

Auctioning off memories of Ruth Gordon

By Audrey Clinton

THE AUCTION of Ruth Gordon memorabilia showed she was an actress for all ages.

A young man from Canton, Mass., took the shuttle in just to bid on the yellow slicker worn by Gordon in "Harold and Maude." A middle-aged woman flew in from Chicago on a day trip to bid for a souvenir and won an 18th-Century enamel patch box, a gift to Gordon from a play producer. And a young independent stage and film producer from Manhattan jumped in the fray to purchase a gold bracelet with charms detailing the actress' long theater and film career — from "Peter Pan," her first stage appearance, to the movie "Rosemary's Baby."

"I've seen just about every movie she made," said another fan, Renee Ascher of Manhattan. "I've read all her books. She was a unique character. She was feisty. She had spunk. Just a lovely woman."

Ascher was one of several hundred people who crowded William Doyle Galleries in Manhattan on Thursday to bid for the belongings of Gordon, who died last summer. Ascher was happy to secure a Mainbocher embroidered cotton slip for \$65, just big enough to fit her 10-year-old daughter.

And though few of the bidders could fit her size 5 clothing, fans vied with dealers for her extensive wardrobe of classic designer daytime outfits and dainty silk and satin evening dresses by Mainbocher, Dior, Chanel, Givenchy and Balenciaga. However, the top clothing lot and the top sentimental lot turned out to be the bright yellow slicker she wore in her 1971 movie, "Harold and Maude." It brought \$1,600 in a bidding duel won by a young New Englander, who preferred to remain anonymous, who came just for that one lot.

Another happy fan was Paul A. Kaplan, 30, the associate producer of "As Is" and a new movie,



A framed photo of a young Gordon went for \$1,600.

"Parting Glances," who won out over stiff competition to buy Gordon's "This Is Your Life" gold charm bracelet. He paid \$2,700, the third top lot in the sale. "This was something she would have worn," said Kaplan. He said he had been a big fan ever since he had seen Gordon in "Harold and Maude."

"She was just a great woman," he said. "She was a symbol of the good possibilities in life."

Another fan, actress Jean Lee of Manhattan, who

had met Gordon, said she was vibrant, warm and sweet to people. But Lee came for a practical reason — to replenish her stage wardrobe. Lee is just the right size for Gordon's Chanel suit and Mainbocher summer dresses, which she bought. "Maybe they'll bring me luck," she said.

Among the younger fans actively bidding was William Doyle's 13-year-old daughter, Carrie, an aspiring actress. Her father, who conducted the sale, allowed her to go as high as she wanted for one lot. The jubilant youngster bid \$1,300 for a framed autographed letter from Arthur Miller offering Gordon a part in one of his plays. Her 10-year-old sister, Laura, got a toy stove, trade name Ruth, for \$300.

The total for the two-session sale was \$133,281.50, with only a few paintings and one outfit passed, according to Maryalice Adams, a gallery representative. The top two lots were a yellow gold and platinum ring with diamonds that went for \$4,250 and matching earrings that sold for the same amount. They went under the estimate, as did much of the silver, except those pieces with personal associations. A silver tray, a gift with signatures of Natalie Wood, Kirk Douglas, Katharine Hepburn and other Hollywood notables went for \$1,700. A silver frame with a childhood picture of Gordon sold for \$1,600.

Watching Gordon's lifetime of possessions go on the block was Garson Kanin, her husband of more than 40 years, who had said he wanted her fans to have her things. Dapper in a pin-striped suit and in a genial mood, he seemed to enjoy holding court, embracing old friends who crowded around to greet him and shaking hands and chatting with his wife's many fans. He personally withdrew one of the lots from the sale, a framed photo of composer Cole Porter inscribed to the Kanins, to give it to a longtime fan and friend who asked for it — Woody Allen. //

MOVIE REVIEW

Delinquents with a musical bent

★ **KNIGHTS OF THE CITY** (R). Youth gang warfare set against a backdrop of rock and rap music on the mean streets of an inner city is what this noisy and violent movie is all about. Add a half star if you're a Kurtis Blow fan. Leon Isaac Kennedy, Michael Ansara. At area theaters.

By Bill Kaufman

"Knights of the City" is like a vicious "West Side Story." But instead of Leonard Bernstein's memorable score, here we're inundated with what seems like music that didn't quite make the "Krush Groove" soundtrack.

The Royals are multifaceted delinquents — a street gang-cum-rock band led by Troy (Leon Isaac Kennedy) — a group of toughs who spend most of their time doing the usual things, ranging from a rumble here and there to occasional grand theft auto. However, there's a glimmer of social redemption in all this. Troy lets it be known that he feels there's no future in being a crook. Maybe, just maybe, they can play their way out of the ghetto.

Not so easy. Their archfoes are the Mechanics, a rival gang that has eyes for taking over the Royals' turf. Like man, these guys are really mean dudes — they peddle bad dope and shake down local businessmen. But unlike their enemies, the Mechanics

have absolutely no musical ability.

Busted after a rumble, the Royals run into a drunk-tank prisoner who happens to own a recording company. "Hey, you kids sound pretty good," he says, handing out his business cards after the gang has done some spontaneous poppin', rappin' and breakin' in the adjacent cell (a number, appropriately called "Jailhouse Rap"). Can a demo tape be far behind? Or a talent contest?

"Knights of the City" manages to squeeze in a handful of cameo spots by such artists as Kurtis Blow and T. K. It's mostly a mishmash of music, street violence and gutter lingo, inconsistently filmed in a stylized way that gives the movie a feeling that they tried to shoot a "Miami Vice" episode but ended up instead with outtakes from an MTV video. Nevertheless, the movie may appeal to a segment of the teenage market.

The film's co-executive producer, incidentally, is Michael Franzese of and Brentwood, Calif., and Brookville. Franzese is among nine defendants who were charged in a federal indictment alleging that they defrauded banks and other major corporations of more than \$5 million. He has been in custody since he surrendered to federal authorities in Florida on Dec. 20. //



John Mengatti, left, Leon Isaac Kennedy and Nicholas Campbell in 'Knights'

IN SHORT

It's ArtExpo NY '86

ArtExpo NY '86, billed as the world's largest international art fair, will present its eighth annual exhibition in New York April 3-7. The fair will feature 500 dealers, galleries and artists from 25 countries. With over 1,200 booths, ArtExpo says it has the largest number of international exhibitors ever assembled. —Associated Press

Exhibit canceled

A sculpture exhibit, "View from

Harlem," scheduled to open today at the New York State Office Building in Hauppauge, has been canceled.

Domingo cancels shows

Placido Domingo, recovering from hernia surgery, has canceled his first two appearances in the Metropolitan Opera's production of Bizet's "Carmen," company director Bruce Crawford announced yesterday. Tenor Luis Lima will replace Domingo on March 10 and 14. Domingo's appearances March 18 and 22 also are uncertain. //