

# Paint Dealer Education: *Are you a hep cat or a generation behind?*

Part Two of Three

**I**N LAST MONTH'S COLUMN I reported that there was a controllable relationship between the longevity of exterior wood products and the greenhouse effect that is contributing to global warming. Simply put, wood products are a form of energy. And their service life is utterly dependent upon two factors: the coatings used to protect

them and the knowledge and care with which those products are applied.

These simple facts are well documented by decades of government and private research, yet this knowledge and the ensuing responsibility remain poorly integrated into society.

It is commonplace – perhaps even normal – to find homeowners, contractors, and paint counter personnel who don't have a rudimentary grasp of sound protocols for exterior wood finishing. The knowledge base that determines the finishing protocols for exterior

wood siding will partly or wholly also determine whether that siding is torn off and trashed in 10 years, or if it becomes a legacy of wise energy use we hand down three generations hence.

**ON MY LAST EXTERIOR PAINT JOB** I used a restorative technique to save the siding on a 15-year-old three-story saltbox. It had been coated with oil stain twice in its history. But the cedar siding was so badly weathered that it contained many patches where moderate pressure applied via a thumb rubbed across the surface just once caused the wood to disintegrate into powder and drift away in the wind. The house was

owned by an intelligent, upscale, and caring young professional couple. The question of re-siding was raised, but I'm confident that almost any siding can be saved. So after some light prep I mixed and applied a custom oil primer and followed that with a coat of latex primer and two topcoats of latex paint. Then I put an additional coat of paint on the badly weathered south and west sides.

This exterior was approximately 2100 square feet of surface area. It consumed 43 gallons of product totalling nearly \$1800, but at the end of the application process the siding looked almost new again! The total job came in under \$10K.

During this same time period a contractor associate told me he had just resided and painted a 10-year-old house because it couldn't hold paint. The tab? Close to \$40,000. Then my barber told me that when she called her painting contractor over to explain why his year-old exterior recoat was peeling, he laughed at her and provided no explanation.

Another friend who was constructing a \$300,000 addition was told by his contractor that it was okay to apply uncoated siding during the winter because "many people allow their siding to weather for a year before finishing it."

In preparation for this month's column I posed as "Herbie Homeowner"

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and walked up to the paint counters of four national chains to query the help about how to finish the cedar siding that was just about to be applied to my new addition.

All believed that I should wait to have the siding finished and that two months was a good amount of time to let pass, but one told me, “The longer the better.” Another believed that preweathering was necessary “to let the sap and water out.” All believed that the siding should be primed with an oil primer, and most believed that stain, especially oil stain, was superior to paint.

#### **WHEN I DOUBLE-CHECKED**

with the technical services department at one of the coatings companies I was told that it was also “crucial to spray the siding with a cleaner/brightener before priming because dead-wood fiber gets barrel-rolled into the surface during the milling process and creates a glaze that needs to be removed.”

When I ran this last statement past Charles Jourdain, who is VP of the California Redwoods Association and past chair of the Joint Coatings/Forest Products Committee, his laughing response was, “Nothing even remotely close to that is the case.”

In fact, most of the above beliefs are contrary to established facts. So as a paint dealer and potential advisor, what protocols should you be recommending for the finishing of exterior wood? In the final installment of this three-part series I’ll summarize some direct suggestions for you based upon the latest research. Drop your fears and get ready to sell more product.

Michael Fallarino has over two decades of full-time experience as a contractor and finisher, and over double that as an inquiring mind who wants to know. You can download samples of his book *Contemporary Relationships between Wood & Finish* at [www.woodandfinish.com](http://www.woodandfinish.com).