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Village hosts couple's return to furniture sales

In the early 1990s, Aimee and Dudley Simms went into business together importing and selling English antiques and reproductions. The couple, who had met at a Campus Crusade for Christ event in Hawaii and married in 1986, enjoyed their romantic buying trips to England. Their plans to open a store in Dallas evolved into twice-a-year sales in temporary spaces. The chaos of preparing for those sales was replaced over time with the chaos of bringing up a baby boy, then two, then three, then four.

Now, 12 years after their last sale as a team, the couple are



KIRK DOOLEY

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back in the imported furniture and antiques business. From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, they will hold a sale in Highland Park Village, in the space where Harold's once held court.

The difference this time is that the Simmses will be assisted by four young vice presidents who all attend Providence Christian School.

Lee is in seventh grade, Armstrong is in sixth, Hampton is in fourth, and Boone is in first.

Aimee Simms is thrilled to be back in business with her husband. "In addition to importing antiques, vintage items and reproductions from England, now we also are gathering merchandise stateside and from others. Our principle is the same, selling high quality at a good value."

The couple has also launched a Web site, highgatehouseonline.com. We don't know if their computer-savvy sons oversee that end of the business. Yet.

The key to success in the short-term sales business, according to Dudley, is to price your merchandise to sell. Highgate House will offer English and French antiques, table and chair reproductions, some estate pieces, accessories, art and textiles. The goal is to start with a space crammed full of merchandise and end with an empty room.

"We've maintained relationships with our contacts overseas," said Aimee Simms. "Now we can look at pictures and order from them online, without going to England. Our Dallas

customers are excited about the sale. And people's faces light up when we tell them that we'll be in the Highland Park Village."

Park Cities interior designer Cynthia Collins is among the local professionals who are glad to see Team Simms back in business.

"They have a solid knowledge of antiques and a good eye for decorative accessories," said Collins. "They can discern consignment items that will sell at fair prices. In this economy, that is a win-win for everyone."

The Simmses have kept

their hands in the business by special-ordering merchandise from their designers and furniture makers in England. During these lean times, they are finding more items available to sell. On Tuesday, they'll jump back into the antiques business together for the first time in over a decade. They are ready for the challenge and excited to be back.

"The way I look at it," said Dudley Simms, "is that four boys later, we're picking up where we left off."

Kirk Dooley is a University Park writer.