PLAYER-CARE HIDE GLUE CRYSTALS

(Sold exclusively at Player-Care.com)

This glue recipe is prepared for Player-Care by Craig Brougher of Brougher Restorations for use in player piano work and is sold exclusively by Player-Care. It is what we believe to be the very best available at any price. The additives are blended so that the glue has more temperature latitude while maintaining its full strength. Cold shops may require preheating of the parts joined, however.

Pot life is inversely proportional to temperature, exposure time to air, and the number of times the pot is reheated. If you have a Hold Heet brand glue pot, it is strongly recommended to remove the aluminum bucket, as this is not suitable for most hot hide glue uses. Many formulations of glue including this one will gradually affect the aluminum bucket, chemically. While this is convenient once in awhile for large jobs requiring a 3" brush on warm surfaces, most of your work is going to be with small parts and should be contained in glass with a plastic lid when not in use. Stir the glue at the beginning of each day.

Vlassic sells a large jar of classic dill pickles that just happens to fit well inside your heating jacket of the Hold Heet pot. It has a smaller lid, which can be discarded, and the top of an 8 oz. plastic yogurt cup, like A&E, is substituted. It makes a perfect glue pot. The rim of the jar is great for wiping off the brushes, and because it's smaller, it holds the moisture from evaporating better. The plastic lids also prevent almost 100% of the moisture from leaving the glue, so if you aren't using the glue, just leave it on, day and night, for up to a week. It will still be perfect if your pot is at the right temperature.

To measure the temperature of the Hold Heet glue pot, fill your jar 3/4ths full of water, place a cut-down plastic coffee can lid or something in the bottom to set the jar on, and let it get fully up to temperature. Drop in a thermometer and check it. The pot should not get hotter than 150 degrees, Fahrenheit.(The plastic lid on the bottom of the pot also prevents the jar from getting glued into the pot in case of a spill.)

To set the temperature of the Hold Heet glue pot, remove the two small screws that attach the liner to the bucket. Spring out the handle if you need to and lift up the liner. There is a nickel-plated heat-adjusting thermostat nut with a little sealant on one side to prevent it from turning. Turn the nut clockwise to increase the temperature, counterclockwise to decrease it. Don't replace the screws until you can be sure that the pot is reliable at about 145 degrees. This is the temperature that your glue will last longest at, and still work well.

To make the glue, pour the crystals into the jar and add water to about 3/4" above the crystals. Add water later to get the right consistency. By placing styrofoam "peanuts" of the non-biodegradable type into the pot jar, you will be able to leave the lid off, float your brushes, and work all day without adding hardly any water.

Consistency is everything, when working with hide glue. Some workmen use 3 plastic squeeze bottles of different consistencies in the heating jacket. Bottles are more convenient, but brushes are neater. If you will buy white bristle (hog) brushes, like the long stemmed ones sold by Van Dykes of Woonsocket, SD, they won't collapse, sitting on the bottom of a glue pot. But you will need 3 artist brush sizes: #2, #4, #7. You also need a touch-up type natural white bristle brush of the 1" variety (for pneumatics).

When working in a cool environment, the glue should be used with a thinner consistency. If you then need the "death grip" effect of heavier glue, just apply a sizing coat on one of the parts and let it set up first. When covering pneumatics, use thinner glue and a wide brush to keep the glue warm. Put the cover around it before the glue can start to gel. If you doubt your ability to use this glue in the time window allowed, just iron them down before completely dry. Double glue all large bellows and always iron their covers after they are well-set but not completely dry. When you see tiny beads of reheated glue oozing out, you know that you have the right temperature and time with the iron. Hot hide glue is just like solder. A cold joint will not show up, sometimes for months, but it will always eventually fail. When in doubt, reheat.