

# The 'good' ole days.

**Peter King**, Floorcraft.

As a timber flooring contractor, have you ever wondered “why am I working in this crazy industry?” With so many things that are out of our control, variables that can make all our hard work literally ‘come unstuck’, the average person would come to their senses and get another job, right? Well, that means we’re ABOVE AVERAGE!



We continue to work at our trade because we are passionate about the finished product; timber can be very rewarding if worked within its limits, the trick is knowing how to read it...

My name is Peter King, and I'm a flooring contractor with over 40 years' experience (where did they go?) in this industry; a second-generation floor guy with my Dad (Gordon) running his sanding business in Traralgon, Victoria for most of his working life. My son Brett has completed his apprenticeship in this trade and now motivates me to continue to work with floors, as a partner in our business.

Gordon worked after serving in WW2 with his father and brothers building homes throughout Gippsland. They would get a guy to sand their floors from Melbourne but saw an opportunity to 'do it themselves'. Gordon started making his own sanders, from scratch – using a big electric motor and a 12” drum, harvested from a 'Mac' – this became the drum sander. Soon after, he modified a handheld polisher/sander to become the edger; lastly, a buffer was made using a decent 1 HP electric motor and a series of bolts/nuts.

Very soon, other builders got word that there was a local floor guy, so his primary income changed from framing to sanding! His brother Trevor got the bug too, so another set of machines was made for Trev. Now there was a team of two, a lot of commercial jobs could be done – schools, halls etc. So infectious was the trade that my Mum's brother Colin also got the bug and a third set of machines rolled out of the garage at Traralgon!

Two-pack solvent poly became the 'go-to' coating after a lot of oil-modified urethane had been used, with gloss as standard and satin available 'once the finish started to wear down'. No staining options here.

Filler was Selley's Special Putty – put in with thumb and putty knife, in a way that I can still do today (those who have done this know what I mean!) Very hard to fill big cracks, and great at fading in sunlight. Nails punched by hand, coatings applied using a set of four 50mm brushes bolted in line, with a single grip, in a semi-circular pattern as far as you could reach, running along the grain, in a series of runs, back bent over painfully! Ouch!!

Can you imagine coating an entire school like this? Let alone a gymnasium... But the job got done and the client was happy and they paid – so that's all that mattered.

It is good to reflect on how hard the early pioneers worked with rough gear and ordinary to no tech support when things went wrong... We have it pretty good now. ATFA gives us the ability to learn, compare and share ideas, techniques and systems. I would love to hear from anyone who has some old photos or stories of how things were done in the past – send them in to [floorcraft61@gmail.com](mailto:floorcraft61@gmail.com).

I look forward to sharing some interesting techniques and tips over the coming issues. 🗣️