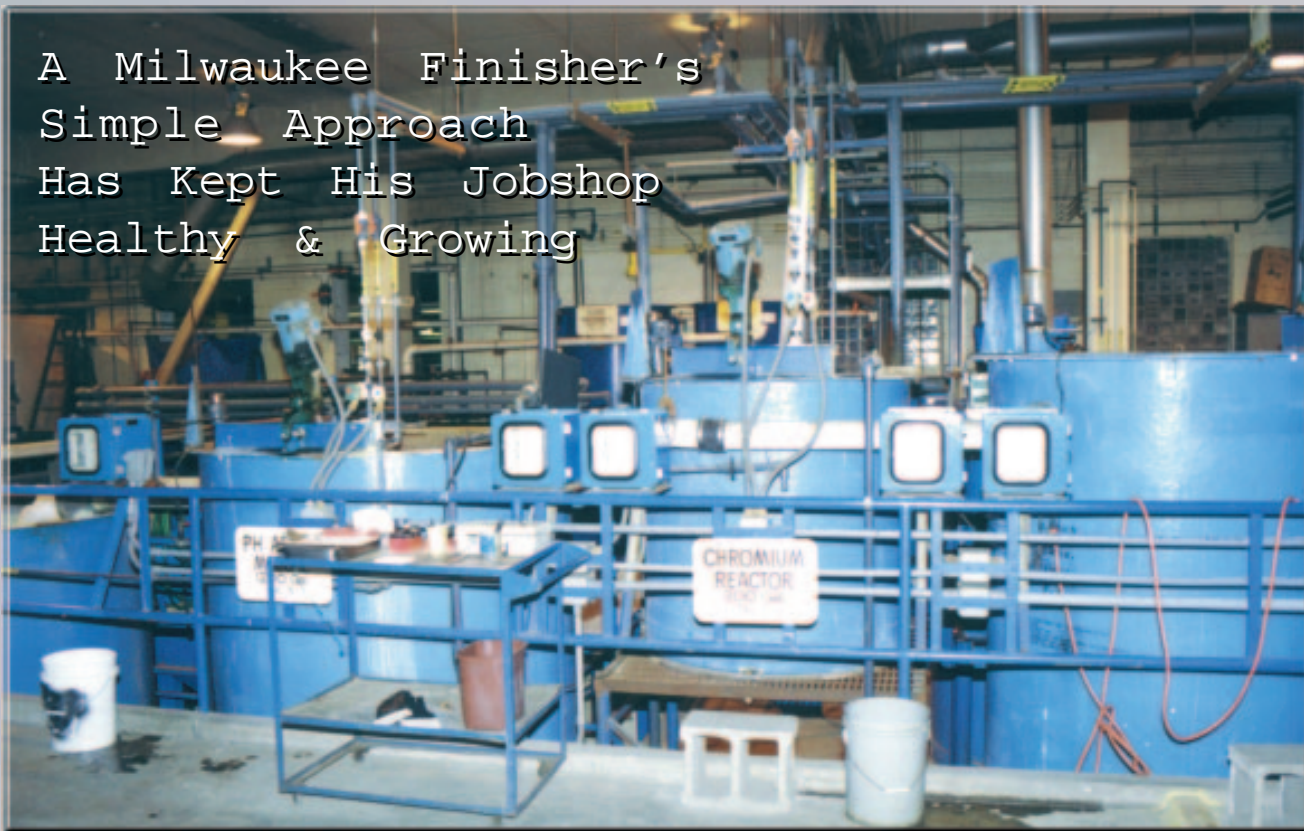


A Milwaukee Finisher's Simple Approach Has Kept His Jobshop Healthy & Growing



The large waste treatment facility is centrally located and designed for safety. The extra effort made in pollution prevention has resulted in the company being listed on the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District Honor Roll for the past several years.

Founded in 1943, Milwaukee Plating Company is one of the oldest jobshops still doing business in Milwaukee, WI. The owners have used careful planning, while investing profits back into the company, to ensure financial stability during changing times and increasing environmental restrictions. Today, the company is one of many family finishing jobshops in the Milwaukee area that has taken a proactive approach to environmental compliance and community involvement, to reduce potential hazards and promote the importance of the surface finishing industry.

When Alfred Mattacotti, president and owner, talks about the business, his eyes light up. When he walks by the shop's plating lines, the people working at the stations stop to chat with him. It's apparent that Mattacotti takes a personal interest in the company and its employees. Employees also take a personal interest in the company. The shop management and the employees are proud of the company's reputation of producing a wide range of quality finishes with dependable, fast turnaround.

Operations

Al describes his shop as "conventional, fairly simple and straightforward." He makes an extra effort to keep things as simple as possible, even as he adds high-tech systems to the operation. He is continuously upgrading and improving the plating lines to keep up with production and quality demands. He recently upgraded production software and added computers in the shop, giving management and line operators access

to instant information from customers. All operators can now obtain information on any job being processed in the shop, including specifications, pictures and drawings of parts. This has already increased efficiency and production, said Al. "The next step will be to computerize the lines."

