

Midwest powder coater waltzes into the major leagues by building a solid reputation coating large parts for historic projects

A go-kart enthusiast turned powder coater grew his business in a few short years simply by seeing a need and fulfilling it. Now he's doing the big stuff.

Peggy Koop *Editor*

Billy Joel and the Minnesota Twins have something extreme in common: A Minnesota powder coating shop called Extreme Powder Coating. Based in Blooming Prairie, the shop began as the dream of a go-kart racer, whose path to powder coating began in 1983 racing on the tracks of sunny California, the birthplace of the first “miniature car” in the 1950s. By the 1980s, multiple associations for racers had formed, establishing rules and regulations for the karts as well as the races. And Greg Peterson, founder and owner of Extreme Powder Coating, was in the midst of what would become a recognized sport in the 1990s.

Peterson was also in the midst of a growing finishing technology becoming increasingly recognized for its durability and performance. His dreams of starting a powder coating company? “I kind of put it on the backburner,” he said. In 2000, the racing enthusiast moved it to the front-burner by recognizing the sport’s growth in the Midwest. “I saw a need for it in

this area, so we started powder coating,” he said.

Without a single customer, Peterson took a chance and opened his 2,500-sq-ft shop in a small community with

a big interest in the sport and was soon finishing about 100 race cars a year for the region’s top builders. As his artistry and reputation grew, he added motorcycles, hot rods, and custom car parts to his powder coating



Internationally acclaimed singer-songwriter Billy Joel wrote a tribute song to this carousel he rode as a boy in Long Island.

repertoire. “But I found out quickly that you aren’t going to make a living doing that,” he said.

Solution? Do large parts. “We had only been in business a month when we were approached by a company out of Florida,” Peterson said. “We had a 24-ft oven in our shop, and we got into these bigger parts. We pretty much made our living doing larger parts.”

By 2007, Peterson decided to build a larger shop in an industrial park down the road to accommodate even larger—extreme—parts. That’s where Billy Joel and the Minnesota Twins come in.

A waltz and a carousel build business

When Peterson opened his 12,500-sq-ft shop, he installed equipment that allowed him to powder coat parts up to 40 feet long. “We found we could do architectural parts, trailer frames, and big heavy industrial type parts,” he said.

The company also could handle the 120,000 pounds of steel for the

Extreme Powder Coating is proud to have been part of architectural projects that have such an emotional impact on their surrounding communities—for generations to come.

gazebo shelter to house the restored Nunley’s Carousel, which reopened to the public in May 2009 on Long Island’s Museum Row, the location of the Cradle of Aviation Museum, the Long Island Children’s Museum, and the Nassau County Firefighters Museum and Education Center in New York.

Built in 1912, the 41-horse (and one lion) carousel sat in storage for 9 years until a major restoration effort was launched a couple of years ago. Only one of about 150 remaining carousels in the country (at one time, there were between 2,000 and 3,000), it provided entertainment to generations of Long Islanders, including native son Billy Joel, who wrote “Waltz No. 1, Op 2 (Nunley’s Carousel)” as a tribute to the attrac-

tion that he rode and took delight in as a child.

The acclaimed singer-songwriter was part of the \$2 million restoration effort and provided a soundtrack of his tribute song to be played on the carousel organ. Joel’s keyboard player, David Rosenthal, recorded the composition with a carousel organ-like instrumentation in Joel’s studio. The carousel’s beautiful musical sound lives on in Joel’s song.

At Extreme Powder Coating, employees heard a different kind of sound—the clang of steel as four semitrailer loads of it rolled up to the shop for the month-long gazebo project. “It took a long time,” Peterson said.

Eight fulltime and two part-time employees became part of Long

Island history as they processed tons of steel for the project. The majority of the architectural steel gets sandblasted at the sandblast shop down the street, Peterson said. The shop also has a three-stage iron phosphate washer from Finishing Systems, Fortville, Ind. The stainless steel modified-batch system (one of four in the country) is built to process big, heavy parts. “I can put 120 feet worth of parts in there,” he said.

