

ELEVATED S

In America's hill-free heartland, Tri-County Painting's grain elevator work rises above the rural landscape

In the flat, fertile heartland of America and Illinois, the most significant topographical feature is usually manmade. This dominant high point — the grain elevator — is also the focal point for the agricultural lifeblood of the rural communities that dot the landscape. It's at once a source of pride, income and identity.

Grain elevators are also

one of the primary areas of coating expertise for Tri-County Painting, headquartered in Pekin, a community of 32,000 people in west central Illinois, right in the middle of that black-dirt agricultural heartland.

TATUS

Tri-County crews took on their most recent elevator job last spring. The Cargill grain elevators stand near Ottawa, Ill., and not coincidentally, along a slough just off the main channel of the Illinois River. Its Illinois River proximity means this Cargill elevator can easily load grain barges from its 700,000-plus bushel grain handling operation.

The project included recoating the three large, welded steel tanks and all of the auxiliary equipment, such as legs, bridges, ladders, conveyors, stairwells and dust collectors, integral to the grain-handling and storage facility. The contract also required Tri-County to add Cargill's signature two-tone green striping to the top 20 feet of the 100-foot-high concrete elevator that has been the landmark in Ottawa since 1943.

The three tanks, known as Tank 100 Tank 200 and Tank 300, each measure 70 to 80 feet in diameter and 60 feet high. They were built to augment capacity of the towering concrete elevator in the early 1970s.

When those tanks were added to Cargill's Ottawa elevator, grain prices were "the" topic of conversation among elevator owners and operators and their farmer customers. That's true today as well, although corn and soybean prices hand-chalked on blackboards are a thing of the past, as computer monitors now report Chicago Board of Trade prices instantaneously. But word of mouth among elevator owners and operators is still the primary information exchange, on grain prices and on the performance of painting contractors.

Second generation professional painter William "Bill" Heaver, owner of Tri-County Painting, is following in the vocational footsteps of his father Harold, who started the business nearly 40 years ago.

Bill heads a crew of about 10 professional painters who specialize in coating grain elevators within a 100-mile radius of his home base. Tri-County also capitalizes on its coating expertise painting semi-trailers, cranes, heavy equipment components and farm machinery in its 15,000-

square-foot shop in Pekin, plus doing a variety of other commercial and industrial coating work.

FIRST ELEVATOR

"Dad started doing painting work in conjunction with Farm Services (FS) in the early 60s," Heaver explains.

"The transition into larger commercial jobs and then the elevators was a natural progression

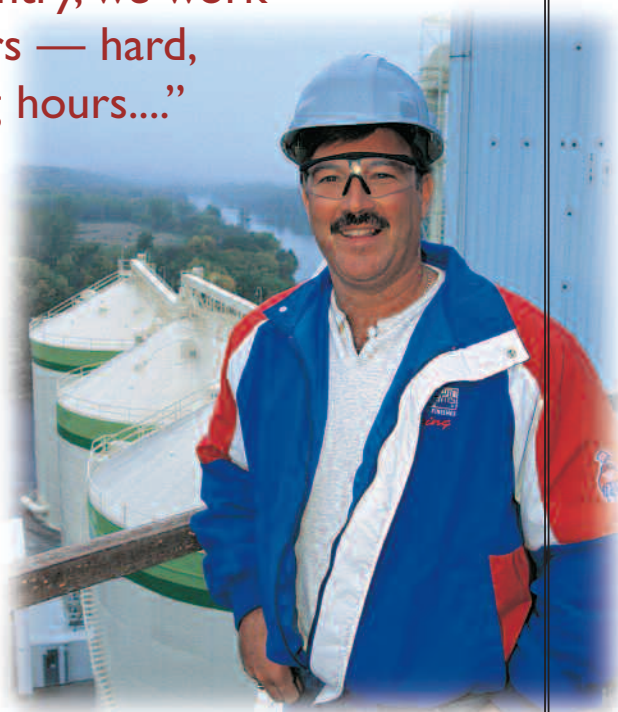
"... in farm country, we work just like farmers — hard, smart and long hours..."

for us. We did our first elevator probably 10 years ago now, and our reputation for getting the job done right, on time and within our clients' budget has grown over the last decade."

