



Stephan J. Miranti (at right) takes bids during an auction of the household items of Colts Neck resident John Forrest, a ticket broker who admitted bilking customers and failed to appear for sentencing in Superior Court. (STAFF PHOTO: BOB BIELK)

Thief's household goods draw hundreds to auction

By **KAREN SUDOL**
FREEHOLD BUREAU

COLTS NECK — The contents of a house owned by a local man who has admitted bilking customers and the state treasury out of \$770,000 worth of concert, theater and sporting-events tickets, were auctioned off yesterday.

Between 400 and 500 bidders participated in the daylong auction at John Forrest's Western Drive home, said auctioneer Stephan J. Miranti, of Eatontown-based Auction Liquidation Services.

Miranti estimated that close to \$100,000 was raised.

Miranti was hired by Forrest's wife to conduct the auction, he said. Bidders from New York, Connecticut and Pennsylvania as well as New Jersey participated.

The house, estimated to be worth \$3 million, is up for sale, Miranti said.

Cars also were auctioned, but they were not owned by 41-year-old Forrest, said Miranti, adding that they were brought to the house.

Everything from silk flower arrangements and gold picture

frames to limestone fireplace mantels and a dining room set were sold in the mini-manor with seven bedrooms and seven baths, he said. Two chandeliers each sold for \$5,000, Miranti said.

"There were a lot of competing bids," he said, describing the contents as "fabulous."

Earlier this month, a judge revoked Forrest's \$1 million bail and issued a bench warrant for his arrest after he failed to appear for sentencing in Superior Court, New Brunswick.

Forrest had pleaded guilty to a five-count accusation admitting theft by deception, misapplication of entrusted funds, sales-tax evasion and credit-card fraud.

As the owner of Tri-State Ticket Exchange on Route 9 in Old Bridge, Forrest billed — and sometimes double-billed — customers for tickets to major sporting and concert events, but failed to provide the tickets, according to authorities.

Under terms of the agreement, Forrest was to pay \$770,000 in restitution, including paying more than 100 consumers and the state treasury.