

'Scapes: Around we go with N&O photojournalist John Rottel. 12E

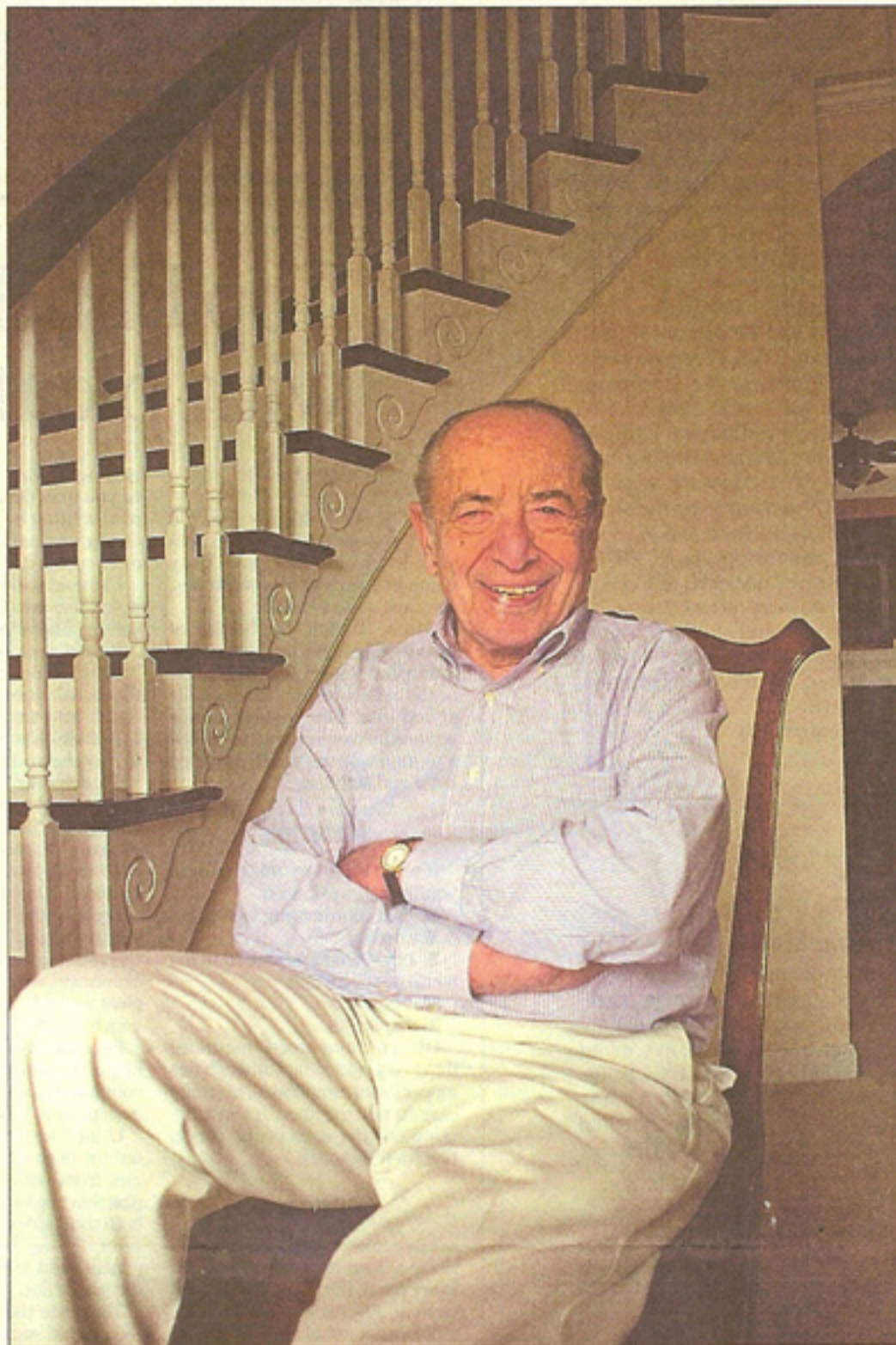
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Fuzzy basket:
Little bunnies will love this fiber Easter egg carrier. PAGE 12E



Albert Sack knows old furniture. After an amazing career in New York buying and selling exquisite antique pieces, the 89-year-old has relocated to Hillsborough to rebuild an empire.

STAFF PHOTO BY TAKAARI IWABU

Dean of the dealers

In the world of antique American furniture, Albert Sack is a legend

BY MARGIE FISHMAN
STAFF WRITER

HILLSBOROUGH
"I gotta tell you a story," Albert Sack begins, the veritable New Yorker commanding attention. Sack was attending an antiques show dinner a few years back, when the editor of a trade digest came running over to his table to tell him that a man had just pointed in his direction, awestruck.

"There's Albert Sack!"
The man was Harrison Ford. In an arcane world where a hairy-paw foot wing armchair can fetch the price of a small island, Sack is considered the dean of Americana dealers. His late father's imprint, Israel Sack Inc., is as familiar as the auctioneer's hammer, a provenance recognized around the globe for authenticity, integrity and superb craftsmanship. Three rooms in The Metropolitan Museum of Art bear the Israel Sack name.

At 89, Albert Sack is rebuilding an empire in an area prized for discount furniture. And his infatuation with decorative arts, which sustained him during the Depression, continues to keep him alive today, he says.

By his own estimate, Sack has examined hundreds of thousands

of pieces over a career spanning seven decades, and possesses an encyclopedic knowledge of only the good finds. He has appeared on "Martha Stewart Living" and "Antiques Roadshow," and has served as a furniture adviser to the White House dating to the Eisenhower administration, when he donated a Hepplewhite sofa to the oval Diplomatic Reception Room. Museums from Detroit to Dallas call on him when looking to expand their Early American collections.

His firm holds the record for the most expensive piece of American furniture bought at auction, paying \$12.1 million in 1989 for a secretary desk crafted by revered 18th century furniture maker John Goddard. After shuttering his business on New York's Fifth Avenue in 2001, Sack moved in with his daughter's family in northern Durham County near Hillsborough.

In January, he paid \$8.4 million for a Chippendale carved mahogany scalloped-top tea table. The sale set the record for the highest-priced American tea table sold at auction, according to Sotheby's. "I think if I would have hesitated they would've gone another bid," says Sack, who has the

SEE SACK, PAGE 3E

Can you spot the difference?

Sack classifies these mahogany four-column card tables as "good," "better" and "masterpiece." Can you tell which table is the "masterpiece"? Find the answer on page 3E.

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