

## Resurrecting wood furniture takes true grit

BY SALLY BAIR  
Staff Correspondent

LEBANON — "When in doubt, clean and condition first. You can't hurt furniture by cleaning and conditioning and it might save many hours of work," says Alletta Schadler, Lebanon County extension home economist.

Speaking at a session designed to help people "resurrect" their old furniture, Letie advised participants to consider carefully before deciding to strip it and refinish it.

In many cases, she said, the value is more when the old finish is cleaned than when furniture is stripped to the bare wood. "You have to decide what your purpose is," Letie said.

She pointed out that hot dry houses are hard on furniture finishes, and that putting a piece of furniture in storage for a time may also produce a haze on the finish. Smokers contribute a film to furniture, and sudden changes in temperature from hot to cold also are harmful to wood furniture.

She suggested that cleaning and conditioning a few times a year, followed by a paste wax will keep furniture in good condition.

The cleaner conditioner recommended consists of one part gum turpentine to three parts boiled linseed oil, mixed in whatever quantity is convenient. She said the cleaner-conditioner can be mixed and stored indefinitely in a tightly covered jar.

To use, the cleaner-conditioner must be poured over hot water. Letie used an electric tile to keep the water hot while working, but suggests that a coffee pot filled with water kept near the working site can be effective. Pour the hot water in

small amounts in a container, then add cleaner-conditioner. When the water cools, discard it and start with fresh hot water and more cleaner-conditioner. The turpentine-linseed oil mixture will float. A soft cloth or very fine (0000) steel wool is dipped into the oil, then used to apply the mixture to the furniture surface.

The turpentine is used for cleaning, and the linseed oil feeds the wood. Letie recommends working really hard with a soft cloth. Work on a small space at a time or it will get tacky. She said it gets creamy as you work.

Let the piece of wood dry completely before waxing it, since a second application may be desirable. Paste wax is then used, rubbing carefully with the grain.

Letie cautioned, "You must have cross ventilation." She pointed out that almost all furniture refinishing products are flammable and some of the vapors are harmful when inhaled. She said, "Read all precautions before proceeding."

When waxing furniture, Letie said, it should be done on a dry day because a humid day will cause it to take longer and will result in too heavy a coat. After letting it dry, Letie said the surface should be buffed really hard for a finish which will last longer. She cautioned, "Do not be in a hurry."

Mineral spirits can be used for periodic cleaning of wax buildup.

In dealing with white marks on furniture caused by moisture, Letie said the most important thing is to let it go for several days until the wood has dried completely. "Don't mess with it right away or you may ruin the finish." She said a mild abrasive is needed. Toothpaste is one agent that works, as well as cigaret or cigar ashes. Rottenstone works best. Pumice is more abrasive than rottenstone but can be used, and English chalk whitening is a very fine agent, used by cabinet makers.

Removing a white mark,

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In some cases a more drastic step is needed than the cleaner-conditioner. Here Letie works on a rocking chair with furniture restorer.

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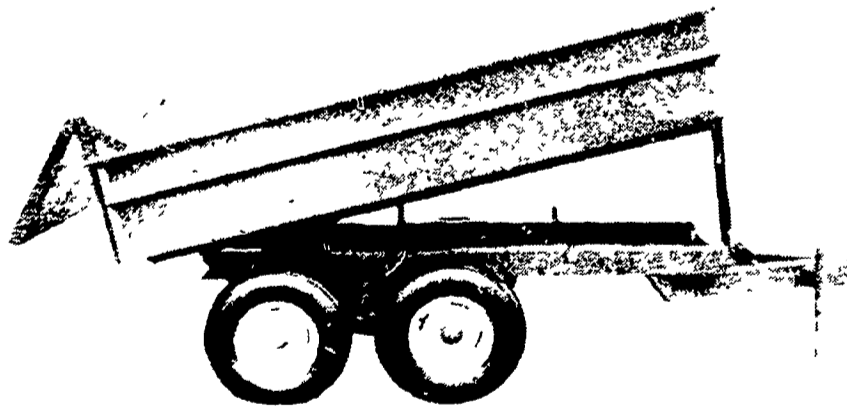


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