

Kramer's Best Antique Improver DEALER NEWS

JULY, 1996

Volume 1, Number 4

more-than-just-a-product...

It's a cause.

IN February of last year, *The Kansas City Star* ran a very nice article, complete with color photo, about John. The headline read: "John Kramer's more-than-just-a-product". And in the body of the story reported: "... *Kramer's Best Antique Improver* is more than a product. It's a cause."

The *Star* newswriter, after an initial interview, which led to lengthy conversations with John, reached this very perceptive conclusion.

And, though it has never been put in exactly those words before, anyone personally involved with serious use and sales of this product will agree.

Antique Improver is an exceptional product. It works very well. Its use yields results which we often hear described as "amazing" or "miraculous".

But it is much more than a great product. It is a product with a purpose. John's goal to preserve as many of the old pieces as possible, keeping original finishes intact, and saving as much originality as possible, is an integral part of the product. Steady increase in sales of *Kramer's Best* over the past 9 years is one measure of progress

toward this goal.

And the "cause" doesn't stop there. Formulation of *Kramer's Best* products—methods of production, as well as the type of ingredients used (and those NOT used)—are proof that we do not need to contaminate ourselves, as well as our planet, with harmful and incompatible materials. Hopefully this knowledge and practice will help to encourage progress of these philosophies and methods into other areas of our lives.

All *Kramer's Best* packaging (except the necessary plastic child-proof lids) is done with natural and recyclable materials. We heartily enjoy shredding our "junk mail" to use for shipping filler, giving purpose to this horror from the mail box. All that we can do contributes to our future.

These are all reasons you can take great pride when you present *Kramer's Best* to your customers. And, you can always feel confident when dealing with this company, that it has been built—and will always operate—on good old-fashioned principles. In a



Dealer Philosophy statement composed by John Kramer when he first began marketing *Antique Improver*, he stated: "I believe fair treatment breeds loyalty, loyalty builds trust, and trust builds friendships and businesses of longevity and good profits." He continues to support this philosophy today.

Yes, it is more than a product. It is a cause. And it's a cause which you can be very proud to promote.

New "Dealer Info" Brochure Enclosed

Included with this newsletter you will find a copy of our recently-completed "Dealer Info" brochure.

We have tried to gather all details concerning the dealership program and wholesale pricing into this one piece.

We chose the "Q & A" format to try to make the information as "reader-friendly" as possible and easy to refer to later. We hope you will find it helpful.

Knowledge = Sales

Educate Yourself about "Kramer's Best"

DO you have the answer if a prospective customer asks you what makes *Antique Improver* better than other products? Or, if it can be used on a painted finish? Or, the toughest one, simply a direct: "What does it do?"

If you don't have answers, you may be losing sales that should be yours.

Kramer's Best Antique Improver and other *Kramer's Best* products not only work very well, but they are very versatile and have many varied applications. It is a rare household that does not have at least one piece, or area, which could benefit from use of one or more of the products.

Many times at shows, after explaining what *Antique Improver* can do on "any wood in your home", we hear the customer declare that they have no need for it. But, when we continue the conversation by mentioning specific applications, such as window sills or kitchen cupboards, etc., one of these will spark immediate interest. It is just a matter of exploring possibilities until you find a

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particular need. But to effectively do this, it is imperative that you are knowledgeable about the products and with the many ways they can be used.

And what is the best way for you to gain this knowledge? Well, first of all, your most valuable tool is the book of "Instructions & Suggested Uses". Read it. Refer to it often. You may not remember it all, but you will know what it contains and where to find answers when you—or your customers—have questions. When you make a sale, talk to your customer about the book as you give it to them. Explain that it has much information they will find helpful and how important this information is to effective use of the products. We are very proud of this book. We spent a lot of time in producing it—trying to make it as complete and helpful as possible. It is expensive to produce. But we feel the successful use of the products (which ultimately means repeat sales) depends upon knowledge of their use, justifying the expense and effort of providing the book with each sale.

In addition to reading about how to use the products, you gain knowledge simply by using them. Maybe you have never used *Antique Improver* on a painted tin, or on the metal of a tool. Read what the

instruction book has to say, then try new applications. (And to make this really pay off, work on only part of the pieces, leaving the rest untreated, then use them as "before/after" samples for your display.) Each piece is different—what is on it is different, what it has been exposed to is different—and working with each one adds to your experience and knowledge. This is valuable information to share with a prospective customer.

Another great source of information about use of the products which is often overlooked, is your customer. Whenever someone buys a bottle, start a conversation. Ask them if they have used it before. Ask how they used it and if they liked the results. Customers have many times told us of uses they have found which had not occurred to us. What you learn from one customer gives you more information to pass on to the next.

