

OMEGASONICS ON THE JOB

OMEGASONICS



CM WEEMS

BUSINESS TYPE:

- Musical Instrument Cleaning

PART/PRODUCT CLEANED:

- Brass Instruments
- Valves & Valve Clusters
- Wind Instrument Mouthpieces
- Woodwind Instruments

SUBSTANCE(S) REMOVED:

- Oils
- Buffing Compounds
- Calcium Deposits

OMEGASONICS SYSTEM USED:

- Omega® Music Pro 2800

OMEGASONICS CHEMISTRY USED:

- Omega HornClean 727
- CitriSurf 2250

MONEY/TIME SAVED:

- 30 Minutes per instrument
- Increased cleanliness

A LOVE FOR MUSIC

Mike Weems' love for music dates back to when he was 10 years old first learning to play the clarinet and saxophone. At 14, he started his own band and joined the Marine Corps out of high school where he first learned to repair musical instruments. After his stint in the service, he became an iron worker and rose to the level of vice president of a bay area steel company. Though his days were filled in the corporate world, his nights and weekends were consumed with music. Mike started several big bands and played local San Francisco area cocktail lounges during the 70s and 80s. Mike retired from performing in 1992.

SERVING CALIFORNIA'S STATE CAPITOL

CM Weems is located in Rocklin, California 25 miles east of Sacramento, California's state capitol. There, working out of a small shop in his home, Mike Weems, known to his clients' as "Mr. Wizard", is a Sacramento institution meticulously repairing and refurbishing musical instruments sent to him from all across the country.

Like most companies in his industry, Mike cleaned a wide variety of instruments including trumpets, trombones and tubas all by hand. Armed with a unique set of brushes and scrubbers and using a mixture of CLR (a commercial grade calcium remover) and water, Mike meticulously cleaned each instrument individually. This was a slow, tedious process.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

What makes Mike's story unique is that in his 40s he suffered an eye stroke in one eye and subsequently the other a short time later and was declared legally blind by the state. Though this eventually put an end to his performing career, it didn't impede his ability to repair the instruments he had grown to love. Using past memory and a heightened sense of touch, Mike is able to fine tune his cleaning and refurbishing projects simply by feeling. If it doesn't feel quite right, then he adjusts his technique until he knows the instrument is in tip-top condition.



Setting the controls



Checking for cleanliness



Adjusting the ultrasonic intensity

DISCOVERING ULTRASOUND

Mike discovered ultrasound through his membership association with National Association of Professional Band Instrument Repair Technicians. NAPBIRT had long recommended ultrasonic cleaning as a better solution for thoroughly cleaning musical instruments. Mike researched ultrasound on the internet and found Omegasonics had the most user friendly system and that it would be easiest to set up in his shop without any additional electrical wiring.

SAVING TIME AND MONEY

Once set up in his shop, Mike found not only did ultrasound do a more thorough job of cleaning the instrument valves, mouthpieces and all internal passages, but the time savings was incredible. Trumpets that used to take 45 minutes to 1 hour now took only 3 minutes. Flutes that consumed 30 – 45 minutes were also now perfectly cleaned in 3 minutes. Mike states, "Since going to ultrasound, I can now charge more money because I am providing my clients with a more sophisticated level of service."



Cleaning delicate musical instruments is simple and thorough



Reassembling a saxophone for another happy client

Instruments are disassembled and every component is placed into a wire mesh basket and submerged in the ultrasonic unit, with the exception of the pads. Mouthpieces and valves are cleaned separately for increased intensity. With the water temperature set no hotter than 95°F to protect the lacquer finishes on the instruments, ultrasound is applied to the bath for a pre selected time—all digitally controlled. Though most instruments are completely submerged in the bath, Mike occasionally cleans tubas and sousaphones, which often require the bell to be cleaned separately. After cleaning, the components are rinsed off with water, blown dry, reassembled and oiled as necessary.

Mike uses a small ultrasonic table top unit for handling some of the smaller parts and pieces he deals with so they don't fall through the larger mesh basket. Though Mike can't see with his eyes as most repair technicians can, his sense of feel allows him to be a more thorough technician. Mr. Wizard isn't only a technician of the instruments but a technician of the ultrasonic machine. He knows exactly the ultrasonic amplitude setting, time, temperature and soap concentrations required for his projects.

Mike can't imagine ever going back to cleaning instruments the old way. He can't imagine how anyone in his industry continues to do the task by hand. In Mike's opinion "I think there should be an ultrasonic machine in every music shop".



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Mike Weems
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Rocklin, CA

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