



AT THE MAVERICK 4-H fireworks stand, Marci Metcalf organized some of the inventory Sunday afternoon.



WITH A BLACK CAT ANNIVERSARY firework in hand, Chris Ward (above) looked at the features the huge item had to offer a buyer. Andrew Heller (below) looked at the stock at Wards fireworks stand on U.S. 83.



POP BOOM BANG IS BIG BUSINESS

With names like the Heart Stopper, Killer Alligator, Saturn Missiles and Crazy Bees, who can resist making a small purchase?

That's right, it is time for fireworks, loud bombs and shooting sparks flying through the night sky.

Area fireworks stands opened Friday afternoon and ever since, the sound of the works can be heard in the air all day long and well into the evening as people practice up for the Fourth of July.

There are quite a few places to choose from for buying fireworks, from the those outside of town, including the Mockrys on U.S. 83, between the Nebraska border and Cedar Bluffs. Then in town, there is one at the old laundromat on U.S. 36, one at the Wards on U.S.

83 just down from The Gateway, one across from Raye's Grocery run by the Maverick 4-H Club and another in front of Reliance Auto Body Shop.

Out on U.S. 83, Sharon Mockry said she started selling fireworks on the farm in 1960. The stand is now in her garage, but she said they haven't always sold out of the same building.

She said selling the noisy, sparkling stuff is fun and interesting and brings in a bit of income for the summer months. The people who lived in the house before her sold fireworks and suggested that she get into the business.

Mrs. Mockry buys the fireworks from Sharleen Kramer, who lives just south of McDonald. Each year there are some new things Mrs. Mockry can buy to sell.

"This year," she said, "we are going to shoot up Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden."

The fireworks, called "game-over," feature each man's face on a small cylinder. There is a third villain whom she said she didn't recognize. The fireworks shoot flaming balls with reports and sell for \$7.



WITH A PUNK in his hand, Clay Richardson prepared to light a firecracker.

Among things that sell well every year, she said, are the magician and the missiles. The magician is noisy and pretty. The missile barrages, said Mrs. Mockry, have lots of shots in them.

Other fireworks which she has set off include the Wild West, Thunder Dome, Sky Garden and Autumn Drizzle.

Mrs. Mockry said the tip she gives to buyers is to check the weight to determine how good a show it will have. Normally, the heavier the fireworks, the more ingredients and the better the display.

Another stand that has had a long history is the Maverick 4-H Club booth across from Raye's. The booth formerly was in Carol Morford's garage when her kids were members.

Since then it has moved next to Pizza Hut and to other locations in town. Marci Metcalf said they order from Flash Fireworks. Members take turns working the booth. The money raised goes to community projects and scholarships for seniors.

At the Ward house on U.S. 83, Chris said this year is the 50th anniversary for Black Cat, a well-known firecracker and fireworks company. For the anniversary, the company has put out special fireworks, bigger than normal. Mr. Ward said he looked at them on the website and they all last a long time and have big explosions.

All of the stands will be open all week: They can sell through Saturday, so sit back and enjoy the show.