And, always remember, we are glad to answer your questions. Phone or write (or Fax), and urge your customers to do the same. To be able to tell a customer that if they have questions they can phone the maker of the product for assistance, is an impressive sales tool.

The more you—and your customers—know about the products, the more they will be used. And when more is used, more is sold.

Read the Book!

Try new applications

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Where are you?

A strange question? Obviously this newsletter found you! Yes, we do manage to keep track of our dealers' mailing and shipping addresses pretty well, since that's what you use when you place your orders.

But, what we have a real challenge keeping track of, are your retail locations—where you offer *Kramer's Best* for sale. For some this is pretty "cut-and-dried". You have a shop, we ship to your shop and you sell from your shop. But for others, we may ship to your home but you don't sell from there, sales are only from a mall, or several malls. Or, maybe your shop and also a mall or two. It can become very confusing.

We have always tried to keep track of this information to help refer prospective customers to retail locations in their area. It used to be easy when we had only a few dealers. Now there are over 300, and it is becoming more of a challenge. Someday it may become absolutely impossible. But we want to keep trying as long as we can.

We now have these listings computerized which is a great help. But we must rely on you to furnish current information.

Enclosed with this newsletter mailing you will find a "Retail Location" form. If you have not filled out one of these in the past year, or if your retail locations have changed, we need this completed form if you wish to be included in our database.

We will update this information yearly, so be sure to keep us posted to be included in this service.

NEWS & NOTES

A NEW "OLD" WORKSHOP FOR JOHN — John's treadle lathe, and the rest of his collection of old tools, now have a new home. Due to space limitations, many of these fine old pieces, as well as an array of "plunder" from his mountain man days, had to remain stored away. Acquisition of this property, in Fairmount township, Independence, Missouri, makes room for display and use of these old pieces, as well as ample room for a workshop. The shop is open by "chance or appointment". If you are in the area, or plan to be passing through and want to stop by, give us a call to set up a time for a visit. And you can make the trip even more worthwhile if you pick up your product orders there and save shipping charges. We hope to see you soon.

DON'T FORGET, A DOZEN FREE 8-OZ BOTTLES of *Antique Improver* can be yours if you refer someone to us who becomes a dealer. If you would like an extra copy of the new "Dealer Info" brochure to give to someone, or would like us to send the information to a dealer prospect for you, let us know. Just remember to give us names of who you have referred. They may forget to mention it and we want to be sure you get credit.

KEEP A NOTEBOOK! — All of our Dealer Newsletters, as well as the new "Dealer Info" brochure have been 3-hole punched. In the future, other forms such as order form, location form, etc. will also be made notebook-ready. A few minutes spent placing these in a binder will have them ready for quick use and handy reference in the future.

WE'RE SORRY this Dealer Newsletter is so long overdue. Demands on our time, while trying to keep up with a growing business, have caused us to focus in other areas. However, requests from many of you have made us realize how important this newsletter is to you and we will try to be more frequent in the future.

Kramer's Best Antique Improver

DEALER NEWS

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VOLUME 1, NUMBER 4

Published by:

JOHN T. KRAMER

maker of

Kramer's Best Antique Improver

and other unique

Restoration & Preservation Products

Editor:

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The World according to John Kramer

BY JOHN T. KRAMER
*Antiques Doctor & Apothecary
Traditional Wood Conservator*

[Editor's Note: John's philosophy of preservation and restoration is an integral part of the products. And his philosophies are, of course, not limited to antiques and wood (as those of you who have heard him speak well know). Hence this page is named as you see above. This page (and as much of the newsletter as necessary) is devoted not only to sales of Kramer's Best products, but to John's writings on matters of interest in many areas: conservation, preservation, restoration, or...(?) Send your questions. Share your problems and concerns as you work with antiques and with wood or in any area where John's knowledge and expertise may be of assistance. Others may also benefit from the answers. If there are subjects you would like to see discussed, let John know. If he doesn't already know the answers, he has exceptional resource materials available. We want to hear from you.]

Since the focus of this issue is to increase sales by learning more about the products and their uses, my answers to some of the most frequently asked questions may be helpful.

Q I have had customers say they don't need Antique Improver because they use lemon oil. How can I respond? What's wrong with lemon oil?

A Not much. Not much good, not much harm, not much lasting benefit. You might try asking your customer if they notice that once they apply lemon oil or other modern concoctions, that the small improvement soon fades away, and the next coat seems less effective than the former. Ask if they don't notice that the more they use the product the more often they need to dust and the more difficult dusting becomes. Ask if the wood isn't getting more dull and lifeless with age not exhibiting the richness shown in your *Antique Improver* "before and after" samples.

