

Montalbano Majestic Furniture going strong

By Jean Guarino

With the holidays in full swing, most folks aren't thinking of their furniture. But if you have a worn piece of furniture tucked in a corner of the attic that belonged to your parents or grandparents it's not too soon to think about having it restored in time for Christmas giving to a family member who will cherish it as a family heirloom.

"Many people take the furniture that has been in their family for years for granted. They don't realize that anything built with solid wood is definitely, worth saving," said Richard Montalbano, CEO of Montalbano Majestic Furniture, a three-generation company started by his father, Thomas Montalbano, in Chicago in 1929.

"Most furniture made within the past 25 years of wood veneer, plastic, flake board or other inexpensive material usually isn't worth the expense of restoring. You may have an emotional attachment to a piece, but if it's not top quality, you're really throwing good money after bad," he added. "But solid wood furniture will only increase in value simply because it's so well built and one-of-a-kind."

Today the family-owned business includes Montalbano's wife Kathryn, his two sons Rick and Mark, his mother Patricia, and Thomas Montalbano, the firm's 93-year-old patriarch who still works four hours a day, six days a week in Montalbano Majestic Furniture's factory at 3000 St. Charles Road in Bellwood. The company specializes in the manufacture of a full line of ornate, hand-carved French and Baroque furniture. In recent years, the company also has gone into manufacturing furniture for hotel and health care facilities.

The firm has built its reputation on the quality



Look into having some older pieces of furniture restored at Montalbano Majestic Furniture.

of its restoration work of all styles of furniture. "We make tomorrow's heirlooms out of furniture that many people believe has no value because of its poor condition. But our promise is that when we restore your furniture, it will be worth twice what we charge you, or we won't do it," said Montalbano.

Once the decision is made to restore the furniture it is stripped of all upholstery and hardware and the paint or varnish is removed by hand with specially formulated chemicals that dissolve the old finish, as if it never existed. "We never use commercial strippers that destroy the grain structure of the wood and clog the pores," explains Montalbano. -

The item is then taken apart, reglued and completely hand sanded in preparation for the 12-step hand-finish process. If any parts are missing they are meticulously hand-carved and reproduced out of wood, and missing pieces of hardware are replaced from a large inventory of period hardware Thomas Montalbano has accumulated over the years. Eight-way hind-tied coil springs over a steel support system are standard on all upholstered pieces. And spring inserts used in all cushions give them a lifetime of shape and support.

"Customers who have trouble narrowing their choice of upholstery fabric from the 20,000 samples we have available can work with our

"Wow!" "Unbelievable!"

"Breathtaking!" were the words spoken after the Troglia family of Forest Park received their last three restored pieces.

Come and see for yourself and experience the joy and excitement of renewing your favorite pieces of furniture.

interior designer on staff who will help them choose both the fabric and the wood finish that is most appropriate for their family heirloom," said Montalbano.

Satisfied customers have spread the word, and people are continually bringing their battered and scarred furniture to Montalbanos restoration factory.

"The most rewarding part of my job is returning a sofa or other piece of furniture to the customer after it has been restored," he said. "People can't believe they're one and the same. Some customers get very emotional when furniture that has been in their family for a generation or more goes out the door in terrible condition and comes back looking like new and ready for another 100 years of wear."

The time frame for restoring a piece of furniture depends on the size and amount of work involved and varies from four to 12 weeks. So if you're looking for a unique Christmas gift that will draw raves from the entire family, call or visit Montalbano Majestic Furniture at 3000 St. Charles Road (five blocks west of 25th Ave.) in Bellwood. Factory hours are Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information call (708) 547-1010.