Like a true Texan, Gilley Hickman lived a life believing in bigger and better. Thurman “Gilley” Hickman passed away at age 67 on Dec. 3, 1995, after a short illness. He founded Hickman Painting Co., Inc. in 1967 in Dallas, and turned the reins over to his son just a few years ago when he retired.

“Really, he never retired,” says Steve Hickman, Gilley’s son, who is the current president of Hickman Painting Co., Inc. “Ray Boyd discussed it with my father, and he became interested,” he says. “He envisioned it could be even better. Because of his involvement in the cattle industry and the auctions associated with that industry, Hickman knew what he was talking about. “He took on the FWCI auction as his cause because he wanted to make it bigger and better,” Boyd says.

And he grabbed the bull by the horns, keeping busy as a stump-tailed bull in fly season. The early 1980s were good years for the registered cattle industry and for construction, and the two together produced good income for the FWCI. Soon, though, Hickman was doing everything from hiring a professional auctioneer and the spotters (those who alert the auctioneer when a bid has been made) to helping secure some of the donations.

Bigger and Better

Carroll came up with the idea for a fund-raising auction to benefit the Foundation of the Wall and Ceiling Industry. The non-profit FWCI, the educational arm of AWCI, operates the largest wall and ceiling industry library in the world and researches topics of interest to the wall and ceiling industry.

The first auction was held in 1981 in conjunction with AWCI’s convention. It was a success, but new-member Hickman said it could be even better. Because of his involvement in the cattle industry and the auctions associated with that industry, Hickman knew what he was talking about. “He took on the FWCI auction as his cause because he wanted to make it bigger and better,” Boyd says.

Even through the lean years in the con-
Hickman’s Association History

From the get-go, Gilley Hickman, who became an AWCI member in 1980, showed his loyalty and commitment to his association and his trade by participating on every committee he could. Below is a list that shows Hickman’s involvement in various AWCI committees during the 1980s.

1981-82
Continuing Study Council
Membership Committee
Labor Liaison Committee, Painters’ Section
Painters’ Apprenticeship Committee
   (Vice Chairman)

1982-83
Apprenticeship Committee
Continuing Study Council
General Coordinating Committee
Labor Liaison Committee,
   Painters’ and Tapers’ Section
Painters’ Apprenticeship Committee (Chairman)
Southwest Conference (Secretary)

1983-84
Continuing Study Council (Vice Chairman)
Council of Regional Vice Presidents
Foundation Auction Committee (Chairman)
Labor Liaison Committee, Painters’ Section
Southwest Conference (Vice Chairman)
WAC/PAC Board of Directors

1984-85
Continuing Study Council (Chairman)
Council of Regional Vice Presidents
Executive Committee
Foundation Auction Committee (Chairman)
Site Selection Committee
Southwest Conference (Chairman)
WAC/PAC Board of Directors

1985-86
Council of Regional Vice Presidents
Foundation Auction Committee (Chairman)
Nominating Committee
Southwest Conference
   (Immediate Past Chairman)
WAC/PAC Board of Directors

1986-87
AWCI Board of Directors
Foundation Auction Committee (Chairman)
Continuing Study Council Alumni
Council of Regional Vice Presidents
Southwest Conference
   (Immediate Past Chairman)

1987-88
AWCI Board of Directors
Continuing Study Council (Alumni)
Foundation Auction Committee (Chairman)
Southwest Conference (Immediate Past President)
Regional Vice Presidents’ Committee

1988-89
Accident Prevention Committee
Continuing Study Council (Alumni)
Foundation Auction Committee (Chairman)
FWCI Board of Directors
Merit Shop Committee
Resolutions committee

In addition to AWCI, Hickman also participated in many other associations, including these: Beefmaster Breeders United, North Texas Contractors Association, Associated General Contractors, Associated Master Painters of Dallas County, and Painting and Decorating Contractors of America.
struction industry, Hickman made the auction work and be fun as well as profitable. He always said it could run its course, but he continued to massage it. Attendees soon got used to the idea that the auction was going to be a good time.

To ensure a good time, Hickman said he personally wanted to approve the menu for the dinner, and that several menus should be submitted to him in advance of the 1986 auction. He also noted that the brands at the bar during the previous year’s auction were ‘call’ brands; in the future he wanted ‘premium’ brands at the cocktail reception and the auction.

“Gilley made sure everything was good,” Boyd says. “He didn’t want the people to feel skimped on; a chicken or fish dinner was not enough—he felt it should be steak. The people who walked away from the auction felt they were well entertained.”

Make Sure It’s Right

Another part of Hickman’s mission was to make sure there were many people’ and the right people were in the audi-
ence. “You never know what buyers would walk into the room,” Boyd says. “With more people in the room, there’s more peer pressure to raise your hand. Gilley wanted to get the best people he could in attendance, because a successful auction needs bids and counterbids. Because it’s human nature not to give any more than you have to, Gilley brought in several people he knew would be interested in a particular item.”

If you look at the history of the FWCI auction, you’ll find that many of the same people attend—and buy—year after year; however, the premier item is almost always bought by a different person, sometimes a first-time attendee. (Gilley always donated plenty,” Carroll says, “plus he also gave a tremendous amount of his time and effort. We’re going to miss him; he was a helluva guy.”)

In the early years, Hickman often donated the prize item. “In the beginning, Gilley donated one of his prime bulls,” Carroll says. “Also, Gilley and the Boyds donated a saddle every year.” In fact, Hickman and the Boyds donated a $1,600 Western saddle to the auction every year from 1987 until 1992. For the third auction in 1984, Hickman donated a $2,000 Beefmaster Heifer and a $500 watercolor painting.

“Let us not forget the very basis of our industry, our association and our trades, which provided us a living. Gilley gave us all of the above,” says long-time Hickman friend Joe Feldner, president and chief executive officer of McNulty Bros. Company, Chicago. “Gilley worked endlessly to make each and every auction a success. He even auctioned off his expensive Western hat [see photo, page 38] to gain even a few more dollars for the Foundation. He supported the association as well as the Foundation, and he always participated and gave his complete input toward the Continuing Study Council.”

“Gilley always donated plenty,” Carroll says, “plus he also gave a tremendous amount of his time and effort. We’re going to miss him; he was a helluva guy.”