Grove Plating Co-Community's "Good Neighbor" Provides Timely Quality Finishing

Grove Plating Company is an outstanding example of a small, independently owned jobshop that has taken basically one major service-zinc barrel plating-and built a very solid, comfortable business. The secret of its success is its ability to provide delivery when the customer wants it.

> Grove Plating's well-maintained property helps it blend in with its community neighbors across the street, which include the village hall and small storefronts.



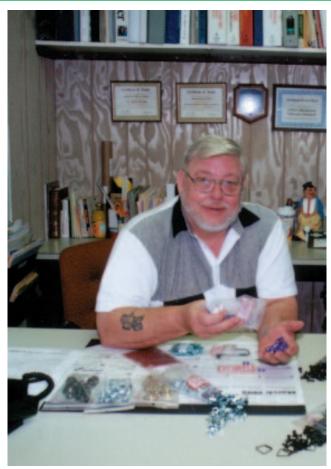
For 40 years, Grove Plating Co., Inc. could have stood out in its locale like the proverbial sore thumb. That's because it has held the distinction of being the only metal finishing business in Fox River Grove, IL, a small suburb located northwest of Chicago. Company management has turned being the "only" into an asset, however, insisting that Grove Plating be identified as a respected member of the community. Its clean, modest and well-landscaped building and parking lot blend in with the hometown atmosphere of its nearest "clean industry" neighbors, which include the village hall, small storefronts, a highway construction supply building, and a large private home that is a replica of a castle in England. In addition, management is extremely careful about its potential impact on community resources, such as its local water supply and water treatment works.

Barrel-plate-finishing small parts and fasteners—lots and lots of fasteners, in record time—is the company's main objective. It makes perfectly good sense, then, that the company's businesscard slogan is, "If you're tired of waiting, call Grove Plating."

While the bulk of the fasteners and other parts sport the characteristic silver zinc finish, a growing number is black-dyed. In addition, Grove Plating has expanded the color range to accommodate customers who have been specifying brightly colored, dyed fasteners in vivid hues of aqua, purple, gold and red.

## Evolution of a Jobshop: Business Grew By Degrees, Then Doubled

Grove Plating's owners, Richard and Beverly Kostner, are well-known in the Chicago area and have fostered a friendly, small business attitude for their successful shop.



While the characteristic silver zinc finish is popular, a growing number of fasteners is black-dyed. Grove Plating has expanded the color range to accommodate customers who are now specifying bright colors. Richard Kostner displays some of the fasteners dyed aqua, purple, gold and red.

This philosophy works. Customers keep returning and help the Kostner's business grow by expressing their satisfaction to other potential customers. Friends and customers alike refer to the Kostners as "Mr. and Mrs. K."

Grove Plating's beginning was modest, typical of many jobshops. In 1956, William Radunz established the company, offering polishing and buffing services. His first location was a two-car garage in Fox River Grove.

Two years later, fresh out of the Navy, Richard Kostner met Radunz and became interested in plating. Mr. K recalls that he was hired at the tremendous salary of \$50 a week. Approximately a year later, Radunz offered him a partnership for \$300, which he happily accepted.

The business took a giant step forward in 1960 when Kostner's brother Ray became the third equal partner. This allowed the group to build a small addition, which housed their first barrel plating line for cadmium plating. Bill Radunz died in 1961, so the two brothers bought his share from his widow.

Another giant step was taken in 1965 when Mr. K bought out his brother, making Beverly and him the sole owners. At that time, they built another addition and installed a larger barrel line for zinc plating. The couple worked through most of the '70s without making any more major changes, until 1978, when they put on still yet another addition to the building and installed a new automatic zinc barrel line. Business immediately doubled.



Drums in the chemical feeding station are clearly marked and safely diked for containment.

The shop reached its current size in 1984, when the building was expanded to house new pollution control equipment, a laboratory, a new robotic barrel line, and to provide storage for chemicals.

Mr. K supports the professional associations he feels are important. He is a member of the AESF Chicago Branch, and Grove Plating is a company member of the National Association of Metal Finishers (NAMF). "The metal finishing industry is not the kind of business in which you can afford to be an island," he says. "You need to be in touch with other people like yourself. The industry has had its ups and downs, but we've weathered setbacks because we've worked together."

Other important organizations to which the company belongs are the Illinois Manufacturers Association and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

One of the major changes made in Grove Plating's management was in 1991, when the Kostners hired a general manager, Abraham De La Mora. "I guess we've made a lot of changes over the years," says Mr. K, "some big, some small. But the one thing that never changed— and never will—is our belief that the customer is always right and should get what he pays for. If our customer says he needs his job in three days or whatever, we try our best to deliver." *PRSF* 



Finished screws are being unloaded from the plating barrel.