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# He's the Man

By WENDY ARNDT HUNT  
One of the 'survivors' was dying.

In a city that had once claimed more than 50 furniture factories as its own, one of the last remaining, Jamestown Lounge Company, was succumbing because of absentee management. The family-owned firm had been losing money for 10 years.

But fortunately for both the 90-year-old company and the area's economy, Paul Combs was in town.

In 1971, he had moved his family from Chatham, N.J. to Jamestown to become a partner in the struggling Chautauqua Hardware Corp. For the first time in the history of that bankruptcy court's jurisdiction, Combs says, a company was brought out of bankruptcy to pay back its creditors 100 percent.

Then in November, 1978, this 54-year-old businessman, who used to travel internationally as a troubleshooter for ITT, bought Jamestown Lounge.

ONE OF the first actions the new president took, was to buy Thanksgiving turkeys for all employees.

The key, Combs says, for saving Jamestown Lounge was in establishing systems and procedures for day-to-day control in the furniture factory that needed direction and organization.

He evaluated and priced all parts and operations, before arranging a sequence of steps for production, setting up schedules for each department and determining a profitable selling price.

He turned to computers to help control the manufacturing and accounting.

One thing Combs did not have to do was upgrade the quality of the product. The Feudal Oak furniture has always been made with care.

COMBS, DRESSED in his usual work attire of jeans and workshirt, toured the five-story brick building with this reporter to explain the numerous steps required to produce a quality product.

There are 115 employees at Jamestown Lounge and the furniture ranges in price from \$200 to \$10,000.

Combs buys his oak locally, the elm, ash and pecan from nearby sawmills. Once the wood arrives at the factory, professional scalers grade the lumber which then is stored in stacks.

When there is room inside one of the six kilns, the wood is dried.

The kilns are carefully monitored for heat and humidity, because the wood must not be al-



tered carvings are often plastic. Changes in weather will pry them loose.

HE EXPLAINS that all wood — regardless of its finish — will expand and contract. In summer, because of the humidity, Combs says, a 72-inch long desk will measure a half-inch longer than in winter.

Because wood expands and contracts, Combs says, "We do use plywood when it makes structural sense." Plywood is composed of interwoven slices of wood layered so that the first one's grain is directed east-west, the second north-south and so forth. Because the expansion and contraction follows the direction of the grain he says, the criss-cross effect



—News Staff Photographer Robert L. Smith

PRESIDENT PAUL COMBS checks over an elaborate glass-doored armoire.



DIEGA HOSIER is shown with a carved door