

# SPRINGFIELD

Woodworking  
KITCHEN & BATH



An

# INTERVIEW

With Pauly

# KLEINSASSER



2023



By: Paul Harrison



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*Woodworking*  
KITCHEN & BATH

Pauly Kleinsasser is a proud Hutterite, living on the Springfield Hutterite Colony, just east of Winnipeg. He tells us how his small family hobby shop developed into the major manufacturing powerhouse it is today.

## An interview with Pauly Kleinsasser

Pauly Kleinsasser has a unique business philosophy: “it is all about love and respect.” This principle is far too rare to hear in the dog-eat-dog world of business, but it is from this concept that Pauly has seen Springfield Woodworking grow substantially over the years. A devout Christian Hutterite, Pauly sees Springfield’s success as a blessing from God. He recalls his company’s humble beginnings: “My uncle Reuben and I started this company back in 1999. We started off as a hobby shop making furniture, but have evolved into the third largest custom cabinet company in Manitoba. Hutterites don’t normally hire outside of the colony, but we have hired about 55 workers from our local towns.” Today, Springfield employs 90 people: an impressive feat for a community whose population totals only 115 souls. So how exactly did this small community give birth to such a bustling facility?

When many Canadians hear the word “Hutterite,” they likely think of farmers. Hutterites, Mennonites, and Amish – all of whom are part of the Anabaptist denomination of Christianity – have long been famous for their farms, but as Pauly explains: “in the last 30 years many Hutterites have diversified to manufacturing because it is difficult to make a living as a farmer.” This change comes as no surprise since Hutterites “have a very strong traditional craftsmanship. Back where our forefathers come from, in the old country (Slovakia, Austria, Italy), tradition dominated.”



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# THE HISTORY OF THE HUTTERITES

Pauly is proud to explain the history and belief-system of the Hutterites: “Hutterites are part of the Anabaptist group, as are the Mennonites and the Amish. But the Hutterites practice a community-living situation, which originates in the Bible; Jesus and his disciples had everything in common. If you read Acts (“All believers were together and had all things in common”), this is where the Apostles started the new church. Everything was given out and laid at their feet and given to those in need. So, everybody gets equal and that’s the lifestyle we practice. We call it ‘to the Apostles’ feet;’ we give everything to the church; we ourselves do not take a wage. Everything belongs to the church, and all our lifestyle and everything we own is bought and paid for. We don’t have our own bank accounts; we don’t have our own money. That’s how the Hutterite system works. It’s 100% based on the Bible.

“The Hutterite system started back in 1522 when a man by the name of Jacob Hutter started his movement and that’s why the Hutterites are called Hutterites.” Pauly adds: “I personally have toured the old countries – Slovakia, Austria, Italy; I have toured these places several times already. It is very interesting to see where we originate from.” Pauly’s ties to Europe show through as Springfield uses finishing techniques from Italy and milling machines from Germany. They were among the first in North America to utilize some of these machines, which has given Springfield a cutting edge in the cabinetry business.

**“...everybody gets equal and that’s the lifestyle we practice. We call it ‘to the Apostles’ feet;’”**



## Old World Values Meet Cutting-Edge Technology and Innovation

Despite Springfield's strong ties to their Hutterite history and tradition, they employ the most up-to-date technology in their work. "We use very state-of-the-art machines. We build exactly what the customer wants. We build for today's world, but with the old values, in a time when things were built to last. You can buy a lot of the new things that fall apart quickly, but our work will last." This combination of old-world values and innovative technology allows for Springfield to produce between 150-200 cabinets a day. This output includes everything from kitchen and bathroom cabinets to hotel furniture, bedroom furniture, entertainment centres, closet organizers and shelving units. Roughly 65% of Springfield's product goes to the private market, and 35% goes to homebuilders and apartment developers. Springfield maintains one showroom in Winnipeg and six dealers, ranging from north-western Ontario to Saskatchewan, with the majority being in Manitoba.

To excel in the cabinetry business, Pauly holds that one must keep up with current trends because "this is a business of fashion." Blending the commitment to making products that stand the test of time with current fashion trends is one of Springfield's keys to success. To stay on top of trends, Pauly attends the annual Kitchen & Bath Industry Show (KBIS) in Las Vegas. "It's a large kitchen event show and they show the latest and the greatest. You have to go to these shows to stay in tune with what's in right now: the colours, the styles and the new hardware. One year, something's in style, and the next year, it's out. They come up with new colours and styles; we get the ideas (at the show), we come home and put them on the table, so we're doing things and using things that our competitors don't even use yet. When I see something unique, I put it in the showroom. It just wows people. You have to keep up with the trends, otherwise your competition gets ahead."

