

LOCAL FRONT

Monmouth County auctions criminals' ill-gotten goods

By **TRACY ROBINSON**
COASTAL MONMOUTH BUREAU

FREEHOLD — A motorcycle used to elude the police, kayaks, cash registers and a car seized from an accused drug dealer were among items the county auctioned yesterday.

"I don't know too much about this one, but it looks good. You want to tell me how much you want to pay?" auctioneer Stephen J. Miranti asked the crowd about one motorcycle yesterday.

The 1996 Honda he was talking about once belonged to a drug dealer, said Capt. Phillip George of the Monmouth County's Prosecutor's Office.

An Acura Vigor also was once the property of a drug dealer in the Neptune area, and a Titan motorcycle on the block was the subject of an insurance scam, authorities said.

But not every item being sold yesterday at East Freehold Park arrived there as the result of illicit activity.

Office and maintenance equipment once used by the county, including lawn mowers, copy machines and even a few hospital beds, also were included among the auction offerings. The merchandise came from the county's prosecutor's office, park system, motor pool and building and grounds, said auction organizer Edward Washburn, an assistant county prosecutor in charge of the forfeiture unit.

"Some of the cars and motorcycles were seized by various police departments in Monmouth County because they were used to commit a crime or are the proceeds of criminal activity," Washburn said.

But other equipment was merely used.

"Do we want an old, dilapidated car representing the park system?" said Troy Schinzel, a park manager in charge of the equipment-services division.

He said buyers might be less fussy about looks and handy enough to rehab the stuff.

"A lot of these guys are mechanics and have the time and money to invest," Schinzel said.

Still others may plan to resell their purchases. As he sat behind the wheel of a red street sweeper yesterday, Joe Musto of Island Heights considered bidding on the behemoth vehicle because he said it would stand out.

"It's just different. I like to have stuff no one else has," Musto said as he examined the available merchandise.

While Musto looked over the 1986 Mobil sweeper with his son Nick, 14, at his side, his friend Alan Burdack tried to discourage him.

"I told him not to buy it. He's crazy," said Burdack of Seaside Park.

Musto ignored him and later offered up to \$550 for the sweeper, but he was outbid.

"I didn't get it. It went for too much," said Musto, noting it sold for \$575.