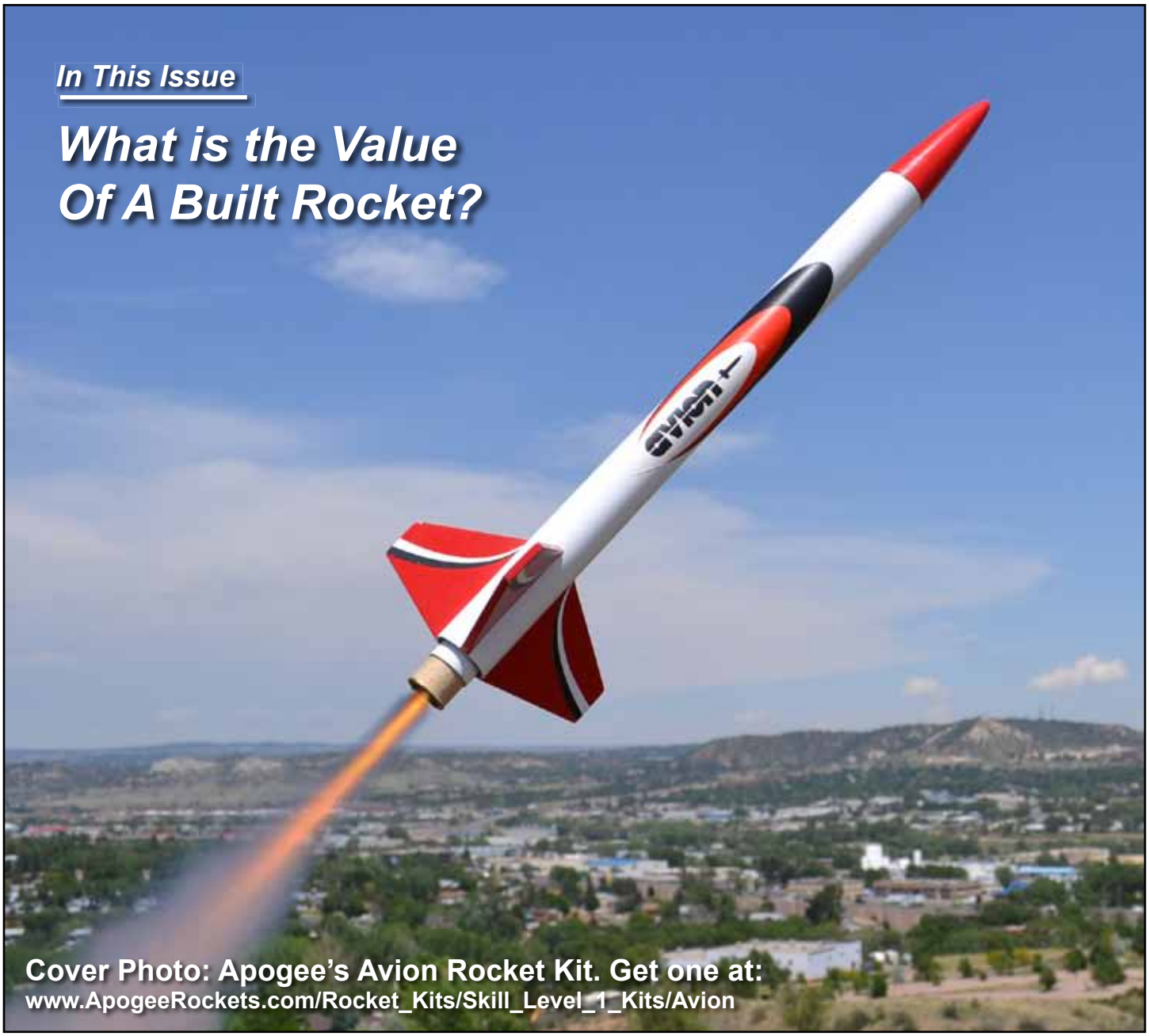
Apogee Components

PEAK OF FLIGHT

NEWSLETTER



In This Issue

What is the Value Of A Built Rocket?

Cover Photo: Apogee's Avion Rocket Kit. Get one at:
www.ApogeeRockets.com/Rocket_Kits/Skill_Level_1_Kits/Avion

Apogee Components, Inc. — Your Source For Rocket Supplies That Will Take You To The "Peak-of-Flight"
3355 Fillmore Ridge Heights
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80907-9024 USA
www.ApogeeRockets.com e-mail: orders@apogeerockets.com
Phone: 719-535-9335 Fax: 719-534-9050

ISSUE 316 JULY 3, 2012

Appraising The Value Of A Pre-Built Model Rocket

By Tim Van Milligan

On June 6, 2012, I appeared as a rocketry expert on the cable TV show *Auction Hunters* to appraise a rocket. In the show, I offered a hefty sum of $2,700 for a big rocket. In reality I overbid for it by a factor of 10.

The truth is that a *built rocket*, which you might find in a storage unit, has very little value. And we'll talk about how to appraise such a rocket in this article.

So knowing that the rocket didn't have that kind of value, you're probably wondering why did I offer such a high sum of money for it? The answer is that it is a TV program – it was for entertainment value. I did it because I wanted the show to look good, so that other TV shows would feature rocketry. Also, it builds up the value of rocketry in the eyes of the general public. Now they have the perception that rocketry is more than just a toy.

Finally, consider the exposure Apogee Components and I got out of it. I don't usually pay for "exposure," because you rarely control the advertising message. That is one reason I wrote the article called *"How to Get Your Donation Request Letter Thrown in The Trash"* in Newsletter 13 (www.ApogeeRockets.com/Education/Downloads/Newsletter13.pdf). I wrote it about 10 years ago, and it is still just as relevant today as it ever was. But in this case, I got to speak my own advertising message – "I" controlled the message. That is different, and is why I offered a high price for the rocket on the show.

