Mur-Low And Wine-O

A good livestock auctioneer can sell anything: horses, cars, houses, machinery; you name it and a cow auctioneer can sell it. That's why livestock auctioneers are busy selling foreclosed homes and GM cars.

But there is one field that's been slow to employ livestock auctioneers and that's the wine industry. They seem to prefer auctioneers who have no chant and go v-e-r-y s-l-o-w.

So I was surprised when a cattle auctioneer friend was hired to do an important wine auction. The wine folks had seen their auction go downhill and they wanted to revive it by using a faster talker.

This brings up another reason why cowboys aren't asked to sell wine: most of them know as much about wine as a hog knows about Sundays. Most prefer beer and whiskey to Cabernet and if they drink wine at all it comes in a box and costs less per ounce than many brands of bottled water. They tend to read the West Texas Livestock Weekly, not Wine Spectator.

Because my friend wouldn't know a Petit Verdot from a Volvo it was decided that a wine expert would put him through an intense training course during the afternoon of the big auction. The teacher, who we'll call Mur-Low, can sip a wine and tell you where it came from!

He accompanied our cowboy auctioneer during the Grand Tasting and together they sampled the 20 wines that would be featured during the auction later that night, some of them costing more by the ounce than a movie-theater coke. Unfortunately, no one told our cowboy friend (Wine-O) that you were supposed to spit the wine out after tasting it.

Mur-Low explained, "The person serving the wine with the cup around his neck is called a Somalian." Or at least that's what Wine-O thought he heard. (Darned if he knew why they had to come from Somalia). "Now swirl the wine and smell it," advised Mur-Low. "Do you smell

blackberries and dark chocolate? What do you smell?”

“It smells more like boiled cabbage or moldy alfalfa to me,” said Wine-O. “Or Chinese food in a to-go carton that was accidentally left in a hot car for three days.”

Mur-Low nearly fainted. “Okay, perhaps your palate will be more educated than your nose. Take a sip and describe the flavor. Does it taste like rose petals, black pepper and butterscotch with high notes of brown sugar and nutmeg?”

Wine-O took a sip and shook his head. “I’ve never been drunk enough to eat rose petals but to me it tastes like cough syrup strained through a wet saddle blanket with high notes of dill pickle juice.”

Mur-Low wept openly. “How would you describe the after taste?” he sobbed.

“Kind of like ham gravy. It’s also chewier than a 20 year old Corriente cow,” said Wine-O. It took five more glasses before he started tasting the butterscotch. By the end of the Grand Tasting Wine-O was larrupin’ up the booze like a fired cowhand, had not eaten all day and the coffee he was drinking to sober up when mixed with the wine created ominous sounds from deep within his bowels. Then it was time for the auction.

I’ll spare you all the details but Wine-O swapped his cowboy hat for a beanie, could take his blood pressure by the drumbeats in his head and his tongue was so thick it slowed him down to the speed of most wine auctioneers. He was also seeing double and was taking bids that weren’t there, which didn’t hurt the sale one bit.

The next day he had a terrible hangover and death seemed like a viable option. Wine-O called Mur-Low to find out how bad he had died on the vine, so to speak.

“They loved you,” said a vibrant Mur-Low. “A good time was had by all and they want you back

for next year.”

Wine-O asked in disbelief, “But couldn’t they tell I knew nothing about the wine?”

“Not at all,” said Mur-Low. “Fortunately they thought you were just drunk... not stupid.”