Good housekeeping is an essential part of the operation and is apparent throughout the shop, from the front office to the waste treatment area.

Plating Lines

The shop has four rack lines, three manual hoist and one automatic line.

The automatic nickel-chromium line is 100 ft long and the largest of all. Most lines have tanks that are 12 ft long so they can be used for large parts, or large batches of parts.

Cleaning and pretreatment receives priority on all the plating lines. Al says extra effort is made to avoid problems and to communicate with customers before processing parts. "This is where platers need to be involved with the design of the part to

be finished,” he said. “The top priority here is to work closely with your customers.” The company is currently researching better methods to solve difficult degreasing problems.

Mostly industrial parts are processed by the company, but many consumer items and a few automobile parts are also finished. The shop formerly plated aluminum parts and still processes some zincate work on aluminum.

Finishes

Processes featured at Milwaukee Plating include:

- Bright and matte copper-nickel-chromium
- Bright and matte copper-nickel
- Bright and matte nickel-chromium
- Bright and matte nickel
- Bright zinc with bright blue chromate coating
- Bright zinc with iridescent yellow chromate coating
- Silver
- Tin



Al Mattacotti, right, president of Milwaukee Plating Company, visits with the front office team (l-r): Christine Ehr; wife, Karen (standing); and Janet Erickson.

Most of the substrates processed are made of brass, bronze, copper, steel and zinc-base die casts. The parts include die castings, extrusions, forgings, wire forms, machined parts, spinings and stampings.

The company also offers aluminum etching, bright dip, polishing and buffing, chromating and degreasing.

a position to do what was necessary to comply. Other plating shops in Milwaukee were also pioneers in establishing good waste treatment systems, Al said. The community of surface finishers in Milwaukee was the nation's leader in initiating proactive programs, which have eliminated many adverse relationships with regulating agencies, environmentalists and the concerned public.

Fortunately for Milwaukee Plating, Al's father, Vincent, had the foresight to plan for investing heavily in wastewater treatment equipment. “We built a treatment facility in 1984,” said Al, “and it is flexible enough to be continuously upgraded so that we can remain competitive in the plating industry, while working with the community, state and industry associations toward joint solutions to pollution problems.” The company's waste treatment program has worked so well that it has been on the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District Honor Roll for the past few years.

Milwaukee Plating has a centrally located waste treatment system that concentrates the waste and precipitates the solids. The concentrate goes through a filter press, is then dried and sent to a company that reclaims and recycles the metals. “It makes

Pollution Control
With the steady growth of the business in the 1970s and 80s came environmental regulations, and only the companies that were prepared for these major changes survived.

When waste treatment became a requirement for metal finishers, the company was already in



The shop's four process lines include three manual hoist-operated lines.



Racks are designed to handle large parts, or a large volume of parts.

good sense to recycle,” Al said. “It really is a premium for plating shops. It’s like having additional benefits from a by-product and it’s great for the environment.”

Over the years the shop has changed its processes to less polluting versions, such as lower concentration chrome and chloride zinc.

Company History

Like many other successful jobshops, Milwaukee Plating Company started small and grew to meet an increasing demand for its services. Except for the first year of operation, the company has remained at the same location in downtown Milwaukee. The original founders were A.J. “Al” Hermansen, Michael Doyle and Phil Ritzenthaler.

In 1945, Al’s father, a young research chemist, became associated with Milwaukee Plating Company. The developer of a process for plating on aluminum, Vincent Mattacotti joined as a partner and the company was incorporated.

The shop grew rapidly in the 1950s and 60s. “There were several additions during this period,” said Al Mattacotti. “We added tin and chromium plating lines, an automatic nickel line, and acquired some neighboring buildings for expansion.”

In 1968, Vincent and Al Mattacotti purchased Al Hermansen’s interest in the company, and in 1972 Clifford Peter became a stockholder and vice-president. With the recent retirement of Cliff Peter, the Mattacotti family owns all interest.

Vincent Mattacotti’s contributions to the plating industry were numer-

ous. He produced and improved several bright plating processes during his career, and guided the company through more than 30 years of growth before retiring in 1978. He was very active in the Milwaukee Branch and at the national level of AESF. He served the Society as an officer, teacher, lecturer and author. In 1976 he received the Frank E. Lane Industrial Achievement Award. Al became president of Milwaukee Plating in 1974.

Continuing a Tradition

Al is confident that his company will continue to grow as it becomes even better at the way it serves its customers. “We are an open organization and we’re eager to become involved with our customers, to solve problems and provide better service,” he said. “We’re never too busy to answer questions about a customer’s electroplating needs.”

With a clientele that ranges from corporate giants to small companies, the simple business philosophy of Al Mattacotti seems to work for them all. **PA&F**



Al Mattacotti takes a personal interest in his employees. Here he talks with an operator on one of the hoist lines.