Note: Due to the competitive nature of TV production, I can't give you all the details of the transaction.

How Did I Get This Part on TV?

Right before Christmas of last year, I got a call from an assistant producer from the TV show. At first, I didn't think anything of it, because I actually get phone calls from assistant producers all the time. Really? Yep. They are always making TV shows, and they are looking for rocket engines and other supplies to use on the show. They've learned over the years that businesses are willing to trade products for "advertising exposure."

But, I'm sure you realize how much exposure a company really gets out of that. You donate a rocket, and they put your name in the credit at the end of the show… (Have you ever read the credits at the end of a TV show?) When it is on TV, the channel operator minimizes the window, and opens up a new one showing coming attractions or the start of the next program. *NOBODY* watches the credits. They are so tiny, that even with Hi-Def set, you can't read them. In effect, your company just threw money out the window because they didn't get the exposure they thought they were getting.

Alan Haff, Tim Van Milligan, Clinton (Ton) Jones, and Ashley Van Milligan out on the rocket range.

The only companies that I've seen successful in getting advertising out of product placements in TV or movies are the big multi-national corporations that actually PAY to put their products into the show as an integral part of the story line. I'm sure you've seen Apple computers in TV and movies, right? It is not by accident; they paid the producers to put them in there. Unfortunately, I don't have that kind of money.

Based on this attitude of mine, when I got the call, I hesitated taking it. I thought: *"Here we go again, another producer looking for a hand-out."*

Continued on page 3

About this Newsletter

You can subscribe to receive this e-zine FREE at the Apogee Components web site (www.ApogeeRockets.com), or by sending an e-mail to: ezine@apogeeRockets.com with "SUBSCRIBE" as the subject line of the message.

Newsletter Staff

Writer: Tim Van Milligan
Layout / Cover Artist: Tim Van Milligan
Proofreader: Michelle Mason

Continued from page 2

Appraising The Value Of A Model Rocket

But the assistant producer said that they were looking for a person, not a product. That is what prevented me from hanging up on them.

So the assistant producer set up a time with me to talk to the show's producer who would visit me in person. At the time, I thought the producer was based out of Colorado, but I found out later that they were from Hollywood, California.

When the meeting took place at our shop, the producer was more interested in me than in the hundreds of rockets that adorn the Apogee shop. I totally got that, as I knew he was looking for "on camera talent."

I came to find out that what producers wants out of talent is "energy." This is the same thing that works in advertising, so it makes sense. Energy and passion sell! That was the main criteria they were looking for, from someone that knew about rockets.

For my part, since I had done so many rocketry videos on the Apogee web site, they pretty much had an idea of what they were getting from me personally. I was a known commodity.

I knew that they were screening other candidates for the show, as word had gotten around in all the rocketry clubs up and down the front-range mountains here in Colorado. Many of our rocketry friends were screened by the same producer. But about two weeks later, they had decided on me. To be honest, I wasn't hoping and praying for the part, as I had a million other things to do. I knew that any of the other guys that were screened would have done as good a job for the hobby as I could have done.

Preparations for the Launch

Initially they wanted to launch the rocket in the Denver area, as that would have made it easier for the filming crew. That would have been difficult, because of the size of the rocket would require a high power flight waiver. There is so much air traffic in the Denver area that it would have been difficult to obtain a waiver that was anywhere near the city. The local flyers in Denver typically travel an hour north to the Pawnee National Grasslands to fly big rockets.

I believe it was that realization that they couldn't get a waiver that caused them to switch to the launch site in Pueblo, Colorado, which is the home-site of the S.C.O.R.E. Club (http://www.scronline.net).

At this point, they gave me an approximate date of the filming and the launch, which was to be scheduled for the 3rd weekend in January.

To pull it all together though, they were going to need a lot of help. The local guys in Colorado came through with flying colors. S.C.O.R.E. members got the launch site and waiver ready to go. To help them prep the rocket for flight, Mike Konshak and Russ Anthony were brought on board from Denver. I also enlisted Bill Mott from Pueblo West to help with a back-up motor in case they needed an extra flight.

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

Appraising The Value Of A Model Rocket

The Special Guest Star

The one thing they told me about the show was that they love to explore the history of the items they find in storage units. They feel that it is this aspect that makes their show different from the other ones on television. Knowing this, and since we were going to be launching so close to where rocketry had its beginnings in Colorado, I thought it would be neat to try to bring Vern Estes into the show. If you want rocketry history, this man is the ultimate source.

So I asked the producer if he wanted to bring him in for the show. I also shot an email to Mr. Estes and told him of the show and that I was trying to get him a cameo appearance. The producers seemed to think it would be OK to have Mr. Estes around. I remember hearing one of them making a comparison: "If this was a show about the value of an old comic book, and Stan Lee was available to appraise it, then of course you'd want him around."

So Mr. Estes was around on the day of the launch, and

Vern Estes (right side) was on hand to add a historical perspective. He also flew rockets with us. Here he holds the original Big Bertha, which sports autographs of several famous people.

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 4

Appraising The Value Of A Model Rocket

he did sign all the paperwork to allow himself to be filmed for TV. And of course, the local rocketeers that came out for the launch that day absolutely loved it too. They got to hang out with a legend, and he thrilled them with launches of the "original" Big Bertha model. We'll talk about the value of that model a little later, because it has significant value.

