve known J.B. all my life. He sold mules for my dad since the time he was old enough to auction. He was raised in Macon county about twenty miles from where we live now.”

J.B. will call four auctions this year for Reese Brothers. The biggest was the January sale in Dixon, Tennessee, where eight hundred head of mules were sold. Two sales are held at Dixon, one at Shelbyville, Tennessee, and one at Knoxville, Tennessee.

Rufus said they usually use two auctioneers for their sales: J.B. Driver and Jeff Bynum.

When contacted about Mr. Driver, Jeff Bynum said, “I’ve got the utmost respect for J.B. Driver. This January made twenty years that we’ve worked together. Over the years he’s really taught me a lot.”

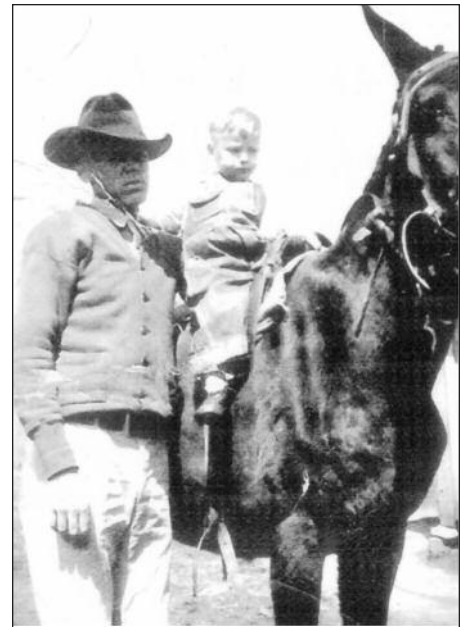
Jeff Bynum’s father, the late Guy Bynum, was a well-known mule trader. Jeff said he used to tell people he wanted to be an auctioneer when he grew up but nobody took him seriously because he was Guy’s son. Then in the fall of 1985, fate stepped in. One of the auctioneers failed to show up for a sale. Jeff was down the street playing pool when someone came in and said J.B. wanted him. That was his first experience as an auctioneer.

Jeff Bynum said, “On a scale of one to ten, J.B. Driver is a fifteen. He’s a very good gentleman to work with, a good man, a fine fellow, a great auctioneer, and the last of a dying breed. He’s a good friend too.”

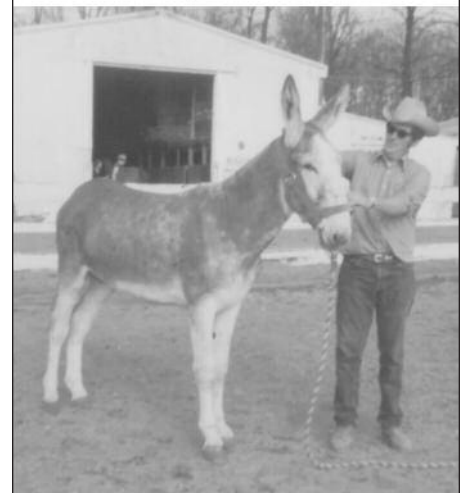
Jeff also added, “J.B. has a very loving and devoted wife ‘Alice’ that makes him the gentleman he is.”

Ben Tennison said, “The first time I met J.B. and Alice, I knew they were good-hearted people. They always have a smile for you. They are awful good-natured folks.” Mr. Tennison added, “I’ve sat in on a lot of his auctions. I thoroughly enjoy hearing him sell a mule.”

Mr. Tennison was in Bishop,



J. B. at two years old with his dad, Berlim Driver



J. B. In 1965 with his first jack at 2 ½ years old



“Pat” and “Peg” pulling J. B.’s show wagon



J. B. with one of his four-year-old mare mules

California, Bishop Mule Days 2003 for a very unusual sale. He described the auction and the auctioneer. Ben said, "When they auctioned off the twenty mule team in Bishop it was an emotional time for those selling them and those in the auction box. They were selling a rare and historical twenty-mule team hitch that the owner had spent years putting together. That day I saw the heart and professionalism of J. B. Driver." Ben further explained, "The crew of the twenty mule team led the mules in and out of the auction ring. The handler all had tears in their eyes. J. B. Driver handled all the emotion and the sadness very professionally; especially considering the seller of the hitch was sitting next to Mr. Driver in the auction box with tears rolling down his face."

Ben added, "Mr. Driver is a mule man. He owns mules, good mules and knows what a good mule is."

J.B. Driver said, "Right now I've got eight mules, four jennies, and two walking horse mares." He said, "I show them. Most of the time I drive them. I also ride them. We go on wagon rides. We go into Kentucky on rides a couple of times a year. We also plow with them and do some farm work."

J.B. Driver auctions more than mules. He said, "I've made more on selling cars but I LOVE SELLING MULES! I enjoy selling both." Then with a laugh, he added, "But I enjoy selling anything; hay, chickens, ducks, or furniture."

He has been honored for the outstanding job he has done in his chosen profession. He is an inductee in the Indiana Auctioneer's Hall of Fame, also an inductee into the Manheim's Auto Auction's Hall of Fame.

J.B. Driver was also made a Kentucky Colonel. He said, "The governor has to give that title to you. I stood at attention while they played 'Dixie' and received a plaque. It's been a real honor."