The 24-ft-long stainless steel powder application booth is from Michigan-based Parker Ionics and is equipped with two manual corona-charging spray guns. Two operators and a helper do all those jobs, Peterson said. Parts are moved through the finishing system via a 3-inch I-



The restored Nunley’s Carousel provides rides rain or shine in its shelter on Museum Row.



Extreme Powder Coating processed four semitrailer loads of steel for the carousel shelter.



Target Field, home of the Minnesota Twins Baseball Team, sports powder-coated brackets processed at Extreme Powder Coating.

stadium. “It’s massive what we did,” Peterson said. “All the aluminum had to be sand-blasted.” Extreme used 120-grit steel shot to sandblast the aluminum brackets. They then ran them through the three-stage wash, coated them with an epoxy powder primer from California-based Cardinal Industrial Finishes, and then applied a TGIC-based polyester custom color topcoat from Sherwin Williams, Cleveland.

Peterson said he was astonished at what his shop was a part of once he actually attended his first game at the stadium. “There were some I-beams that were quite long,” he said. “They are aluminum C-channels and go all the way up this wall. I never knew the magnitude of this job. I knew it had a lot of parts, but when I walked up there and saw this whole wall by Kent Hrbek’s Bar, I was dwarfed by it.”

Target Field was awarded Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver Certification by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). The stadium is only the second professional sports stadium in the country, after Nationals Park, home of the Washington Nationals, to be LEED-certified.

An internationally recognized green building certification system, LEED provides third-party verification that a building or community was designed and built in ways to save energy, reduce water use and carbon dioxide emissions, improve indoor environmental quality, and provide stewardship of resources and their impacts.

Go-karts to large parts builds solid reputation

From the stadium job, Extreme Powder Coating found itself powder coating the same type of parts for M.G. McGrath, an architectural metal company based in Maplewood, Minn., who fabricated and installed one of Minnesota’s largest pieces of public art, the Target Plaza wind veil at Target Field. The

beam trolley conveyor that branches into three lanes into a gas-fired convection oven, which is 19 feet wide and 34 feet long.

A home run means the major leagues

Extreme Powder Coating’s success grew as it did more and more projects. Word was out, and K&K Fab-

rications came calling. The fabricator was a contractor for Mortenson Construction, builders of Target Field in Minneapolis, new home of the Minnesota Twins Baseball Team.

The shop was hired to powder coat the brackets and the covering of the pylons for walls on each side of the

wind veil, designed by artist Ned Kahn, is a kinetic wind sculpture that covers the south façade of the B Ramp of the plaza. It's composed of thousands of aluminum flaps that move with the air currents to reveal complex patterns. The wind veil is backlit with LED lights to reflect the movement caused by the wind turbulence, creating ever-changing patterns of light and color.

Although Extreme Powder Coating didn't powder coat the wind veil for M.G. Mcgrath, the company did powder coat more parts for the louvered wall that covered the large steel I-beams. The coater is proud to have been part of architectural projects that have such an emotional impact on their surrounding communities—for generations to come.

Not bad for a shop that started out doing go-karts. "We do our thing," Peterson said. "And that thing is building our reputation doing all these big parts." **PC**

Powder coatings: **Diamond Vogel/ Peridium Powder, Orange City, Iowa. 712/737-4993.**
www.peridiumpowder.com

Powder coatings: **NIC Industries/ Prismatic, White City, Ore. 541/826-1422.** www.nicindustries.com

Powder coatings: **TIGER Drylac USA, Ontario, Calif. 909/930-9100.**
www.tiger-coatings.us

Powder coating job shop: **Extreme Powder Coating, Blooming Prairie, Minn. 507/583-7448.**
www.extremepowdercoating.net

References

Billy Joel and Nunley's Carousel, see [www.billyjoel.com].

Nunley's Carousel, see [www.carouselnews.com].

Minnesota Twins Baseball Team and Target Field, see [ballparkauthority.com]

U.S. Green Building Council, see [www.usgbc.org].

Editor's note

For further reading on the topics discussed in this article, see *Powder Coating* magazine's Web site at [www.pcoating.com]. Click on Article Index and search by subject category. Have a question? Click on Problem Solving to submit one.