Vern Estes was filmed that day. Unfortunately, like a majority of the shots that were taken, it didn't make it into the actual TV show. By my accounting, the rocketry portion of the TV show was very short, only about 3 minutes and 40 seconds. That was a bit of a letdown for me, since we filmed all day long on the launch field pretty much non-stop. It was a good 7-to-8 hours of filming, from just after sun-up to sundown (remember, it was in January, so the available daylight was pretty short).

Not appearing with Vern Estes on TV was the biggest letdown of the whole show for me. For that reason, the experience probably won't make it into my bucket list of favorite lifetime events.

Shooting the TV Show

Remember, this is the middle of January. It is winter in Colorado...

We arrived at the launch site, and it was a near perfect day. The winds were calm, and the temperature was mild. It probably reached the upper 50's during the afternoon. It was warm enough that I was able to strip off my jacket and wear a short-sleeve shirt. I was thankful for that, because I was allowed by the producers of the TV show to have a small company logo appear on camera. I didn't have a logo on my jacket, so being able to take it off allowed me to get it on camera. That is the advertising that I really wanted for

The rocket range on the morning of the launch. Fog in the distance shows how calm the winds were.

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

Appraising The Value Of A Model Rocket

Apogee.

The weather report indicated that the winds were expected to pick up in the afternoon, which would have made rocket flights difficult. So the show was shot a little bit backwards. Talking about the rocket, going over its features and its approximate value, was actually recorded after the launch took place. We were under a time pressure to get the rocket off the pad as quickly as possible, so the launch was filmed first.

It took a while for the camera crews to get their equipment unpacked and set up. They brought out two moving van sized trucks with all sorts of supplies. I would guess that there were about twenty-five people associated with the crew that came out for the filming. On the TV show, it only looked liked there were just three of us, but in actuality, counting all the local rocketeers (it was a regular monthly launch day), I'd say there were well over 50 or 60 people on the range that day. It was quite the crowd.

The camera crew had about 6 or 7 cameras filming the launch at the same time, including a high-speed camera, and three hi-def cameras on the rocket itself. One of them was a Booster-Vision camera (www.ApogeeRockets.com/Electronics_Payloads/Cameras/BoosterVision_GearCam_HD-DVR) that I mounted on the rocket myself. I didn't trust their cameras to work, because they weren't specifically made for rocket flights like the BoosterVision camera was. But in reality, they got some excellent video from their cameras too.

The rocket launch didn't quite go as planned, and had to be filmed twice. The first time the rocket was pointed skyward, it suffered a misfire on the pad. The problem turned out to be the relay launch controller that was hooked up improperly. I think that was my fault. I had never used that piece of equipment from the club, and they assumed

Vern Estes (in the brown jacket on the far right) and I (red shirt) were given instructions on where to stand during the recording. Yes... Like on many launch sites, those are cow turds you're seeing in the foreground.

that I knew what I was doing. It was a little embarrassing.

When we got it sorted out, the launch was fine. It was nearly perfect in fact, and the dual deployment operated exactly as you'd want it to work.

The problem was with the cameras on the ground. The production company had a high-speed videotape camera on the ground that they wanted to use to get a slow-motion shot of the rocket taking off. Because of the misfire on the pad, the camera ran out of tape before the rocket took off. In other words, they missed the lift-off shot with the slow-motion camera.

For that reason, it was decided to fly the rocket a sec-

Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6

Appraising The Value Of A Model Rocket

Image taken from my BoosterCam video camera that rode the rocket skyward. It shows the large crowd that gathered for the launch.

ond time. This was a big L3 type of rocket flying on a K motor, which meant that there was a lot of prep that had to be done before it was ready again. Fortunately, the film crew was on a scheduled lunch break. So while they were down for lunch, Mike and Russ were busy prepping the rocket for the second flight. It kind of all worked out pretty good.

The second flight was just as spectacular as the first one. And everything worked perfectly too. In fact, I'd say the rocket landed in approximately the same location as the first rocket. And this time, the film crew got the slow-motion shot that they wanted.

The Stars and The Crew

I have to say, the best part about this whole process was the people. First of all were the stars (on camera talent). 'Ton' Jones and Alan Haff are the real deal. What you see on TV is how they are in real life. They yuck it up on TV, and they do the same thing off camera too. Remember, the producers want energy, and if they see it off-camera, they'll see it on TV too. With Ton and Alan, they've got that energy.

They both had past rocketry experience too. It wasn't the formal NAR or Tripoli involvement like you and I have, but they have launched rockets on their own with family and friends. So that was cool to know. In fact, they knew

After the launch, Alan Haff picked up the rocket, and the BoosterVision camera got this image of him.

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

Appraising The Value Of A Model Rocket

exactly who Vern Estes was, and his place in rocketry history. They both got his autograph.

Alan was injured during the filming of this episode. It wasn't bad... just a few cactus needles in his knee. It happened when we were out chasing the rocket after the launch. We were running out to the place where the rocket landed, and I don't know if Alan was trying to make it look dramatic or if he didn't see the cactus. But as he was running, he made an Olympic style hurdle over a 2-1/2 feet tall "walking stick" type cactus. Unfortunately, he didn't quite clear the top of the cactus, and his knee brushed through the needles along the top.

What impressed me was they actually had a doctor with them as part of the film crew. After pulling out the few needles, we went back to filming. The part of the episode where I handed them a large wad of cash took place right after this little incident.