"We wanted it done right and quickly," explains Kevin McNab, the Ottawa Cargill elevator manager, "both to meet the specifications of our engineers at our Minneapolis headquarters and to get the project done within our fiscal year.

"Bill Heaver did a similar project for one of our other facilities near here," McNab reports, "so he came highly recommended. We put a deadline on the work and he met it nicely. He also did the kind of high-quality job we expected him to do."

"We worked closely with everyone involved," Heaver adds. "Cargill's engineers in Minnesota; Kevin and his Cargill team in Ottawa; Kenny Hanshew, our Sherwin-Williams industrial coat-



Bill Heaver, owner of Tri-County Painting in Pekin, Ill., stands atop the recently completed Cargill elevator.



At a Glance

PROJECT:

Grain elevator, tanks
Ottawa, Ill.

COATING SYSTEM:

Primer — Macropoxy
4-5 mils DFT
Topcoat — Corothane II
3 mils DFT

CONTRACTOR:

Tri-County Painting
Pekin, Ill.

ing rep; and the various regulators concerned about the removal and disposal of the lead-based coatings.”

POWER WASH

The decision was made to power wash the tanks and the other structures, using water at 4,000 psi, prior to coating.

Complicating matters were coats of old, lead-based paint on Tank 200 and some of the elevator’s auxiliary equipment. This prep work required careful protection of the Tri-County team members doing the work, containment of water spray, collection of all chips and other materials removed by the power washing and proper transporting and disposal at a registered hazardous waste site. The specific objective was to encapsulate any lead-based paint on Tank 200 remaining after the power wash, and to generally stay out of the way of those using the facility.

“When we work here in farm country,” Heaver explains, “we work just like the farmers — hard, smart and long hours. Our outdoor painting season roughly coincides with the growing season here, April through October, so we’re working on site at the same time that a lot of other things are going on. We need to be able to do our work well and quickly and not disrupt the regular business of

the people we’re working for.”

Although Tri-County uses spray technology and techniques for about 80 percent of its work, proximity to the river and the highway prompted use of the power-rolling application alternative. Using a two-coat system — Sherwin-Williams Macropoxy epoxy primer at about 4-5 mils DFT and a top coat of Sherwin-Williams high gloss urethane Corothane II at about 3 mils DFT, for a total of 8 mils DFT — Tri-County took full advantage of the quick drying properties and short recoat times of the epoxy primer as they power-rolled the tanks and other equipment.

“We have full confidence in the two-coat system that we used in Ottawa,” says Heaver. “It’s perfect in terms of build and dry time and we use it on all our other grain industry jobs.”

The application window was 45 days. Tri-County finished in 44 days.

“Meeting tight deadlines and specifications reflects the level of professionalism of my crew,” Heaver stresses.

LONG RELATIONSHIPS

The majority of Heaver’s team has been with him for years. The end of the outdoor season sees them migrate to Heaver’s indoor facility at Pekin.

Similarly, Heaver’s association with Sherwin-Williams and its products goes back to the early 90s, when Hanshaw was the store manager in Normal, Illinois, and supplied Heaver with coating and service for Tri-County’s work.

Heaver’s 100-mile work radius roughly overlays a Sherwin-Williams store district of 23 stores. Tri-County gets its products and service from whichever store is closest to where the project is located.

“My experience with Sherwin-Williams and Kenny has been excellent,” Heaver points out. “He and I have a solid working relationship. We go into jobs knowing that our materials are going to work for us and they’ll be there when we need them every time. The finished job looks good and so do we. In the end, we all get to deliver on our promises.” ▣