



# Specialty Steel Treating Inc.

Specialty Steel Treating Inc., a family business specializing in precision-controlled heat treating, provides its customers with exceptional service and is a leader in the industry with the highest heat-treated product quality and a vision for new opportunities and change.

*By Ed Kubel*



Specialty Steel Treating (SST) was founded by Donald Cox in 1956 in Warren, Michigan, and began operations in a 4,000-square-foot plant with one furnace. Today, it has six facilities — five located in Michigan and one in Connecticut. The company has grown to over 250,000 square feet of operating space in its 59-year history. Michigan facilities are located in Fraser (corporate headquarters) and Farmington Hills, and the Connecticut plant is in East Granby.

### SST BUILT ON A DREAM

While working for a company before starting SST, Cox had many new ideas about improving furnace design and improvements in heat treating performance. He left the company to implement his ideas in his new start-up, Specialty Steel Treating. With capital from a mortgage on his house, he bought his first furnace and set up shop in a modest facility.

Working with the furnace equipment OEM during the construction of his first furnace, Cox debated with the furnace manufacturer on the design of this type of furnace and his concern about the muffle and atmosphere inlet for stainless steel heat treating and brazing using a hydrogen atmosphere. He finally accepted the recommended design by the OEM.

Upon installing the furnace and the initial start-up involving heating the furnace to operating temperature and introducing the atmosphere, an explosion occurred that severely damaged the furnace. Cox and the OEM spent many weeks during the holiday season in 1956 to repair and redesign the furnace to the specifications that he wanted. Due to the circumstances of the furnace failure, the OEM offered a generous grace period on paying off the furnace.

Many years later, Cox revealed to his staff that if it wasn't for the grace period to pay for the furnace, he may not have survived his first year of operation due to lack of work and revenue.



### SST MISSION

The mission of SST is Performance, Integrity, and Improvement. Performance to exceed customer expectations with regard to quality, delivery, and cost. Integrity to maintain the highest level of integrity to its customers and the industry. Improvement to maximize productivity and efficiency of all business activities through a program of continuous improvement.

### PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

SST is known in the aerospace industry as the premier heat treating source for precision-controlled heat treating services. For many years, SST has been the only source for certain flight-critical and flight-safety helicopter transmission parts with

unique and challenging configurations. SST was a crucial source for the final "Return to Flight" program of the last Space Shuttle Program. The aerospace industry accounts for about 40 percent of SST work, 25 percent is industrial related, and automotive, heavy equipment, trucks, rail, and firearms markets account for the other 35 percent of business. SST is ISO 9002 and Nadcap certified and is an FAA Certified Repair Station.

Primary services offered include gas and vacuum carburizing, press and plug quenching, roller quenching shafts, vacuum heat treating with 6-bar pressure quench, normalizing, batch oil quenching, neutral hardening, carbonitriding, gas nitriding, and precipitation hardening.



## COMPANY GROWTH

During its 59 years in business, the company has grown and expanded numerous times. From its beginning in Warren, Michigan, the first move was to a larger 12,000-square-foot facility in 1960 still in Warren. The next expansion was in 1967 to a 30,000-square-foot facility in Fraser. Due to the growing business, this building was expanded to the maximum size allowable by the property. In 1969, the plant in East Granby, Connecticut, was opened at the invitation of Sikorsky Aircraft seeking a quality heat treating source in the region. In 1979, SST opened the facility in Farmington Hills, Michigan, at the request of Ford Motor Company to process ring and pinion gears for the company. Between 2006 and 2011, SST opened three additional facilities in Fraser due to its process capabilities and position in the taper-bearing market.

SST entered the vacuum carburizing arena in 2003 and is now a crucial supplier to the aerospace industry for certain critical programs and challenging part configurations.

## PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY

“People make a company,” said SST’s Vice President Mark Sosnowski. “We believe we have exceptional associates at Specialty Steel at every level. The dedication, service, and expertise our staff presents to the company and industry go from the president to each employee, and this is the main reason for SST’s success throughout the years.”

Employee job satisfaction is evident by the tenure of SST associates. While there are new team members being added to the company as growth continues, the average tenure of the team is over 15 years, and many associates have well over 25 and 30 years with the company.



SST is involved in the community and is a strong supporter of various programs through participation and donations including the Fraser DARE Program and the DEA Survivor’s Benefit Fund every year. SST works closely with local firefighters and police annually to ensure proper training is performed on prevention and reaction to hazards within the heat treating industry.

## PROMISING FUTURE

As a family business, SST has been successful for several generations. Today, the third generation is deeply involved in the operation and success of the company, and the fourth generation has begun their journey within the company to continue the level of growth and success that was started almost 60 years ago.

“The same philosophy will be ingrained into each generation to come: respect all those who work for the company, respect and serve its customers with exceptional service, and continue to be a leader in the industry with the highest quality, best service, and a vision for new opportunities and change,” said Sosnowski. ♣

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**, contact Mark Sosnowski at (586) 293-5355 or at [mark@sst.net](mailto:mark@sst.net). To learn more about Specialty Steel Treating, visit [www.sst.net](http://www.sst.net).