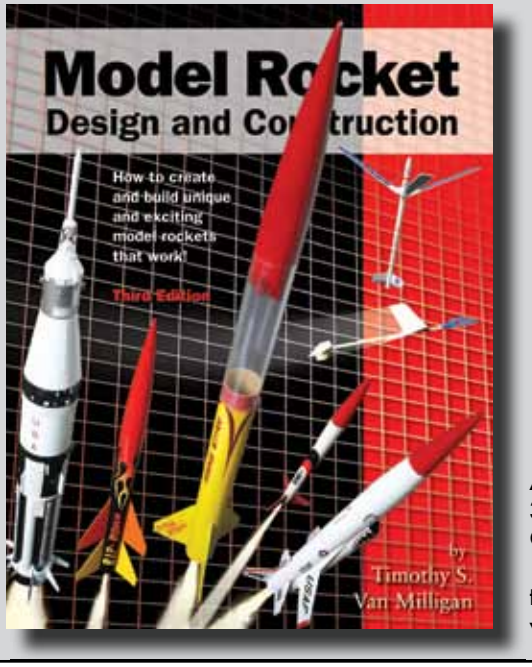
The rest of the crew was great too. The producers and the directors were clearly running the show well. They obviously had done location filming before, so they were aware of the time constraints and kept things moving along as quickly as possible.

I really admired the discipline of the crew working out on the road like this. It seemed everyone knew exactly what their job was, and where they were supposed to be at all times. I don't recall them ever having to wait for someone to get in position for filming to occur.

When 'Ton' told me he flew model rockets, I knew I had to give him a copy of my book "Model Rocket Design and Construction."

There was one time during the day when we were using plastic zip-ties to attach the external cameras to the

Continued on page 9



Model Rocket Design and Construction

By Timothy S. Van Milligan

The Expanded 3rd Edition

This massive, 328 page guidebook for serious rocket designers contains the most up-to-date information on creating unique and exciting models that really work. With 566 illustrations and 175 photos, it is the ultimate resource if you want to make rockets that will push the edge of the performance envelope. Because of the number of pictures, it is also a great gift to give to beginners to start them on their rocketry future.

For more information, and to order this hefty book, visit the Apogee web site at: www.ApogeeRockets.com

Apogee Components
3355 Fillmore Ridge Heights
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80907

telephone: 719-535-9335
website: www.ApogeeRockets.com

APOGEE COMPONENTS

Continued from page 8

Appraising The Value Of A Model Rocket

rocket. I needed another zip-tie, so I was about to walk to my car and get one. The director got on his radio to a technician in the van, and we had a brand new one out on the field in about 3 minutes. It was cool that they worked so well together as a team.

I also took note that both Alan and Ton pitched in to make things happen too. They helped move the rocket around, and took an interest in getting it prepped for launch. While they were the stars, you could definitely relate to these guys. They didn't feel fake to me, like some of the other actors you see on other auction style television shows.

It's about Rockets!

While we were filming the show, the rest of the local rocketeers were having a normal monthly launch. They were acting like nothing special was going on. While the filming crew took an occasional break, they would wander over to the launch range and watch some of the flights that were taking place. They were in awe of the rockets being flown. After all, how could you not be in awe. It's Rockets!!!

And Vern Estes was there too, as I mentioned before. He was busy making new friends with everyone that wanted to shake his hand or get his autograph, as well as getting off a flight or two of his own rockets.

Late in the day, the shadows started to get long, so they brought out reflectors to make filming easier.

Viewing "The Rocket"

As I mentioned earlier, the filming was out of sequence to what you saw in the show, because we were worried about winds picking up in the afternoon. The winds never did pick up, and the rest of the day was as nice as the early part.

Continued on page 10

Looking For A Fun Rocket Kit?

Roam In Our Forest of Over 190 Different Types

- Unique and exotic kits from over 20 different manufacturers
- Skill Levels range from "easy" to "fiendish"
- Sizes from 1/4A motor to level-2-high-power
- We build & fly them to find out what they're like, saving you grief
- More new ones arriving all the time
- Educational bulk packs available too

www.ApogeeRockets.com

www.ApogeeRockets.com/Rockets_By_Manufacturers

Continued from page 9

Appraising The Value Of A Model Rocket

The last thing we recorded was the part about the history of the rocket. It was getting late in the day when we started doing this, and the sun was creating some long shadows. I was about to take off my sunglasses, but then I remembered that this part was supposed to look like it happened before we flew the rocket.

I don't know what would have happened if we smucked the rocket into the ground on the flight, because then we wouldn't have had anything to talk about. I guess it was a good thing that it worked great on both flights.

Because I was a newbie to the whole television thing, they had one of the assistant directors help me with my part. He was really patient with me, bless his soul. And he definitely had his work cut out for him. Basically, he coached me on how to look passionate, excited, and to project energy in front of the cameras.

I remember one time when he told me to stroke the rocket, like I was caressing a woman's body. I had to chuckle when he told me that, because even though I am pretty passionate about rocketry, I don't think I get to that level of excitement. OK... maybe I do.

Bring Your Daughter To Work Day

The one memorable thing that I'll remember about the day was that I had my youngest daughter with me the entire day. She was a real trooper. A lot of the time, she was on her own and had to keep herself busy. She ended up flying her Estes Pop-Fly rocket about a half-dozen times during the day. She probably ended up entertaining the crowd, knowing her (You saw a picture of her on page 2).

What is a Rocket Really Worth?

It is hard to pin a value on a rocket. I'm sure you've heard other people say: "The real worth is what a person is willing to pay for it." And to a large extent, that is true. But I'll throw out to you some criteria that may make the rocket more or less valuable to someone else.