## Marketing with Love and Respect for All People

Pauly has been with Springfield from day one, building the company from the ground up. He has done every job, from working the saws and drills, to management, to signing contracts, to marketing and sales. "When I started, I didn't know the difference between oak and maple. Now, I know everything in this market, and I mean everything. I have given 100% to my company and my community." But it is in Sales where Pauly is most at home. "I have the gift of the gab," he jokes. But it's not just Pauly's love of conversation that inspires his commitment to marketing: "I make a personal relationship with (clients and customers). That friendship you form is the key to success. I have about 3,800 contacts in my cellphone. A lot of them are customers. I love them all. I have a great respect for human beings. I can walk up to an employee and have a personal conversation. Just think of a company of our size: (in many such companies) you would hardly ever see the CEO. But ours is a very personal company. We are very respectful to people. The word respect is just as strong as the word love. Those two go hand in hand: love and respect. And we're talking about personal respect, not commercial."



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**“Maybe somebody has health issues or family issues, or he’s not feeling well that day, so don’t look down on him.”**

This dedication to customers and clients has fostered great relationships between Springfield and several companies with whom they closely work. FC Machinery supplies woodworking machines and maintenance; Hardwood Inc. supplies lumber materials; Cefla North America provides finishing products; Sherwin-Williams at 32 Beghin Avenue in Winnipeg provides paints; Hettich Canada provides drawer slides and hinges. Such partnerships allow Springfield to thrive.

Springfield also maintains a strong relationship with A&S Homes, one of the larger homebuilders in Winnipeg. Pauly explains: “We started off with a few homes of theirs and then moved into multifamily homes and now we’re doing single family homes. We will be doing a few (homes) for them in the near future. It’s a huge thing for them to trust us with a single-family home.” On top of this, Springfield does a lot of work with Paragon Design, WRE Developments, Springhill Lumber and many other home builders and construction companies.

For Pauly, nothing is more important than maintaining good relationships with all people, be they one-time customers, long-term clients, employees, friends or family: “We are people of faith, and we believe in others. There shouldn’t be any harassment within a company, especially if somebody has a bad day: don’t judge (a person) by that bad day. Maybe somebody has health issues or family issues, or he’s not feeling well that day, so don’t look down on him. In the eyes of God, we are all equal; it doesn’t matter if you are a king or a servant. In the eyes of God, we are equal. I believe in our company: our employees are very happy working here because we respect them. I have one employee who suffers from depression; he says when he walks through our doors, his depression is gone. He feels the love. I say that to be like Jesus is to be nice to people who suffer. You cannot shine with just your own candle; you’ve got to help people to shine to make that hill glow. And the more light (that there is in the world), the better.”



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Pauly holds that this has been Springfield's greatest key to success. The Springfield Community puts their trust in God, and in turn, God blesses them as they need it. In this way, Springfield does as Jesus commands: to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. "The key to success is to be nice to people. That comes from the Christian faith: have respect for people. Respect them as human beings. There are people out there who do not respect human beings. And I strongly believe that Jesus is our best salesperson because he blesses us." Having the most famous carpenter in history watch over their woodworking business has been a winning strategy for over 23 years. Pauly has no doubt that it will continue to work going forward. "The future looks bright. Again. I put things in God's hands, and He provides. We have a new year coming up and it looks strong again. I don't notice the recession that people are talking about. We are booming. I have someone new calling me everyday. We are just increasing. We have been growing by about 200% over the last two years." It is written that God said to Adam and Eve "go forth and multiply," and when it comes to cabinets, Springfield is certainly following that ancient commission. Their cabinets can be found in homes and buildings all over North America.

## Addendum: The Hutterite Manufacturing Association

Pauly Kleinsasser has been working with fellow Hutterite, John Waldner, from Better Air, a ventilation manufacturer, also located in Manitoba. Together, they have established the Hutterite Manufacturing Association. The Association was founded in December 2021 and has been having great success this past year. The Canadian Construction Journal will be running a feature on John Waldner and Better Air in a forthcoming issue. We will also be covering the Hutterite Manufacturing Association and spotlighting more of their members as we go forward.



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