

Budenbender (epoxy) – part 1

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Let's go to Kauffman Stadium, home of the defending world champion Kansas City Royals. Note how the concourse floor is smooth, clean, and beautiful. That's because this floor was coated with a special treatment, produced by a company with ties to rural Kansas. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Paul Budenbender is co-owner of Epoxy Coating Specialists, or ECS, which coated the concourses at Kauffman Stadium as well as floors and walls in many other facilities across the country. Paul's family has roots in Pottawatomie County, where his ancestors homesteaded near Fostoria. Paul's dad went to K-State and then worked for the Corps of Engineers, which eventually transferred him to the head office in Kansas City. Paul grew up at Shawnee but spent summers on his grandparent's farm.

Tragically, Paul's father passed away from cancer at age 48. Paul went to work for a painting and flooring contractor in Olathe. He worked there 16 years and met his wife Pam. Paul's work involved the emerging use of epoxy to paint floors and walls.

In 1995, Paul and a man named Dave Schloegel and some other friends decided to go out on their own. They created Epoxy Coating Specialists, or ECS. Today, ECS is a leading installer of industrial polymer floorings, coatings, and linings. These are essentially hard epoxy resins that can coat a floor or wall to create a hard, clean, durable, waterproof surface.

"When I got started, it was places like surgical labs and pharmacies that wanted these types of coatings on floors," Paul said. Now the company provides these for many different types of applications, such as industrial and manufacturing, aerospace, health care, sports venues, auto dealerships, schools and universities, food and beverage plants, and retail facilities.

"These coatings are ideal for anyone who wants a clean, seamless floor," Paul said. "They have great cleanability 'cause they have no seams or other places to let bacteria in," he said.

These might be used in new construction or in retrofitting old facilities. They might be used in a school or where there is an old warehouse being repaired or a facility being upgraded by a manufacturing firm. In a plant, for example, Paul and his team can fix joints in the concrete, coat with epoxy resin, and use striping to mark aiseways.

"Every week we have a crew working at airplane plants," Paul said. As a result, the company now maintains offices in Wichita plus Kansas City. ECS primarily serves Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Iowa, and South Dakota, although the company does epoxy floors across the country. ECS did floors in Kauffman Stadium, which led to them doing the floors in George Brett's house as well. Wow.

These floors are ideal for research facilities. ECS will be doing 80,000 feet of flooring within the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility. At K-State, ECS has done everything from laboratories to the Memorial Stadium green roof to the bathrooms and showers in the new residence hall.

In one industrial application, a manufacturer in southeast Kansas had installed new equipment which didn't seem to be working right. A company consultant was brought in from Japan. He found that the equipment was okay, but residue from the

concrete floor was affecting the sensors. “After we coated the floor, the equipment worked just fine,” Paul said.

ECS employs some 75 people, and Paul remains active as an installer. He lives in Pott County where he has bought land near the family farm through the years. He also collects antique tractors as a hobby and has more than 100 in his collection.

Paul’s place is in a rural location between Havensville, population 145, and Wheaton, population 91 people. Now, that’s rural.

For more information about ECS, go to www.epoxyspecialists.com.

It’s time to leave Kauffman Stadium where we’ve observed the high quality floors installed by Epoxy Coating Specialists. We salute Paul Budenbender, Dave Schloegel, and ECS itself for making a difference with hard work and entrepreneurship. They are making things better from the floor up.

And there’s more. Paul’s wife Pam has established an innovative grocery store serving rural Kansas. We’ll learn about that next week.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.