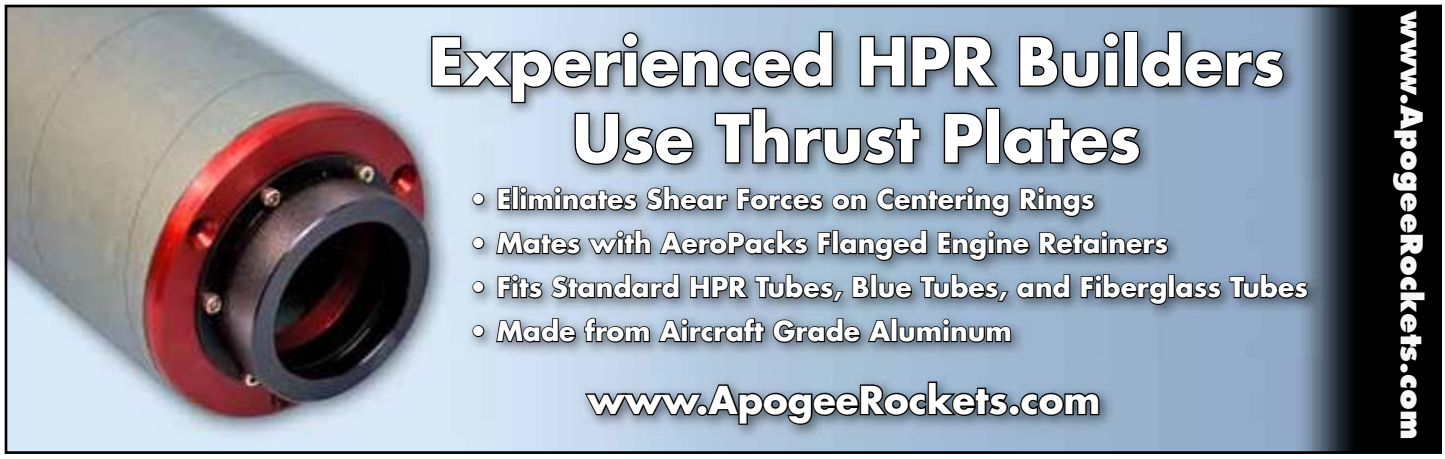
1. The rarity of the item - This should be obvious to you. Items that are few in number are harder to find. For example, when a company is just starting out, they usually begin with small production runs of an item, because they don't know if the consumer will want the item or not. You don't want to commit to a large production run until you have established that the item will sell. An example of this is the old Estes catalogs from the very early 1960's. I know that many of these catalogs sell in the hundreds of dollars.

2. The history of the item. Even common items can be valuable, if they have significant history attached to them. For example, an Estes Alpha is a pretty common rocket, right? But what about the value of that single kit that was taken into earth orbit on the Space Shuttle by Astronaut Jay Apt? What would that model rocket be worth? I'd say it was priceless, because it could never be replaced, and the Space Shuttle is no longer flying. So this rocket, were it ever come to auction, would probably fetch in the tens of thousands of dollars.

3. Who Owned It? An item owned by a famous person could add a lot of value. I'm sure you've heard about clothes that were worn by famous actors in the movies fetching huge sums of money. The same goes for rockets. That 50+ year old "Big Bertha" rocket shown on page 4 that Vern Estes was flying on the day we were shooting the Auction Hunters TV show was probably worth a lot of money.

4. Is it autographed? Famous people, signing their autograph to a rocket, can add a lot of value to the item. Do you remember in my story about Ton and Allen getting Vern Estes to sign their model rockets? Yep, those models are

Continued on page 11



Continued from page 10

Appraising The Value Of A Model Rocket

worth a lot more money now. What was probably worth just a couple of dollars is going to be worth 10 times that much just because Mr. Estes signed his signature on it. This is related to a combination of rarity and history.

5. The condition of the item – a beat-up rocket than looks like it has significant road-rash has lower value than one in pristine condition. The exception, of course, is if the battle damage occurred in some historic event.

6. Kit or Pre-Built – kits are always worth more than a pre-built rocket, such as the one on the Auction Hunters Television show.

Now this may be counter-intuitive, because people like to put a price tag on their own physical labor and materials that they put into building the rocket. But in actuality, this reduces the price of the rocket. This is important, so let me try to explain.

When people buy a product, and especially a model rocket, what they are buying is an *experience*. Typically, they want to have the experience of success. They want to feel that they have achieved this success on their own. For a deeper discussion of this, see the article *"Why Do We Like Model Rockets"* in Peak-of-Flight Newsletter #85 (www.ApogeeRockets.com/Education/Downloads/Newsletter85.pdf)

