

Suburban Life



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Bygone books

Former bestsellers live again

By Carolyn DeMarco
staff writer

IF YOU WANT New York Times bestsellers, computer searches, wide and clean and well-lit aisles of glibly displays, well, you know where to go. There's a brand name bookstore if not on every corner at least in every mall.

Now on the other hand, if you're looking for one of Stephen King or Elmore Leonard's earlier works, a cheap copy of "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy," or an only slightly spaghetti sauce-stained book of tried and true Italian recipes, better intro-

duce yourself to George Barry.

George Barry is the owner of the bookstore by the same name on Orchard Lake Road just south of 14 Mile Road, under the yellow awning. And if it looks a little nondescript outside, come on in. Once inside, disarray is a word that comes to mind.

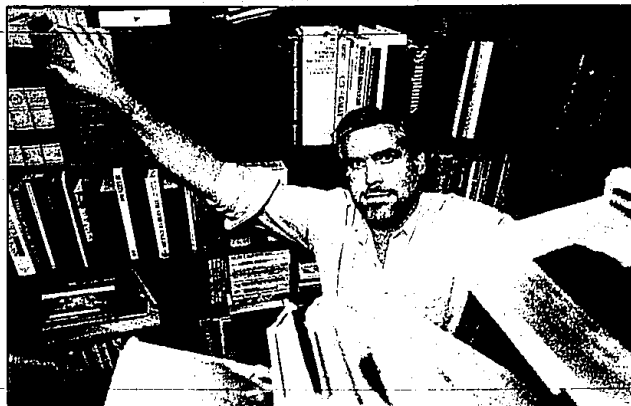
Naturally there are books on shelves, hardcover and paperback, children and adult, mystery and romance, science fiction and westerns, and lots of non-fiction on any and every subject. But there are also books in boxes, books in corners, books on top of, behind, in front of and underneath the counter.

LIKE EVERY BOOKSELLER, Barry's had a lifetime love affair with books. "It's in my background and I'd say it parallels the life of 9 out of 10 used booksellers, antiquarians and collectors," he said. "I've been haunting used book stores since my early teens, most of that time in Detroit. I remember the Silver Shack of 30 years ago and the Michigan Book Exchange. Most of the used bookstores were in Detroit."

"I became a book junkie, dealing (in books) on the side to pay for my habit. Then I'd deal more to buy more. It's a natural way to fall into

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Sherry Schultz
of George
Barry Books
does a visual
search for a
customer
looking for a
specific book
on the
revolutionary
war.



SHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer

What'll it be? A Dorothy Sayers mystery? Lee Iacocca's biography? A history of Michigan? There's a good chance George Barry will find it in the stacks on the shelves and floors.

Furniture fixer restores prized possessions

By Carolyn DeMarco
staff writer

NEVER ASK Steve Szuba "What's new?" Instead, better phrase it, "What's been renewed?" Szuba is the 28-year-old owner of Old World Refinishing, a Farmington firm that offers antique and other furniture refinishing, repairs, stripping, seat weaving and caning.

Szuba's been doing his stripping act since he was 12 and was his father's assistant in a garage workshop. In 1983 Ray Szuba turned the hobby into a business, but died suddenly in 1986. The young Szuba, who

was intending to join his father in business, instead took over the reins, just out of Eastern Michigan University.

"I majored in business," Szuba said. "There are no schools that teach this. If you hired experienced people they've already learned it a certain way. I'd rather hire young people. After four or five years here they do it the way I like."

Szuba employs four people — two full time and two part time. "We never run out of work,"

Business is changing, Szuba said. "In the last two years it's taken a big turn. It used to be more residential, now it's 90 percent commercial."

Businesses have become more cost conscious. If they have hundreds of the same chairs, we can offer a great price (on making them like new.) Instead of paying \$75 for a new chair, they can spend \$25 on renewing, he said.

OLD WORLD Refinishing's most unusual project was a four-month job restoring a Catholic church in Monroe. "We moved down there," he said. "There was nothing going on here in the workshop." The job included pews, doors, "anything that was wooden."

The most unusual request, Szuba said, was one he turned down.

"Someone brought in an old painted toilet seat. At first I thought it must be a friend playing some game, but it was for real."

The question "why?" pops to mind. "I've learned not to ask, Szuba said. "I never ask how it got broke. I learned that early. Many times it's in a domestic dispute . . . but I really would have liked to hear the story behind the toilet seat."

Szuba shakes his head when he remembers the old, home-made, three-legged milking stool. "It was filthy. It had absorbed so much dirt over the years."

His favorite jobs are the challenging ones. "I enjoy the difficult repairs, but I don't make any money. There's too much time spent on it if it's a nice job, but I like veneering, making new parts. When you work so hard on it it becomes 'your piece' and you know it was only two steps away from the dumpster."

Szuba is down on today's furniture makers, those who've manufactured since 1970. "The new pieces are really junk. The veneer is too thin. You can't even sand. Then it's glued to particle board . . . I like to think people bring us furniture to redo because they realize it's a quality piece. They know they can't buy that in a furniture store today. Even Ethan Allen doesn't make the quality furniture they made 20 years ago."

THE OLDEST PIECE restored by Szuba was an old English trunk from 1631. "The basic task is trying to save it. You try to retain the original

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— Steve Szuba

wood and you go out of your way to retain that old look," he said.

Oak is still the wood of choice, Szuba said, "but I wish trends would change. It gets sort of monotonous."

His own home in Redford is decorated in "hodgepodge," the accumulation of found objects, none of them oak. "I have unique coffee tables, end tables, not a matching piece in the house," he said. "The only thing not antique is the sofa — you have to sit on that."

Szuba has advice for antique-seekers: "The most redeeming quality of an antique is its uniqueness."

If you can say, "Gee, I've never seen that," buy it, he advises. "That's the type of piece I put in my house," he said, "something that's not typical. It has little to do with the wood."

Anything that's broken can be fixed, Szuba said but not everything

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Fashions are focus for center

What may very well be the longest-running fashion show fundraiser in the area does a repeat next week. The volunteer guild's 23rd annual fall fashion luncheon in support of the Community Center Farmington-Farmington Hills is scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 3, in the grand ballroom of the Novi Hilton, Eight Mile Road and 1475.

The community center scrapbook shows the 1972 donation as \$5.50 for a Holiday Inn show featuring fashions by Irene Mackinnon. This year's event is \$25 per ticket to view fashions by Liz Claiborne, plus a whole lot more. The aim, however, is the same — to raise money for the center's general fund. This year's goal is \$5,000 and 400-500 women are expected to attend to help meet that goal.

Doors will open at 10 a.m. with a cash bar and boutiques featuring air-brushed fingernails, custom clothing, jewelry and other unique items. Lunch will be served at noon.

Liz Claiborne fashions — sportswear, career dressing, evening and holiday fashions and all accessories — will be modeled 1-3 p.m. by volunteer guild members, professional models and celebrities, including Ann Thompson of WDIV-TV 50.



SHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer

Steve Szuba of Old World Refinishing, Ltd. of Farmington applies the finish remover to start the renewal process of an old chair. All work — including sanding and stripping is done by hand by Szuba or one of his small staff. At right, matching tables show the before and after effects of Old World's work. The tables barely survived a house fire.

