

# Sales Idea: OLDEST OPENER CONTEST

## Promotion Supports Drive to Eliminate Older Openers

By Tom Wadsworth, CDDC

**Y**ou may have replaced hundreds of old openers and often wondered, “How old was that operator?” Gary Bechtold of St. Cloud Overhead Door has taken that common question and turned it into a novel sales promotion for his market in central Minnesota.

Bechtold’s “Oldest Opener Contest” may be a great idea for other dealers to consider in 2014. Here are some key benefits of this contest:

1. It was an inventive way to boost sales in Minnesota’s slow months of January and February.
2. It creatively supports the industry’s new effort to “Replace Not Repair” pre-1993 residential garage door openers.
3. The winning “Oldest Opener” was effectively used as a centerpiece and sales discussion point for Bechtold’s exhibit at a home show in March.

### In a Nutshell

The contest was open to entries within 60 miles of St. Cloud and valid for openers for doors up to 18’ wide by 8’ high. The contest ran from Jan. 20 to Feb. 14, and the entry with the oldest opener won a new LiftMaster opener installed.

The company promoted the contest in the local newspaper, on two local radio stations, and on the company’s website and Facebook page. “We had great response on Facebook and radio,” says Kristen Berreau, communications and marketing coordinator for St. Cloud Overhead Door.

Participants had to submit a photo of their old opener, which hopefully would include information about the manufacturer, the model, and the serial number. Even though the contest ran only 25 days, it collected a total of 25 entries, or one every day.

### Turning Entries Into Sales

“We were blown away by the response of entries,” says Berreau. “It seems to be the talk of the town, so it’s also turned into a partial branding campaign.”

For entries that did not win, St. Cloud Overhead Door will offer them a special opener price to replace the older unsafe openers. “Our hope is that the majority of these entries will turn into new opener sales and safer openers in residential neighborhoods,” explains Berreau.

### An Unexpected Hiccup

She says the contest was a lot of fun and a positive experience, but they did encounter an unexpected road bump: dating the old openers.

“We didn’t realize the number of opener manufacturers, some of which we’d never heard of,” adds Berreau. “We had a hard time finding any information that would lead us to a manufacture date.”

### The Winning Entry

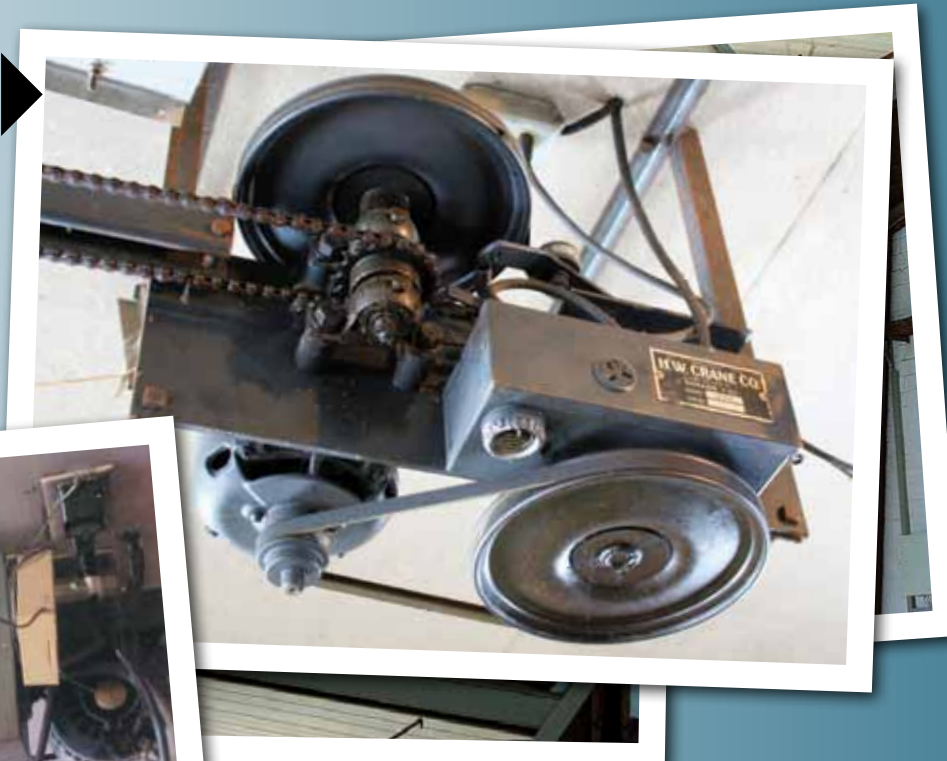
That’s when Bechtold contacted us for help in dating the oldest-looking entries. We helped pinpoint a date for the winning opener, an H.W. Crane Model 300.

Old Raynor literature from the late 1940s and 1950s reveals that this model first came out in 1950. Since the Crane 300 was likely available for several years, Bechtold’s oldest opener probably dates in the early 1950s.

On the following pages are photos of some of the other entries. If you can shed any light on these operators, send an email to the editor at [trw@tomwadsworth.com](mailto:trw@tomwadsworth.com).

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**THE OLDEST OPENER:** The H.W. Crane Company of Chicago introduced its Model 300 in 1950. A 1/6-HP motor powered the Crane operator for one-car garage doors. The winning homeowner had two of these, installed in 1954, and both were still in use.



**EDWARD T. FINK:** This old Edwards opener from Edward T. Fink Co. of Yonkers, N.Y., also bears the DORCMA logo and likely dates in the early 1960s. Edward T. Fink incorporated his company in 1954, and he was the third president of DORCMA, serving from 1962 to 1964.



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**STUMPED:** The word “Detronotrols” is not found anywhere on the entire Internet. We think the word may come from “Detroit” and “controls.” The unit, installed in 1957, may be homemade or manufactured by Vemco (of Detroit). If you know anything about this operator, send us an email.



**THE DORCMA CLUE:** Vemco, a leading manufacturer of the 1950s and 1960s, produced the Doorkeeper. This model featured a 1/4-HP motor, common for early residential operators. The DORCMA (Door Operator and Remote Controls Manufacturers Association) logo is a helpful dating clue. DORCMA was founded in 1959, so this unit probably dates in the 1960s.



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