

Dan the Man

By Tom Comi



We could debate the pros and cons of the A&E reality show *Storage Wars* for hours, but we'll leave that for another time. Instead, I'd like to use this space to talk about the face of the show that—for better or worse—put the storage industry on the pop culture map.

Dan Dotson comes from a long line of auctioneers dating back to the 1940s, and he has been performing auctions since he was 11 years old. Along with his wife, Laura, he runs the company American Auctioneers, and it's his fast-talking cadence and outgoing personality that added

some flair to an industry that many could claim lacked just that.

When *Storage Wars* premiered on A&E in 2010, it introduced everybody to a world that somehow managed to fly under the mainstream radar despite generating billions of dollars of annual revenue. Like most reality fare, it also made stars out of people like Dan Dotson who never imagined they would be known outside of their little bubble.

The show vaulted to the top of the cable ratings, drawing as many as five million viewers an episode in its heyday. Along the way, it stirred controversy ranging from disgruntled storage owners who felt the show damaged the industry's reputation to a cast member who claimed the auctions were manufactured for TV entertainment.

The one constant, though, was Dan Dotson's presence as an auctioneer. He became a celebrity of sorts, especially when he made appearances at the Self Storage Association's spring and fall conferences. You would never know the program drew mixed reviews within the industry judging by the line of people who wanted to get their photo with him on our trade show floor. And fitting his personality, he was always happy to oblige and chat up his fans.

Sadly, the outgoing Dotson almost died in June when he suffered a double brain aneurysm. His wife, Laura, and son were fortunately home at the time and were able to administer CPR before he was rushed to the hospital. Despite a bleak outlook at the time, he is on his way to recovery and has vowed to stop his 40-year smoking habit.

After spending time in the ICU and then the hospital, he posted the following on his Facebook page on June 29 following his release: "I'm home & loving it. Thx everyone. I'm back 100% and damn glad to be here."

Storage Wars will always be a controversial topic in the storage industry, and I certainly get both sides of the argument. Like most reality fare, though, its declining buzz and ratings will eventually lead to it being canceled and replaced.

Regardless of the show's fate, Dan Dotson has been blessed to get a new lease on life. Here's hoping that the guy who makes his living talking extremely fast slows down this time to smell the roses. ❖

Legislative Update 6

The SSA helps avoid taxes, other threats.

Value Limitations 10

The SSA is fighting to ensure storage operators are protected.

The Social Network 12

Special boot camp in Las Vegas will teach you how to reach new customers.

Smooth Operators 16

Bob Copper's Managers Summit will help facilities be the best they can be.

Legal Q&A 23

How to deal with a claim you think might be fraudulent.

Education News 28

It's time to plan your Vegas itinerary and for CSSM certification.

Vegas 2014 29

Here are 11 pages detailing everything you need to know about our Fall Conference & Trade Show.

State Association News 43

Around Self Storage 59

Globe Advertisers 61

Data Depot 62

We look at storage in the Northeast Region of the United States.

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