



The Piano Man

Photographs and article by Marcia Butterfield
Staff Photographer

His work is music to his ears. And to everyone else's.

James Reeder of Reeder Pianos Inc. is renowned for the quality of his restoration work. The wall entering the restoration department of his Lansing store is covered with letters from colleges, universities, fine arts camps, churches, piano teachers and concert artists from all over the United States complimenting his work.

"We're doing a very good service for piano owners all over the world," he said.

Among his clients are Spring Arbor University, the Jackson Symphony, and the First Presbyterian Church of Jackson, which is having a piano restored.

Reeder, who has more than 30 years experience, and his staff of 10 are committed to quality workmanship with quality materials that match the original

corners, veneering, cleaning, polishing, and refinishing the case — to his staff.

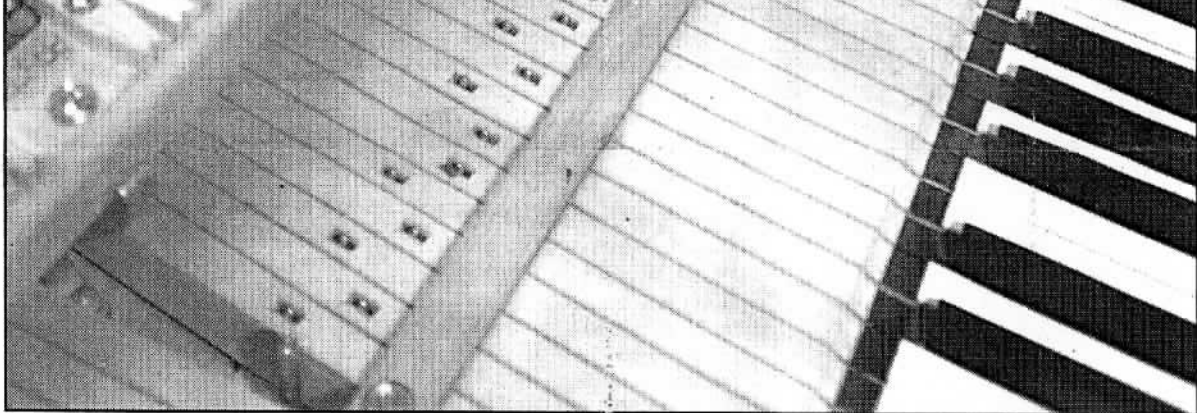
"It's a lot of work," Reeder said. "The biggest chunk of time is in the refinishing."

The mechanical parts of a piano — all made out of wood — are restored. The soundboard is refurbished or rebuilt. Ribs are formed and glued. Bridges, which transmit sound through the soundboard, are cleaned or rebuilt, along with the action of the keys, the dampers and hammers. The piano action is regulated and adjusted several times for proper performance.

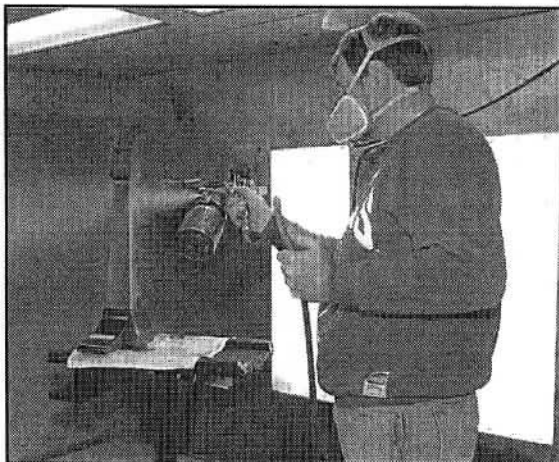
From leveling keys to voicing, it takes three to four days of work.

"It has to sound right," Reeder said, "We're all perfectionists."

