Contractor Brings Customer Service To

How many contractors can say they helped fight the fire that burned down a building they would eventually help rebuild? Probably not too many.

Ron Nolt, president of plaster and stucco contractor Nolt & Nolt, Inc., is also the deputy fire chief for Lancaster, Pa., in the heart of Amish country. Nolt’s department has the only ladder truck in the area, and when the Sight and Sound Theater went up in flames, his department was called in so firefighters could reach the roof in an effort to extinguish the fire. Nolt was on the roof and in the building during the blaze, making efforts to contain the fire before the roof eventually collapsed and the theater was deemed a total loss.

Level

After the theater burned to the ground in January 1997, the community began to feel the effects almost immediately in the form of lost tourism dollars. Local financial experts claimed the theater generated approximately $80 million in revenue for Lancaster County. The owner, Glen Eschelman, built the first Sight and Sound Theater in Lancaster in 1976, with cinder block and stucco. Nolt & Nolt began their relationship with Eschelman back in the 1970s and slowly educated the owner about the

Nolt & Nolt Comes to the Rescue with Panelized EIF System and a Drive to Do the Job Right.
endless possibilities of using an exterior insulation and finish system.

“It really was an educational process with (the owner) over the years, but as time went on, he really saw the design possibilities with the Dryvit system,” Nolt said. “The new theater is one of our biggest and most ornate jobs to date.”

Meeting the Schedule

Nolt & Nolt, Inc. has been a Dryvit contractor since 1976. Last fall, they completed work on the Sight and Sound Ministry project in Lancaster, Pa. The theater is 90,000 square feet and seats more than 2,000 people. Plays are performed five days a week with multiple shows on the weekends. The performances always have a Biblical theme; for example, Noah’s Ark, complete with live animals.

Horst Construction, the general contractor from Lancaster, did not start erecting the steel framing until nearly one year after the fire in December 1997. Nolt & Nolt knew they could not meet the opening date in September 1998 if they field-applied all the EIF systems’ materials. Given the tight time line, Nolt & Nolt decided to build
panels with Dryvit’s Outsulation® System for three sides of the exterior. They started hanging panels in January 1998, but not all at once.

“As the steel went up, the panels were all ready to go,” Nolt said. “Some days we could hang only one, maybe two, panels.”

On average, the panels were 44 feet in height and 12 feet wide. As soon as panel sections were hung, the roof was closed in and work started on the interior. While the
opening date for the theater was in September, the theater company needed to be on stage for rehearsals by July 1.

The Show Must Go On

The front of the theater’s exterior was done last and was field-applied Outsulation. This portion was saved until the end for two reasons: One, the work on the front has a lot of intricate detail and took the most time; and, two, because it was field applied, the area had to be done in the warmer weather.

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“[The owner] is a hands-on type of person,” Nolt said. “We had him down at our office on a regular basis, climbing scaffolding or going up in one of our cranes to make sure the mock-up was exactly what he was looking for, from the color to the smallest detail. At one point, he came to us with photos of columns he had seen on a home in Georgia—the U-grooves on the front of the theater are exact duplicates from the photos he supplied.”

The Millennium Theater’s operations director, Doyle Heisey, was involved with the project from the first day and knew the ambitious schedule would pose a unique challenge. “[The EIFS] panels are what made (this project happen),” Heisey said. “Without the panels, we would not have opened on schedule, and we know you cant just do that with any building material [in reference to the panels].” Heisey went on to say that this particular brand of product was also used in the lobby on 14- and 18-foot high columns. Nolt & Nolt is now finishing work on a guardhouse, a miniature replica of the theater, out in front of the theater.