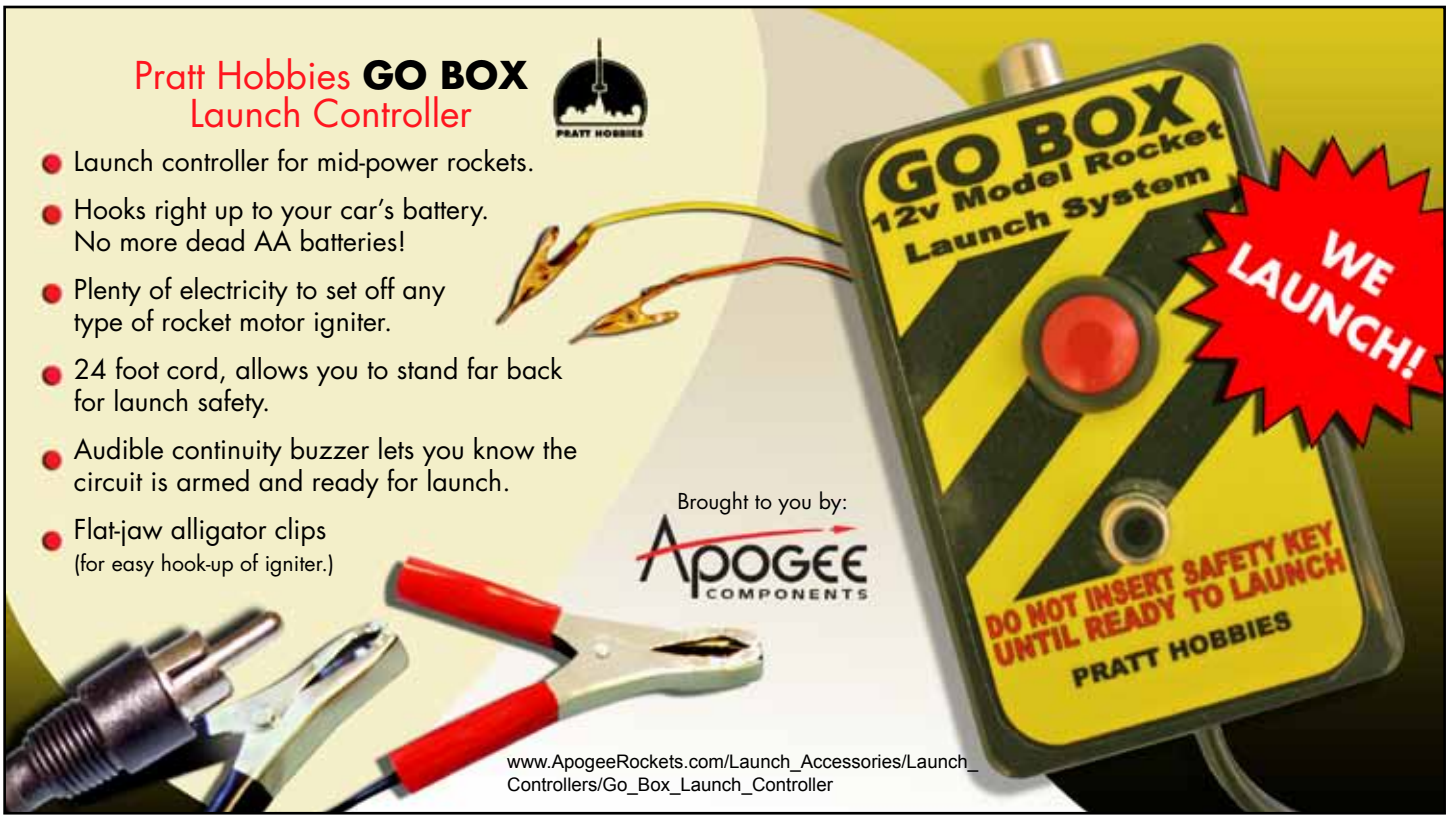
If someone else builds the rocket, they've taken away the feeling of success you'd get if you made the rocket yourself. They've taken something away from you, and therefore the price goes down.

In the case of the Auction Hunters rocket, I offered $2700 for a rocket, but what I was buying was not the rocket, but the experience of being on a television show. How much would you pay for the same rocket, assuming you did not get the same experience of being on TV? Probably not much. It is likely you'd offer less than $100 for the rocket. "Experience" is HUGE! It adds value.

When people actually work for something significant, it takes on greater value. The more they work for it, the higher the value they place on it. That is why I hate giving people the simple answer to their questions when they come to me for help. I know that if I do give them a quick answer, and take away their own involvement (removing success), then they will not put much value in rocketry.

So when you email me with a question, I will almost always direct you to some place on the Apogee web site where you can find the information yourself. I know this really makes a lot of people angry, and they feel that I'm treating them with disrespect because I'm not answering

Continued on page 12



Continued from page 11

Appraising The Value Of A Model Rocket

their question directly. But actually, I'm pushing them to put more effort into finding the answer themselves, so they come away with a greater feeling of success.

In other words, when I give you the "quick answer," I'm dooming you to failure in the future. Because now you'll come to rely on me for future answers too. So what happens when I'm not around? Basically, you'll give up.

I know, since I pay attention to my customers, that the ones that want and go so far as to demand quick answers, are going to be out of the hobby in a short amount of time.

The most important part of Apogee's business easily fits in the trunk of my car. When we evacuated the building because of the wild fires, we took our customers with us.

The ones that "work" for their successes will be in the hobby for a long, long time. It is this fact that led me to grabbing my computers first when we were evacuating the business last week when the terrible fires hit Colorado Springs. My customer lists include over a thousand of people that have gone through our rocket rewards program (www.ApogeeRockets.com/Frequent_Flyer_Program). By doing so, they have proved they have worked for their successes, which makes them very valuable to me. I'd rather have one thousand of those kind of customers, than 10,000 people that just buy because of a quick discount. The discount buyers are "one-and-done." They're gone out of the hobby so fast, that it isn't even worth putting them into the customer database. The *Very Important Rocketeers* (V.I.R.s) that are in my database will keep me in business for a very long time.

7. Salvage Value - What is Included With The Rocket?

This is where we get to the real value of the pre-built rocket, like the one on Auction Hunters. What can be taken off the rocket and used on a different one? What is salvageable from it?

The tubes, fins and centering rings are the *least* valuable components in the rocket, since they are the easiest to replace. They originally cost a lot in a rocket kit, but have almost zero value once the rocket has been built.

The nose cone is always worth something. Nose cones are hard to come by, and the bigger the nose cone, the more valuable it is. This is where size does matter. As far

Continued on page 13

Continued from page 12

Appraising The Value Of A Model Rocket

as material goes, a fiberglass nose cone is more valuable than a plastic one, which is itself more valuable than a wooden one that someone may have cut on a lathe.

Electronics in the rocket are *iffy* from a monetary point of view. First of all, you have to test them to see if they work. Electronics can have damage internally in the components that you can't see, and if they're broke, they're worthless. Most manufacturers don't warranty electronics that have changed owners, as they are damaged more easily than other items in the rocket.

