

Pouring 105/207 on a Bar Top

By Bruce Niederer

I helped by brother Nelson with a different, smaller bar he built for a customer who comes from a long line of dairy men. His family has been in the business for decades. He has a little bar area in his garage where he and his buddies hang out and work on cars or watch their hunting blind videos while they have a couple beers.

The bar is on heavy duty wheels so it can be easily moved when necessary. He collected dairy memorabilia—old milk bottle caps and family photos which he wanted encapsulated in the bar top.

We regularly get calls from customers attempting something similar to this. The photos explain the process we followed and some of the techniques for success.

The recess was sanded with 220-grit and the memorabilia to be encapsulated were artfully arranged in the 1/4"-deep recess. Each piece was encapsulated with Mod Podge®, available at most art supply stores. This important step seals the paper so it doesn't wick up any epoxy, which will cause dark or discolored splotches on photos or anything made with paper or cardboard. Under each item, we brushed a thin coat of mixed WEST SYSTEM 105/207 to set the items in before pouring.

We got started with one of us mixing and pouring and the other chasing bubbles with a propane torch. Because the recess was coated with two coats of cured then sanded epoxy, we didn't need to worry about bubbles due to out-gassing of the wood. But it's pretty much impossible to stir the resin and hardener without inducing some bubbles in the cup. One of the best ways to deal with them is with a flame treatment using a handheld torch. A heat gun won't work—it's not hot enough. You must use a flame held so it just barely touches the epoxy surface. Move the flame quickly—12" to 16" per second—you don't want to scorch the epoxy. WEST SYSTEM epoxies don't contain flammable solvents so this is safe, but be careful; the epoxy can ignite if the flame lingers in one spot too long.



WEST SYSTEM® 207 Special Clear Hardener™ is formulated for exceptionally clear, no-blush coating and fiberglass application.



The oak bar top ready for a sealer coat of epoxy. Note the recessed center where the pour will go.



Left—The bar top with old milk bottle caps and family photos encapsulated in two coats of 105/207.

Right—Nelson was mixing and pouring the epoxy while Bruce chased bubbles with a propane torch.



You typically get bubbles when you mix in a cup with a stir stick. With smaller bubbles, if they don't pop after a quick pass or two, don't get all crazy about it and risk a scorch or worse. Just walk away for 10 or 15 minutes, have a beer, and then try it again. Those little bubbles will rise towards the surface and then you can get them out.

The finished top is clear and beautiful with no bubbles. The bar has some nice custom features including a replica of a 1957 Chevy Impala hood ornament flanked by chrome strips, lighted milk bottle corner posts and orange lighting under the bar rail. An antique milk box with the old family dairy logo serves as an ice box that drains into an antique metal milk can.

Things we learned

The recess was about ¼" deep and it took about 1½ mixed gallons of 105/207 to fill level. We could have got the same result with a ⅛" recess and saved some epoxy bucks.

The client brought in a couple of additional pictures after the first pour cured. We added them, then finished the pour. Those last two pictures look like they're floating in the middle of the epoxy. They look more three dimensional as a result—a nice effect for photos. ■



The front of the finished bar with its 1957 Chevy hood ornament.

The back of the bar. An antique milk box serves as an ice box.



Lighted milk bottles decorate recesses in the corners.

