

COLLECTIBLES



Nisha Pulliam • For 50 Plus Lifestyles

Tim Luke poses with collections in the Elliott Museum in Stuart.

Appraiser tells you what your antiques are really worth

By NISHA PULLIAM
For 50 Plus Lifestyles

STUART —In keeping with its policy of education as well as exhibits, the Elliott Museum brought Tim Luke, president and co-owner of TreasureQuest Auction Galleries and appraiser on HGTV's new show, "Cash in the Attic," to the museum.

An active member of the Historical

Society of Martin County's Collections Committee, Luke has an extensive background in the antiques and collectibles field. He served as Director of the Collectibles Department at Christie's Auction House in New York prior to his moving to South Florida and starting his own auction and appraisal business, which he recently moved to the Willoughby Business Park in Stuart.

He introduced his first book, "Toys from American Childhood," on NBC's "Today" show and has been a frequent guest on NBC's "The View," where he was asked to appraise the family heirlooms of Barbara Walters. Luke also appeared for the first eight seasons on the "Antiques Roadshow."

His latest show takes viewers through people's homes. The idea is they want to fix up their homes and need cash for that purpose. Luke and another host check out things they feel they can live without and see if they will bring the amount they need at an auction. The show originated in England, where it is in its seventh year, with a slightly different format.

The producers had seen Luke on the "Antiques Roadshow." He submitted a tape and made the final cut to be the appraiser on the show. It took three years, but he was chosen as appraiser for the program.

"I never had any real lines, it was just go, and that's what I loved about it. It is spontaneous."

At the Elliott, Luke regaled the audience with his experiences putting the production together. It was a real challenge and a great learning experience for him. Then he gave them some tips about collecting and debunked some of the myths surrounding antiques and collectibles.

"A lot of families that brought things to me had a preconceived idea of the value of them, and we went about breaking them down," he said. "A lot of times people get attached to the stuff we carry around with us through our lives. Sentiment and memories are behind it which no appraiser can put a price on, as to the person it is priceless."

People and family memories can be faulty about dates and events, he said, and all items do not increase in value with age. What creates value is the desirability and rarity of a piece. So keep your finger on the pulse of the market.

Some of the interesting things he came across in the show were a pair of needlepoint chairs, but they were reproductions. Most of the furniture they saw was 20th century reproductions. Luke said what people are looking for