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Kennedy's Refinishing returns fine pieces to original state

By Andy Rathbun, Herald Writer

Some think of it as holiday season, but for furniture refinishers, the weeks before Christmas and Thanksgiving signify something else entirely -- dining season.

And that means a steady flow of business for Kennedy's Refinishing.

The company can take an antique or distressed table and turn it into a gleaming, lacquered piece of furniture that you can, quite literally, eat off.

The Arlington refinishers intend to showcase some of their work -- including an antique wash stand that is half-distressed, half-refinished -- at the Everett Fall Home Show from Friday through Sunday.

The shop, which specializes in refinishing antiques, will also provide free quotes at the show. It's a soft-sell, said co-owner Kathleen Kennedy, who runs the business with her husband, Patrick Kennedy.

"A lot of people, they just want to know what the price would be, and there's no way for them to know that," she said. "We're happy to give all the information."

Kennedy said some people hesitate to refinish their heirlooms and antiques, worried that the process might devalue the item. She said generally, that won't happen.

"It's really not true," she said. "It only really can be true in museum quality pieces, which most folks don't have. Museums have museum quality pieces."

Nonetheless, Kennedy's takes its time refinishing pieces, following a three-step process: Strip the wood, make minor repairs to it, then refinish it.

While it may sound simple, the process takes two weeks on average.

In part, that's because the business abhors tossing an antique into a large tub of chemicals. By meticulously applying and removing the stripper, the potent chemical is less likely to damage the wood or weaken the glue used on some furniture, she said.

"It's in that chemical for the briefest time possible," Kennedy said.

The hands-on work is done by Patrick Kennedy, who has been refinishing pieces since the early 1980s.

"The bulk of his work was for antique dealers I'd say until about 15 years ago when we really opened up to the public," Kathleen Kennedy said.

Now, at any given time, the business has a range of pieces being stripped and refinished.

"At the present time we have a huge project going on for a woman that's totally redoing her kitchen," Kennedy said. "It's taken up our whole shop. (Patrick), he's probably got 14 pieces out there right now."

While that project may eat up loads of work hours, the shop is approaching a still busier time of year, with the holidays -- excuse us, dining season -- right around the corner.

In other words, if you want that table ready by Thanksgiving Day, you may want to get an estimate soon.

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Kennedy's Refinishing

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