The other aspect of electronics is that newer and more modern components are often less costly and have more capability than products made in the past. For example, on the rocket on the Auction Hunters TV show, it contained a dog-tracker GPS system, exactly like the one described in the article from the July-August 2009 issue of *Sport Rocketry*. At the time the device was installed in the rocket, it may have cost the original owner $400-$500. But the same amount of money today would not only give you GPS for tracking the rocket, but also dual-deployment capability plus a barometric altimeter and accelerometer data too. This is the Telemetrum unit that we sell at Apogee Components (www.ApogeeRockets.com/Electronics_Payloads/Altimeters/TeleMetrum_Starter_Set).

Recovery equipment, such as parachutes and shock cords have some value, but it is much like the value of clothing you might buy second-hand. It has been pre-worn or pre-stressed, and has a slightly "icky" feeling to it for most buyers. I'd say that used recovery equipment is probably worth 1/10th the new price for the same item.

The same goes for motor hardware, like reloadable motor cases. It has been through the fire, and people consider it more suspect than new motor cases.

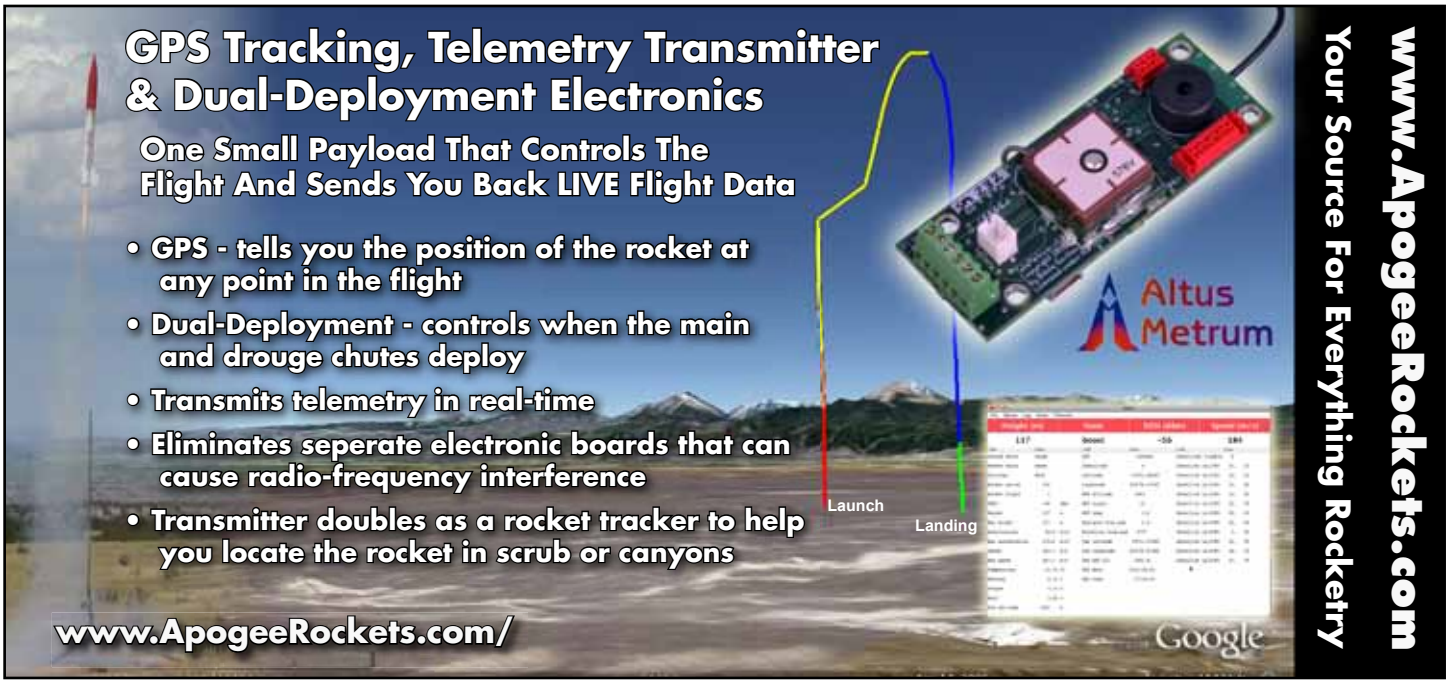
What retains its value a bit better to some extent, are motor retainers. Instead of losing 90 percent of their value, they probably only lose half their value from being used. The same goes for a lot of the other miscellaneous hardware inside a rocket, like metal all-thread, screw eyes, U-bolts and rail buttons. But these are fairly low-cost items to begin with, so it isn't likely that you'd go out of your way to buy an old rocket just to pick them up on the cheap.

8. Reliving Old Experiences – This one is buyer dependent, and could actually add value to a rocket.

Many folks that participated in rocketry during their youth, are wanting to relive those old experiences and successes that they had. And some (not everyone, but a few) want to pick up right where they left off. They don't want to back up and have to rebuild the rocket, unless they messed it up the first go-through. For these types of rocketeers, buying a pre-built rocket is a plus. It is like discovering their rocket that was tucked away in an attic for a long time.

However, these buyers are rare. And the rocket has to be one that they built when they were young. So a rocket like the one that was featured on the Auction Hunters TV show would not appeal to them.

Continued on page 14



Continued from page 13

Appraising The Value Of A Model Rocket

9. Is The Buyer A Reseller?

The type of buyer is also going to make a big difference in the price of a rocket, such as one found in a storage unit. Up until this point, we've assumed that the buyer is also going to be the final user. But this might not always be the case.