The problem is that commercially-available so-called "lemon oil" preparations are simply petroleum-based ingredients with a little artificial lemon scent added. (Usually, if you read the label it will verify this.) Petroleum-based woodcare products have no beneficial uses relating to wood. They may temporarily improve appearance, but contain nothing that gives lasting improvement, and in fact, can aggravate damage over time. Lemon oil is only the less offensive and damaging of the wide range of petrochemicals available. Suggest to your customers that they try *Antique Improver* so they can see the difference for themselves.

Q A customer told me that when they used Antique Improver it left the piece "sticky". What went wrong?

A Most often it is simply a failure to wipe the work completely dry after applying *Antique Improver*, leaving a residue of the oils on the surface to dry and become sticky. The cure for this is to reapply *Antique Improver*, then wipe the surface perfectly dry with a clean cotton cloth. Another situation that can cause stickiness: if the product is liberally applied too often (once every week or two) over a period of time, it can soften certain finishes too much and cause stickiness. Simply slow down, dust with a dry cloth and let the finish firm up. *Antique Improver* can be applied in multiple coats initially to stabilize a piece, but, once fully stabilized should only require reapplication once or twice a year—at most three or four times. [For additional information see the Instruction Book: BASIC INSTRUCTIONS, PG. 5; CLEANING & REMOVING SURFACE BUILD-UP, PGS. 5-6 AND SMUDGES, STREAKS, SMEARS & CLOUDING, PG. 6.]

Q Instructions on the bottles say not to use Antique Improver or Blemish Clarifier on "modern water-based finishes". What does that mean?

A If you have a piece of "name brand" furniture with a high-shine finish, manufactured in the last 25 years, it may be a

water-based finish. Use caution! In order to comply with environmental regulations, furniture mass manufacturers have been using so-called water-based lacquers, off and on, over the past fifteen to twenty years. These materials are known to be less than successful as wood finishes. These finishes are very delicate and easily damaged. Though *Improver* or *Clarifier* can be used successfully over these—when used with great care—they can cause permanent damage when used only a little carelessly. Better to use only what the manufacturer recommends. Best of all, of course, is to stay with the wonderful old pieces so that you can enjoy and preserve those irreplaceable finishes and better quality furniture.

Q I get complaints about the price of Antique Improver. Why does it cost more than other products?

A The simplest answer is that "You get what you pay for!". But, of course, customers deserve a better answer. To explain the price difference, it is first important to understand how this product is different from other products on the market.

I have chosen to make a product intended ultimately to help preserve the past for the future. The tangible historic record, celebrating the longest period of human history and endeavor, is the working and using of wood. Up until this century wood was used for every aspect of life and has been far more important far longer than oil or any other material save food and water. It is only just now we can begin to identify a decline in its importance to everyday life, and a need to truly begin preserving what we have left (good and bad) to show the future the true ingenuity of their ancestors. My product is formulated to aid in this preservation.

More it pleases me to offer something of the past—something still superior to confounded alternatives. The materials I work with in my products have not been in general (and ever in declining) use for the past 150 or so years. This is only because they've always been expensive to produce, and cheaper has come to mean better—even though it might not work quite as well. When precious extracts of oils, gums, resins, volatiles and essential emollients are hand gathered from rare plants, and carefully hand processed in small batches to concentrate the treasure within, it is not inexpensive. These best materials have always been expensive, but for *results*, they've never been surpassed.

Ingredients in my product cost over 3 times what the packaging for the product costs. I may have the only product on the market in which this is true—for most others, the ingredients are only a fraction of the cost of the package. If I were to price my product to the same level as other manufacturers, I would need to retail the 8-ounce bottle somewhere near \$49.95.

For mass marketers, cheap ingredients are necessary in order to have a huge profit margin to spend on promotion, advertising, fancy packaging and multi-level markup. I choose to invest as much as possible of the price of the product into the product itself, and let simple marketing practices, happy customers and word-of-mouth advertising take care of the rest.

And I guess, in the end, it does boil down simply to the fact that, indeed, *you do get just what you pay for*.

Q Prices are all going up so much—will there be a Kramer's price increase?

A Any discussion of "price" usually prompts this question. Our last price increase was in June 1990. I hope to maintain that price a good time longer. Since that last increase I have been absorbing rising costs of the ingredients, packaging, freight, printing, production and shipping costs. Inflation has hit me hard, just

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like everyone else. So far, I have been able to hold the price by quantity purchasing and greater productivity. But, it becomes ever more difficult to offset these increases. Some ingredients have increased from under \$15 per gallon to over \$50 per gallon. Several range well above \$200 to one which now costs over \$700 per gallon. Fortunately only very small amounts of these ingredients are required for each bottle.

With the current round of massive crop failures throughout the country I can only expect continuing increases in all the products of agriculture which I use to formulate my products. Many have already become painfully obvious and are only going up still more. If we get another round of rampant inflation it can only go up even more. I'll hold out as long as I can.