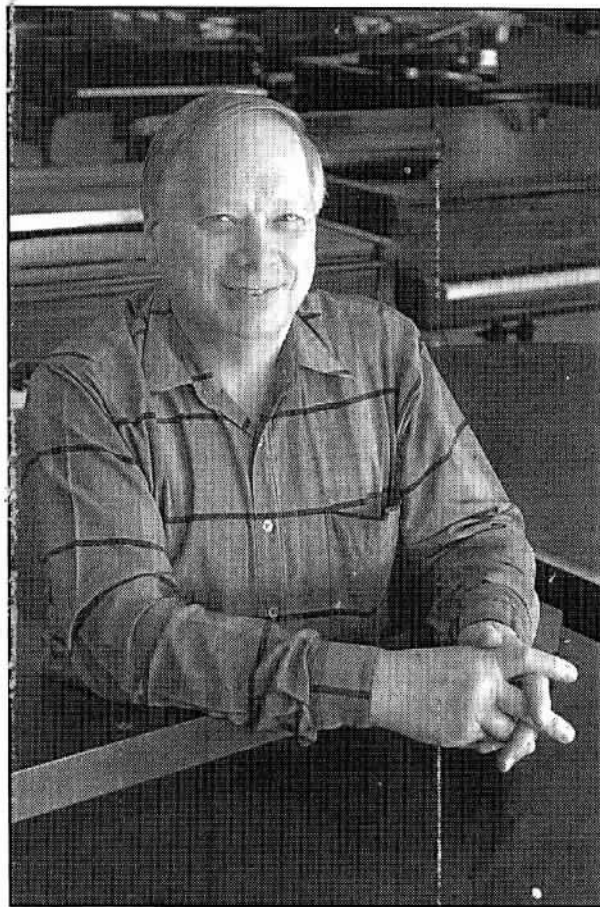
The piano is tuned four or five times or more before it is ready to go. It takes about six months



James Reeder makes an adjustment to broaden the sound during the final tunings of a completed restoration.



Above, Don Wood, a finisher, sprays a no-rub finish on the legs of a Steinway being restored. Right, James Reeder, is owner of Reeder Pianos Inc. in Lansing



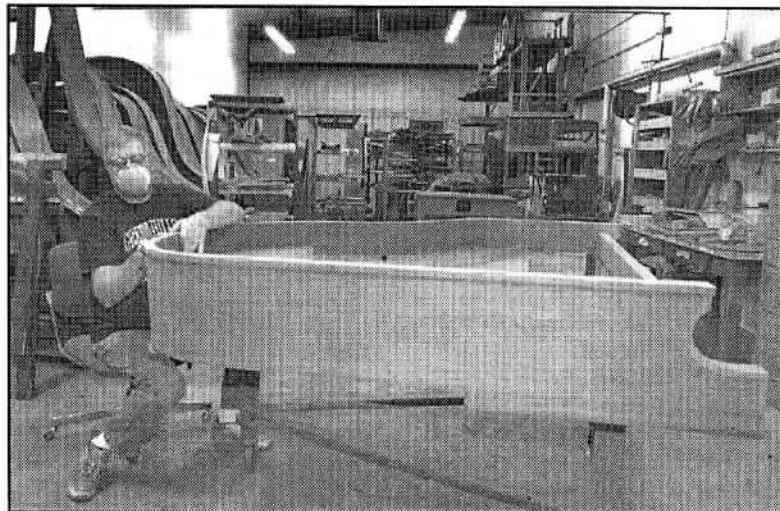
workmanship.

"Most of the time we exceed that," he said.

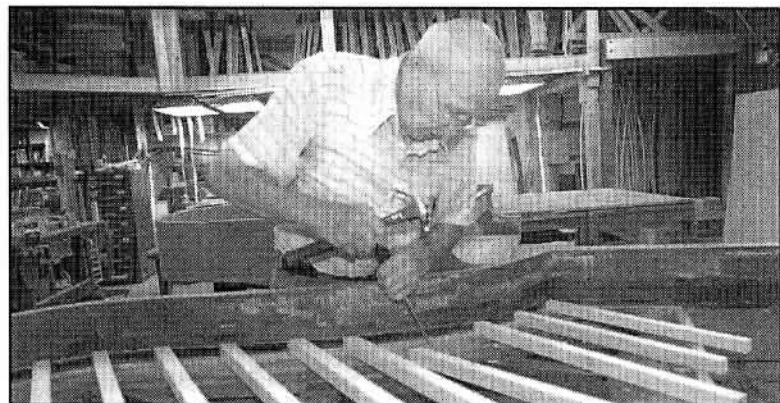
Reeder works on the soundboard, strings and hammers, doing the conditioning, tuning, and voicing, which is training the hammers to sound right. He leaves the rest of the work — the cabinet work, repairing dents,

to complete a restoration. But, according to Reeder, it's worth the effort.

"It makes good sense to restore an heirloom," he said. "When restoring a high-quality instrument, you end up with a better sounding and playing instrument, and restored quality pianos grow in value."



Bob Pline does the finish work on the case of a piano being restored.



During restoration, Elmer Reeder, 86, makes grooves for the new ribs which will be shaped and curved before installing.