If you found a rocket in a storage unit, like the guys on the Auction Hunters TV show did, and you were trying to make money on it, what would you do? You really have only two options. One is to sell it yourself to the end user. The most likely way to do this is an online auction web site. The advantage of this is that you'd get the most money from the deal. But you have to deal with shipping, and the hassles of writing a product description for your item. If you didn't know much about rocketry, you might write such a bad description, that you could drive down the price of the item without knowing it. This happens a lot.

Also, putting it up for auction takes a lot of time. It is going to be a slow process.

If you needed quick money, the best thing to do is to take it to a person that specializes in selling merchandise to others. You might call this person a middleman, since he buys it from you and resells it to another person.

This is what the Auction Hunters do on their program. They find a merchant, and sell it to them for a quick buck. The disadvantage of this, of course, is that you have to greatly reduce your price. The reason is the middleman needs to be able to mark up the price in order to make a profit too. You can expect to drop from the market price by 40-60%.

Most people are stunned by this, but it is reality. The middleman isn't going to buy it from you unless they can make a profit. And since they might have to sit on the item a long time before it finally gets sold, they need a big incentive to fork over the cash to you right away.

The Value of The Auction Hunters' Rocket

The real value, or the value that I'd pay myself (as an end-user), for the rocket is $270. It is almost all a "salvage value." If I were to resell it to another person – making me the middleman – then I would probably offer about $108.

On top of that, since the market for pre-built rockets is pretty small, you might not even be able to get the cash upfront. There is a big risk that the rocket could sit for years before it sold. That is far more than a merchant is willing to wait to get his $108 back.

The other option, is to sell it on consignment. That means the merchant doesn't buy the rocket until he actually has a buyer for it.

Consignment selling is really what an online auction site really is. You post it for sale on their site, and they don't pay you until someone buys it. Therefore, your best option might be to put it on an auction site if you can't find a merchant that will give you cash up front for the rocket.

Other Rocketry TV Shows

The morning after my episode aired on television, a customer, Sam Fineberg, came into my office. Sam is a rocketeer from the LUNAR club in California, and he was visiting Colorado Springs on a business trip. He said he caught the show on TV the night before, and then proceeded to tell me about another rocketeer from California's experience on a different auction show. The rocketeer was Jack Garibaldi, and the show was *Storage Hunters*. As he was telling me about that show, I soon realized that it was the exact same story line as the one I was in: a big rocket was found in a storage unit, and then flown before an offer

Continued on page 15

Continued from page 14

Appraising The Value Of A Model Rocket

was made. Déjà vu...

Here I thought I was unique, and then I find out that I'm not. Oh well...

I found out that Jack's episode was actually shot about two months before it aired on TV. So that would put it somewhere around April, which was after the Auction Hunters show was recorded. I absolutely had no idea this was coming.

Maybe that was the reason that the rocketry portion on Auction Hunters was so short. Who knows? I could easily come to the conclusion that the producers had time to re-edit the video, and play down the rocketry story, because it had already aired on a different station. That is probably what I'd do if I were a TV network executive. You want to be original, and not rehash the same type of story.

Conclusion

I'm not in the business of selling used rockets like the one in Auction Hunters. I need to tell you that before you get all excited that there is someone out there that would take your old inventory off your hands. That is not me. And I don't know of anyone out there that is a middleman for pre-built rockets. I knew that would be one of your next questions... The reason, as I mentioned before, is that most people in rocketry want the experience of building the rocket themselves. They want their own success, not purchasing someone else's success.

I hope you enjoyed the Auction Hunters TV show, and I hope you learned a little bit about what makes a rocket valuable. The main take-away from the show is the entertainment value of it, and I hope you had a good time.

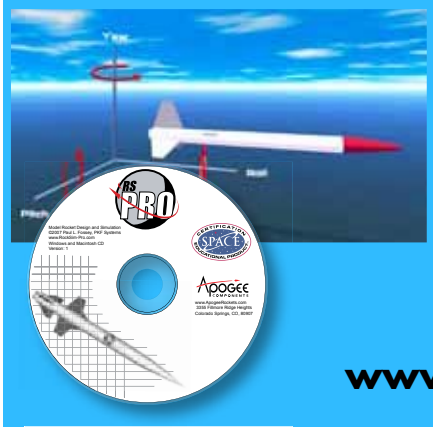
These TV shows have a lot of cool stuff, and they like to embellish a lot of things. For example, one thing TV always likes to do is play up the danger aspect of rocketry. As we all know, rocketry is one of the safest hobbies you can have. Most injuries occur during the recovery of the rocket, where you might twist an ankle because you were looking up when you should have been watching where you were walking (been there... done that).

About The Author:

Tim Van Milligan (a.k.a. "Mr. Rocket") is a real rocket scientist who likes helping out other rocketeers. Before he started writing articles and books about rocketry, he worked on the Delta II rocket that launched satellites into orbit. He has a B.S. in Aeronautical Engineering from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida, and has worked toward a M.S. in Space Technology from the Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne, Florida. Currently, he is the owner of Apogee Components (http://www.apogeerockets.com) and the curator of the rocketry education web site: http://www.apogeerockets.com/education/. He is also the author of the books: *"Model Rocket Design and Construction," "69 Simple Science Fair Projects with Model Rockets: Aeronautics"* and publisher of a FREE e-zine newsletter about model rockets. You can subscribe to the e-zine at the Apogee Components web site.

Sim Your Rockets With The Confidence of 6-Degrees-of-Freedom

RS-PRO is a 6-degree-of-freedom rocket simulator to find the behavior of high-performance rockets. It picks up where RockSim leaves off:



- Speeds up to Mach 10
- Altitudes up to 392.7 miles
- Reads RockSim design files
- Create landing zone patterns in Google Earth
- See a 3D trajectory path
- Developed for university researchers and aerospace professionals.

www.ApogeeRockets.com

www.ApogeeRockets.com