

# Furniture quality key for Formby

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

When Homer Formby goes furniture shopping, he heads straight for garage sales, junk stores, resale shops and antique stores.

"Go to the second-hand places. If it's well-made furniture anywhere from 50-60 years old, it's going to increase in value," said the world-famous authority on furniture refinishing and care.

Finely crafted solid wood furniture prompts continuing interest despite the difficulties today in buying it brand new. Hardwood trees, which take 60-100 years to harvest for furniture quality, are drastically dwindling. Today, particle board, plastics, metals and glass have come to frequently replace the beautiful hardwoods.

"It's not the manufacturers' fault. They have to make furniture you can afford to buy," said Formby, who appeared at the Farmington/Farmington Founders Festival July 16. "They can't do it any longer and put it on the market."

Paralleling the interest in quality wood furniture is a growing interest in do-it-yourself refinishing and care.

With a little investigation and some patience, good quality furniture of the type that enriched the homes of most people's grandparents can be found.

"PEOPLE ARE interested in this. They go out and get the old furniture. It doesn't have to be antique to be worth something. Age doesn't have that much to do with value."

Two things to look for when shopping for older furniture is good, sound structure and craftsmanship—carvings, spindles, turns, for example. "You'll know it's nothing but the finest wood because a craftsman wouldn't have bothered on less than quality wood," Formby said.

Whether it's painted, overly varnished or knicked here and there isn't much of a problem. With a little work, the piece can be brought back to life. And it is not that tough, though perhaps a little frightening, to the new do-it-yourselfer, Formby said.

Naturally, do-it-yourselfers are of interest to Formby, who has become world famous with his refinishing and wood care products. But the southern-born craftsman began his refinishing products company



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Leading furniture refinishing and care authority Homer Formby recommends using only lemon or cedar oil to dust and maintain quality wood furniture.

when the supply of qualified craftsmen dwindled.

"I owned 17 antique shops. I tried to have a national chain. But all the older men began retiring and I started a long search for skilled people to replace them. I found I couldn't replace them. I found most people didn't want to learn a trade with a lot of hard work and sweat. So I had to find an easier way to do the work myself," said Formby, who comes from a long line of furniture builders and craftsmen.

HE BEGAN experimenting and eventually developed products he could use in his own refinishing and antiquing business. "I came along and found a new way of refinishing furniture," said Formby, who began displaying his then-home made products in public in 1968.

He encourages people interested in good furniture to get out searching and putting in a little old-fashioned elbow grease into maintaining the treasures they find.

"Refinishing a piece of furniture is the last resort. Cleaning, and I don't mean with soap and water, is the most important," he said.

Just like mirrors and windows, furniture collects the pollution of the day. And it builds up. Adding to the build-up is the myriad of polishes and other specialized cleaning products.

"Everytime you put on a coat, you're truly putting on another coat. All you're doing is burying the pollution. And that will start softening the wood," he said.

With or without his products, Formby said there is plenty of simple ways to clean furniture and keep

it maintained to last forever. Furniture can be cleaned of all the built-up pollution, waxes and polishes with mineral spirits, which is a paint thinner. The substance softens the hardened wax and a cotton cloth can wipe it off, Formby said.

Proper care of furniture boils down to using a little lemon or cedar oil rather than dusting sprays and polishes. "Oil is absorbed. And oil is what makes wood beautiful."

## Sanders may reopen downtown — vice president

By Casey Hane  
staff writer

Holy hot fudge Farmington residents may again be able to enjoy the Sanders soda bar downtown.

After closing the downtown Farmington Sanders store earlier this year, the company's new owners are considering reopening a store in the heart of this city and at other, former locations, a Sanders executive said this week.

Vice president John Christy said there is no set plan or timetable, but the company is reviewing its entire marketing strategy, which includes the possible store reopenings and expansion into new markets.

One of his first jobs, Christy said, is to re-establish leases for Sanders' 21 Detroit-area stores, some of which expired while the company was being reorganized under federal bankruptcy laws.

"Right now, we're reassessing the market, and doing a lot of capital investing within the plant," Christy said. "We're also reassessing the real estate situation and should start to move on it. But there are no definite plans at this time."

ALTHOUGH THE downtown Farmington store was closed in February, another remained open at 12 Mile and Farmington Road in Farmington Hills. Sanders could not recover its former site in the Downtown Farmington Center because the site is being renovated for a different store.

The store's closing last winter prompted a last-minute rush for hot fudge cream puffs and other goodies.

Christy was named vice president for marketing and sales for Fred Sanders, Inc. last spring and

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is charged with boosting the company's future sales in Detroit and across the country.

The 51-year-old was formerly vice president for the east Connecticut-based Country Home Bakers, Inc. which acquired Sanders for \$6 million in a deal approved last April in U.S. Bankruptcy Court.

The new parent company sells frozen bakery products to supermarkets and food service chains nationwide, and Christy envisions a time, in a year or two, that Sanders cakes, ice cream, candies and toppings also will be available nationwide. They are test-marketing many Sanders products across the country.

CHRISTY, a native of Detroit, recalls his childhood when he waited eagerly for the Sanders delivery driver and watched his mother choose from the baked goods.

"If we had a theme here, it would be 'remember when,'" the marketing executive said.

Future plans include reintroducing discontinued recipes stored away in the Sanders archives for 35-40 years. The recipes are for products such as old-fashioned fruit pies and gourmet chocolate chunk cookies, Christy said.

"Gee whiz, there's nothing more accepted than an old-fashioned homemade pie with fresh apples," he added.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.



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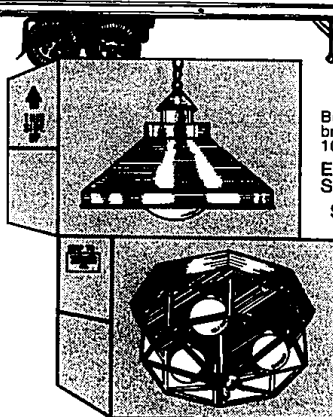
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