Mr. Driver spoke about an auctioneer's greatest asset. He said, "It's your own personality; knowing what you can do and doing it. You have to sell yourself and win the confidence of people."

J.B. Driver has done just that. In the words of Rufus Reese, "J.B. Driver is very sincere, very matter-of-fact, and has a heart of gold. He is one of the few auctioneers that I have seen that is never rude to the people. He's a gentleman up

there."

Rufus also added, "His voice demands attention on the auction block. When he's up there, he's the boss. He runs the show. He's a pro."

One habit this old pro has retained through the years is putting a handkerchief over the microphone. Mr. Driver explained, "Years and years ago everybody couldn't afford a microphone and everybody was spitting in them. They (the microphones) sit around and get dirty. I like to cover mine up. I like to keep mine clean. Now I have my own microphone and P.A. system."

If you are interested in purchasing a mule, or just want to see this auctioneer in action be sure and catch The Great Celebration Mule and Donkey Show in Shelbyville, Tennessee and step in on one of The Reese Brothers Great Tennessee Mule Sales. You will not be disappointed.



*Auction of the Twenty Mule Hitch
at Bishop Mule Days, in
Bishop, California*



*The Great Tennessee Mule Sale,
Shelbyville, Tennessee 1998*



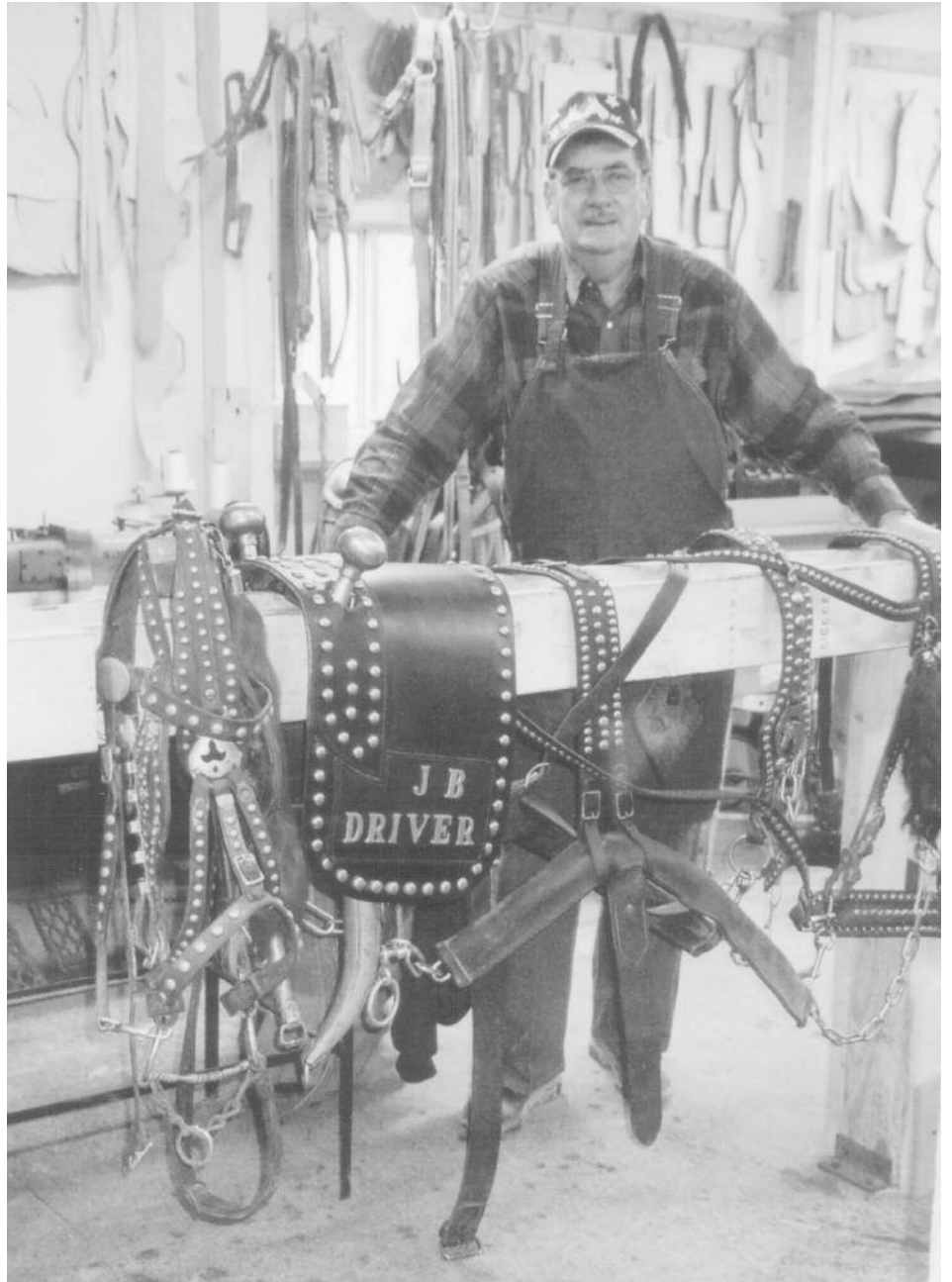
*J. B. Plowing with "Pat" and "Peg"
at the Tipton, Indiana Steam Show*



Mule tractor



J. B. With "Pat" and "Peg"



J. B. in his Harness Shop