

As president of a California-based general engineering contractor, Steve Pokrajac has bought and sold millions of dollars of equipment at Ritchie Bros. auctions across the United States.

Although the internet has opened up the world for Steve, he'll never lose his love of attending auctions in person.

Steve Pokrajac has attended more than 100 Ritchie Bros. auctions over the past 20 years – but two stand out from the rest.

“My first Ritchie Bros. auction was like going to Disneyland as a kid for the first time,” recalls Steve. “It was fantastic: the amount of equipment, the selection, the prices and the atmosphere. It was quite an experience even though I didn’t buy anything; at that time I didn’t have two bucks to rub together. Inspired, I thought: if I ever become a contractor, this is the vehicle I will use to get my equipment at the market rate.”

In 1992 Steve established Pokrajac Construction Company, a general engineering contractor based in Southern California, and started attending “a lot of auctions” to build up his fleet. At one Ritchie Bros. auction, he recalls, “the plan was to finish before sunset, however this one had quite a ways to go and it was starting to get very dark, so this one big fella and I decided to drag over some light towers and set them up. They worked great and the crowd showed their appreciation.”

Steve thought it was nice of the man to help out. Only later did he discover that the “big fella” was Ritchie Bros.’ co-founder Dave Ritchie. “I couldn’t believe it,” says Steve, “but as I’ve come to know, that’s his style: he’s very hands-on. You can see him at the auctions, taking care of the details, talking to customers, coaching and inspiring employees. Although he has since retired, the true legacy of Dave Ritchie is the emphasis on customer service, hospitality and the positive atmosphere you still see at Ritchie Bros.”

Over the years, Steve has built Pokrajac Corporation into a multi-million dollar company with a large fleet of heavy equipment. With six of his children currently working in the business, Steve feels the future of the company is in good hands. Ritchie Bros. auctions now form an important part of his fleet turnover program.

“I learned the difference between a true auction and other auctions the hard way,” said Steve. “At a true auction there are no minimum prices, no bid-ins or buy backs, no shenanigans. Ritchie Bros. has the utmost ethics, integrity and professionalism in the business.”

Steve now purchases equipment from auctions across the U.S. “That’s the great thing about Ritchie Bros.: there’s an auction going on almost every day,” he says. “It’s a great resource for smaller contractors too. If you have a contract that requires scrapers, you can get them. And then if your next contract has an emphasis on excavators, you can put those scrapers in the auction and buy excavators. You can also create cash flow



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liquidity when you need it.”

If he can’t make it to the auction site, Steve uses rbauctionBid-Live to bid online. “It’s a useful tool for buyers, but it’s also enormously important when you’re selling. It puts you in a broader market range,” he explains. “Right now the local industry is slow, and some types of equipment are in low demand. But if I put my equipment in a Ritchie Bros. auction there may be someone from the other side of the planet that’s very interested. Our machines have sold all over the world.”

After 20 years, Steve hasn’t tired of attending Ritchie Bros. auctions.

“Internet bidding is a great tool, but the auctions will always be the main event,” says Steve. “Ritchie Bros. auctions are a great time. Not only for the excitement and energy of the auction, but also being able to meet and talk to other contractors and people in the industry. I’ve made a lot of friends over the years. It’s been a lot of fun.”

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