This is only to let you know we want to hold our price. The reason we're the only company still using these precious materials, is because the others have all demanded a larger margin of profit at the expense of product performance. We're just too stubborn to do it any way but the right way. One promise I will make, regardless, is to always maintain the quality and performance of my product—not accommodate a price. If it isn't worth what I must charge for it, it isn't worth making.

Q Can I wax a piece on which I have used *Antique Improver*?

A Most times waxing is not necessary after a piece has been totally conditioned with *Antique Improver*. Enough applications to totally condition the wood, and passing of time to allow curing, leaves a surface with a beautiful soft patina that is durable and easy to maintain.

You can, however, use a wax if you choose. Keep in mind that the main difficulty with its use is that since wax holds dirt it is necessary that it be cleaned off before reapplication else discoloration will result. If you use a pure beeswax, the surface can be easily cleaned with a wipe of (pure) turpentine before the next application and not risk the finish beneath. Between waxings you can use *Antique Improver* to maintain a buffed wax surface or finish, delaying reapplication of the hard-to-work wax.

I have considered offering a quality wax. Pure beeswax softened with turpentine is the very best you can use. However, when made without dryers it requires long waiting times for the wax to dry, and if too long, can be difficult to buff out. Traditional dryers that work best are heavy metals and we have already used them to excess. I could use small amounts of petroleum-based substitutes, probably without adversely affecting performance but this is in conflict with the standards I've established.

In choosing a wax from those available on the market, keep in mind that the ones boasting permanent hardness due to ingredients such as carnuba, are just that—*permanent*. When build-up and discoloration

make removal necessary, the required powerful solvents may damage the finish as well. As with any product, read the ingredients, look for compatible materials, and always test first.

CAUTION — A collectible “decorator” piece showing up a lot lately is the small wooden bucket—heavily made, usually of oak and banded with metal. We have seen these tagged by a dealer as a “paint bucket”, “grease bucket”, or just “oak bucket”. Many times, these are, in fact, containers that were originally used to hold lead—usually white lead. This identification usually can be made from the white residue remaining inside the bucket. Beware! This residue is PURE LEAD, totally toxic, and can kill you if you touch it enough. Lead can enter the body by being absorbed through the skin as well as orally and it accumulates in the system.

In years past lead was used for a wide array of purposes. These buckets found their way into most businesses and many garages and workshops. Since these buckets are usually very well made of good materials and workmanship they are considered desirable “finds”, but are potentially very dangerous. Be sure to use caution when handling, label correctly, and warn your customers.

COMING SOON TO THE WORLD-WIDE WEB—We had hoped to be able to give you specifics about our Web Page, but at press time details have not been completed. If interested, check in a couple of weeks at:

<http://www.kramerize.com/>

which is the domain name I'm trying for. Or, you can contact me now at my current E-Mail address: kramers@kcnet.com.



We get letters...

[We usually print only excerpts from some of the many letters we receive, but have decided to share this letter in its entirety. It speaks for itself.]

November 22, 1994

Kramers:

I'm sure you've heard these words before — Thanks!

On Oct. 13th one of your demonstrators was at our Crippled Children's Antique Show here in Sioux Falls, S.D.

I bought a bottle of your "Kramer's Best Antique Improver." I read all the material first. And when I came across the statement that I could try rubbing alcohol first to see if that ugly brown "wrinkled" finish would come off, I did so. And Praise The Lord—it did.

We live in a very old house. For 22 years our hardwood woodwork looked awful. But I couldn't bring myself to undertake the job of stripping it. So it just stayed and looked ugly.

So I bought several pints of alcohol, plenty of rags and went to work. After a few days I put your Kramer's (miracle worker) on. And lo and behold I have what looks like new woodwork and oh, so beautiful! Thank you and God Bless you.

It also took care of an ugly white stain on a very old end table where my husband spilled coffee.

IT WORKS!

If you USE Antique Improver, you can't help but talk about Antique Improver.

If you TALK about Antique Improver you will sell Antique Improver.

If you SELL Antique Improver, customers come back for more (and you get another chance to sell them something else).

They then tell their friends who come to buy Antique Improver and often leave with much more, to return yet again . . .

It all starts with USING Antique Improver.

The success of our top dealers is because they

*USE the product,
TALK ABOUT the product,
SELL the product!*

KRAMERIZE IT!

HAVE you ever been asked: “What did you do to that piece?” when you've used *Antique Improver* to dramatically improve the appearance? Terms like “polish” or “refinish” are not adequate, or correct—*Antique Improver* does so much more than that.

How about a word of our own: “Kramerize”. This word—coined by some of our customers and dealers—may be just what we need.

Try it out on your customers, let us know what you think. We will be exploring possibilities with promotional materials, etc. Having our own “buzz word” could really catch on and spark some interest.

Sincerely, A&J H, Sioux Falls, SD