

Still a Family Affair

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PALM BEACH GARDENS — Slim's Fish Camp will stay in the family.

Charles Corbin on Friday morning outbid six others to keep the Belle Glade business his father opened in 1935 at the lip of Lake Okeechobee.

After an hour of closed-door auction action, Corbin exited a conference room at the Palm Beach Gardens Marriott ready to shake some hands. His price: \$343,000. "It was spirited in there," Corbin said.

Corbin and his sister-in-law, Karen, each own half the business. She inherited her share more than two years ago from her late husband, Gordon, Charles Corbin's brother. The two men had run the popular business, a bait-and-tackle shop with an expansive dock and guide and boat rentals, since 1965.

But Karen hadn't wanted to continue with the fish camp, part of which Hurricane Wilma destroyed in 2005 and the current drought has strained. She and Charles were unable to settle on a price for him to buy her out, which led to Friday's auction.

"It's resolved," her attorney, Larry Fuchs, said Friday afternoon. "Everybody can move on."

Nearly 20 people milled around the hotel lobby waiting to see the outcome, including several family friends. "I'm curious to know who's going to get it," said Royal Palm Beach resident Jerry Stewart.

Corbin on Thursday said he anticipated at least 10 outside bidders, some from other parts of the state. But a sign-in sheet revealed one from Wellington, two from Jupiter and two from North Palm Beach. Charles and Karen Corbin joined, too.

Forty people had inquired about the auction and received information on it, said Rebel Cook, the court-appointed receiver.

According to the rules, the successful bidder had to be prepared to transfer funds for the bid price on the day of the auction. When contacted late Friday afternoon, Corbin said he had sent the full sum.

Corbin and his wife left the morning sell-off ready to eat lunch at a nearby restaurant and head to a family reunion in Georgia, where they own a house and lease farmland. After that, Corbin will get down to business at Slim's, despite its dry run these days. "We'll get out there now, and be able to do some more," Corbin said.

Corbin and his brother were born a stone's throw from Slim's, in the now-demolished tender's house; their father, nicknamed "Slim," had the job of opening and closing the bridge that connects State Road 717 to Torry Island, where the fish camp is. The brothers later took over the county-contracted job, which continues with Corbin today.