



The staff at Certified Finishes includes, from left, Mike Peach, Greg Allen, and Carl Peach.



This scrubber/evaporator was modified to allow the shop to achieve zero discharge.

## A Hard Chrome Jobshop in Tennessee Has Big Plans for the Future

**Being small doesn't mean you can't be modern. Mike Peach, owner of Certified Finishes, Old Hickory, TN, has taken his young jobshop beyond compliance with a unique and innovative approach that can work for others. With a little luck and some help from the economy, Peach has big plans for expanding the shop to serve a growing niche in the Nashville area.**

Mike Peach has been working as a plater since 1976. He learned the trade through working at a number of jobshops in the Midwest and South.

Six years ago, Peach started Certified Finishes in Old Hickory, TN, a small-town community in Greater Nashville. Currently, the shop has just two other employees—Greg Allen, Mike's stepson, who has been working as a plater at the shop since it started, and Mike's brother, Carl, who joined the company a little more than a year ago to handle administrative responsibilities. Together, the team has about 50 years' experience in metal finishing.

### A Specialist Shop

Certified Finishes specializes in industrial hard chromium plating. Peach started out plating for customers who were mostly affiliated with

the tire manufacturing industry. The majority of the finishing processed through the shop is salvage work to repair worn parts—most of which are parts used for making tires. All kinds of machining parts are plated for local manufacturers.

The shop is small, and currently is plating with just one hand-operated hoist line in a plating tank that is 4 ft. wide by 7 ft. long by 4 ft. deep. A smaller tank is used for rinsing. The jobshop does mostly low-volume, high-quality finishing, but has the capacity to do larger production work as well.

The company also performs passivating, pickling, bead blasting and rust removal. Some hand polishing is provided for parts when needed, but the shop mostly sticks with its specialty—hard chrome.

Any time Peach considers changes or additions for the shop, he always tries to think of the worst-case scenario and put things in place to prevent them from happening. He always takes precautions to avoid accidents. Before he opened the plating business, he made sure construction was completed to prevent an accidental spill from going outside the shop, just in case one should occur.

### Keeping up with Technology

A member of the Mid-Tennessee Branch, Peach goes out of his way to learn everything he can about the business. He attends branch meetings, and reads trade journals and other publications on a regular basis to keep up with the latest trends and technologies. Although his shop is small, the emphasis is always on innovation, whether it's new methods for processing parts or better marketing techniques. One of the latest projects for the shop was creating a website ([www.certifiedfinishes.com](http://www.certifiedfinishes.com)). Peach thinks the Internet will give him an advantage for finding new customers, and also provide opportunities for doing a better job with customer service in the future.

### Achieving Zero Discharge

One of the most unique things about the shop is its waste treatment system. A couple of years ago, Peach was offered a good deal on a scrubber/evaporator from a company that was being purchased by a larger supplier. The unit was installed on the line, and with some additions, the scrubber has allowed the shop to achieve zero discharge. All contaminants are filtered out through the system, and the cleaned solution is sent back to the plating tank. The unit works



*The process line consists of a single hand-operated hoist, but plans are being made to expand the operation.*



*A typical hard-chrome-plated part processed at Certified for a local manufacturer.*

*These parts were finished to repair areas worn during use.*



## ***A Plater's Diversion***

Mike Peach is very serious about his chromium plating business, but he also has another interest—a passion for fireworks. During the years he has lived in Old Hickory, which still has the small-town atmosphere, he has developed the best fireworks show around for the annual 4th of July celebration.

Each year, people come from miles away on the evening of July 4th to see his fireworks display. It's all done very professionally and safely, and the annual acknowledgment of Independence Day has earned Peach a reputation for putting on one of the best displays in the area. The event has the support of the town and local officials. "It's just something we started doing that has turned in to a pretty big thing," Peach says. "Folks will bring their coolers and lawn chairs, we cook hamburgers and hot dogs, and we put on a good show. It's a lot of fun."

And, it's probably good public relations and promotion for a small-town hard chromium plater.

constantly in harmony with the plating line. When necessary, contaminants are plated out of the filters to clean them. A mist suppressant is used in the tank to minimize fumes.

Although the scrubber was not originally built for achieving zero discharge, with some innovative modification, Peach has made it work. He installed it himself and mostly designed the modifications so that it could achieve zero discharge on the process line. The unit itself was \$25,000. It cost Peach an additional \$5,000 for an impartial test to be conducted to satisfy requirements of the local pollution control authority. The test took one full day to complete, which meant one day of down time for the shop. The system passed all phases, however, and no waste from the plating line has left the shop since.

Is the system unique enough to be patented? "I'm not an inventor," Peach said, "I'm a plater. If any other shop can use this idea, or a similar system to help do a better job with its

waste treatment program, it is welcome to it."

"It's a good feeling to know that you're doing everything you can to keep your community clean and safe," Peach said. "It's not just for the business," he pointed out. "Our families live here, and their families will also grow up and live here. It's our responsibility to do everything we can to keep it clean and safe. That's the best reason for making process changes to minimize waste, even if you don't have to. It's the right thing to do."

### **Expansion in the Works**

Peach has plans on the drawing board for relocating to a much larger building and to expand the plating operations. A location has already been selected, and the move was originally set for this year. A downturn in the economy, plus some bad luck, however, have put the plans on hold for now.

Bridgestone/Firestone, a Nashville-based tire manufacturer, and one of

the largest in the world, is experiencing difficult times, following a voluntary recall of some of its tires manufactured at one of its plants. The tire maker has seen a decline in demand of its products, and this has had a domino effect on related businesses in the area. Add to that an already soft economy, and it means a sharp reduction in sales for Certified and its customers.

"We don't do any work for Bridgestone/Firestone," Peach said. "But, we do a lot of hard chrome plating for companies that do work for them. It has had a dramatic negative effect on the amount of work going through our shop this year."

Peach pointed out that the volume of work at Certified Finishes in 2001 is only about one-third of what it was in 2000. So, for now, the shop expansion will wait until times get a little better. "I know it will come back," said Peach. "It's just a matter of when. If we can hang in until then, we will be ready when the work is ready for us." **P&SF**