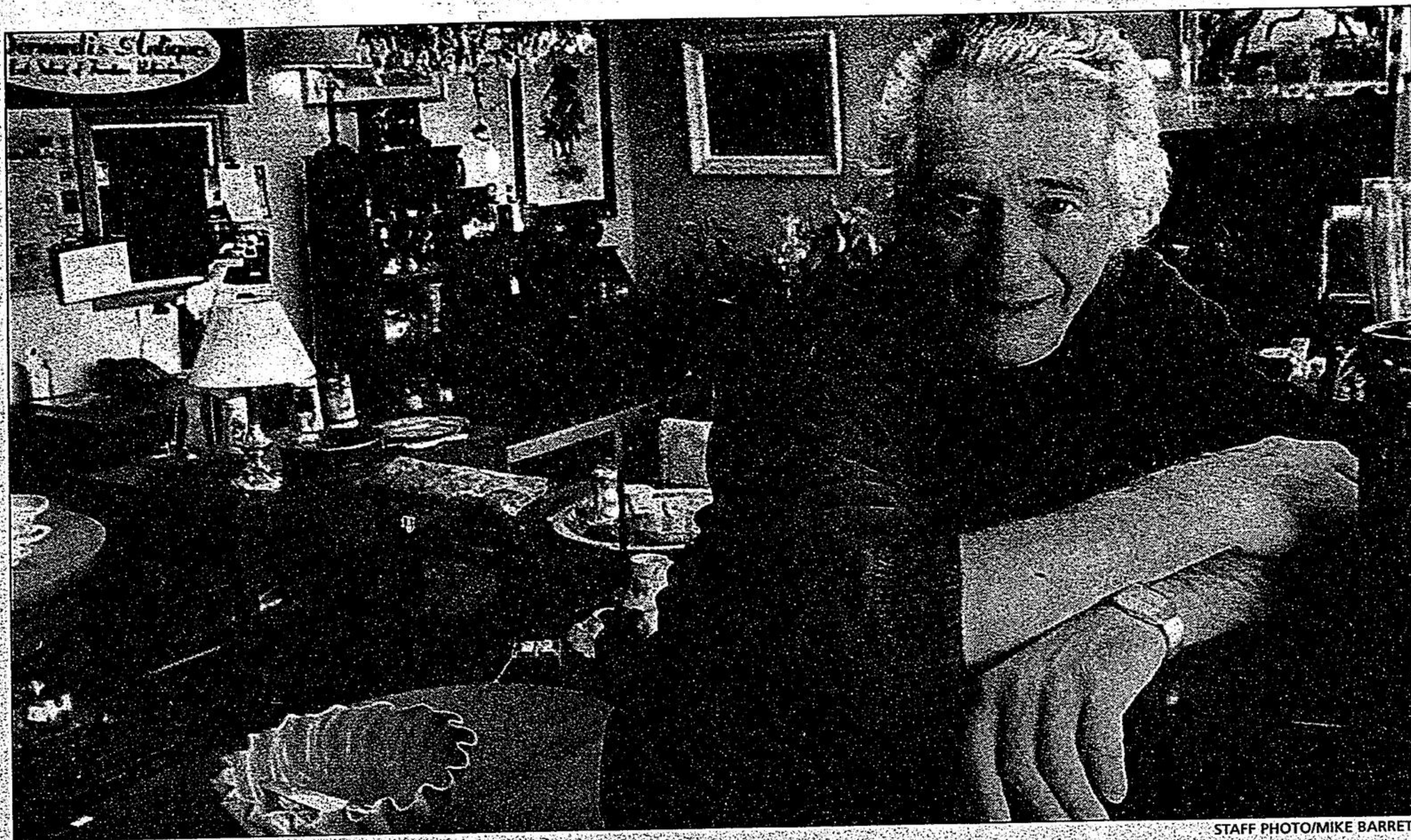


ETCETERA

Thursday, March 8, 2001

14



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Antique dealer Sergio Bernardi says Scandinavian teak furniture from the 1970s is a hot collectible today.

Trash or Treasure?

BY ROY GREEN
Staff Writer

If you're fortunate enough to uncover an antique treasure in an old barn or at a yard sale, don't make the mistake of "restoring" it to its original state — it might cost you a fortune.

"Maybe you saw the woman who brought a lamp to the TV show (Antiques Road Show) and they told her the good news and bad news," antique dealer Sergio Bernardi said.

The good news was it was worth \$35,000. The bad news was it would have been worth \$150,000 if she hadn't restored it.

"With really good antiques, the finish has not been touched.

If it has, the value drops in half,"

said Bernardi from his Aurora antique store.

Dave Beasley, who conducts auction sales across York Region and Simcoe County, compares it to destroying good art.

"Some people make the mistake of stripping the original finish on an antique and refinishing it. It's the same as picking up a Rembrandt and painting green over all the reds."

It's just one of the pitfalls in an increasingly difficult venture — trying to determine what's antique and what's junk.

Sometimes there's a very fine line between a priceless antique and what is, for valuation purposes, junk. And, sometimes an item can be both.

"A lot of times, with furniture,

The growing popularity of antiques has made it harder to sort the junk from the jewels

you can get one piece put together with parts from another piece," Beasley said. "It alters the piece, it's not an original any more."

Bernardi recalls a specific example.

"One of my customers paid \$10,000 for a table in Yorkville after being told it was manufactured in 1815. As it turned out, the top was

1815, but the bottom was brand new. She complained and the dealer took it back. It was eventually resold for about \$1,000."

Bernardi advises antique-seekers find a reputable dealer.

"The most common mistake people make is going to an antique mall and believing everything they tell you. Some of them will tell people an item is 150 years old, but it's only 25 years old. You should go to a reputable dealer who will stand behind his product."

It is certainly safer that way, but if you seek the thrill of unearthing a priceless knick-knack at an incredible price, you won't be able to resist the lure of an auction.

"That's where the bargains are," Beasley said. "You're going to get something a lot cheaper at an auc-

tion. Where do you think the dealers get their stuff?"

Auctioneer Rob Sage is concerned about some of the changes in the business has seen in recent years. "It was different 20 years ago," said Sage, who had his own antique shop in Bradford for many years.

"Most of the dealers were doing it for a living and they had to have good stuff. Now, there are a lot of part-time dealers. It's changed the complexion of the business. You don't need a shop now — you just rent space in an antique mall."

And with an increasing number of people seeking antiques, it's tougher to find bargains.

"There's still lots of good stuff,

See FEW, page 16.

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