

REICHEL-KORFMANN CO., INC.

RK RUBBER



There's a reason
we've been around
for over
114 years!

Experience = Solutions

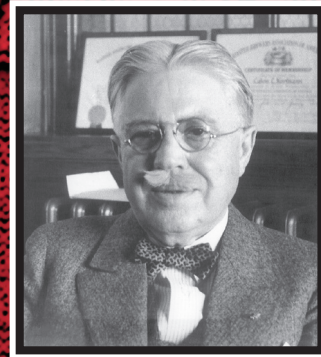


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using only the highest
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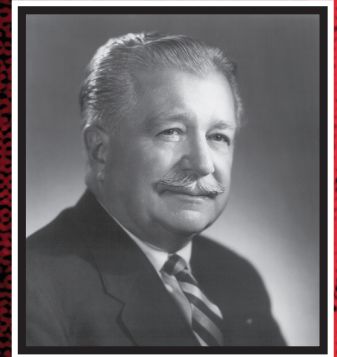
FOUNDATIONS AND VISION

BREWERS' SUPPLIES

REICHEL-KORFMANN CO.



Ludwig Korfmann



Calvin Korfmann

RK Rubber: A History of Solving Problems

Some companies just keep rolling along, like a well-crafted, endless conveyor belt. Others can't stand the test of time and eventually fail like an old, brittle rubber hose.

In business for more than a century, Reichel-Korfmann Co. Inc.—dba RK Rubber—stands firmly among the former.

Founded in 1898, RK Rubber is one of the country's most-respected fabricators of industrial rubber parts. That reputation comes hard earned, forged by solving problems with innovative, customized solutions that minimize customers' downtime and keep their factories and processes humming, year after year, decade after decade.

To survive and thrive for more than 100 years requires a certain business DNA—that uncanny knack for adapting to changing business trends and climates. Over the years, RK Rubber has done just that by growing and evolving into a company that's as resilient as the rubber it uses to fabricate customized parts and components.

In short, when rubber parts fail...or belts engineered by original-equipment manufacturers don't do the job...or industrial processes require custom-designed and built rubber components, businesses from a wide range of industries know exactly who to call.

Beer-Industry Roots

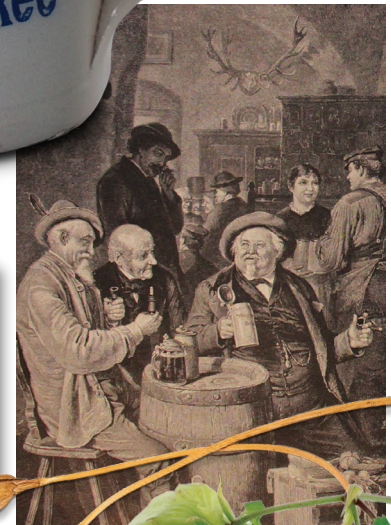
Surprisingly enough, the company's origins stemmed from the world of hops, malt and barley, not conveyor belts and rubber sleeves.

It all began when one of RK Rubber's original founders, Ludwig Korfmann, took a job in the late 1800s with the Charles Baumbach Co., which dealt in brewery supplies and equipment.

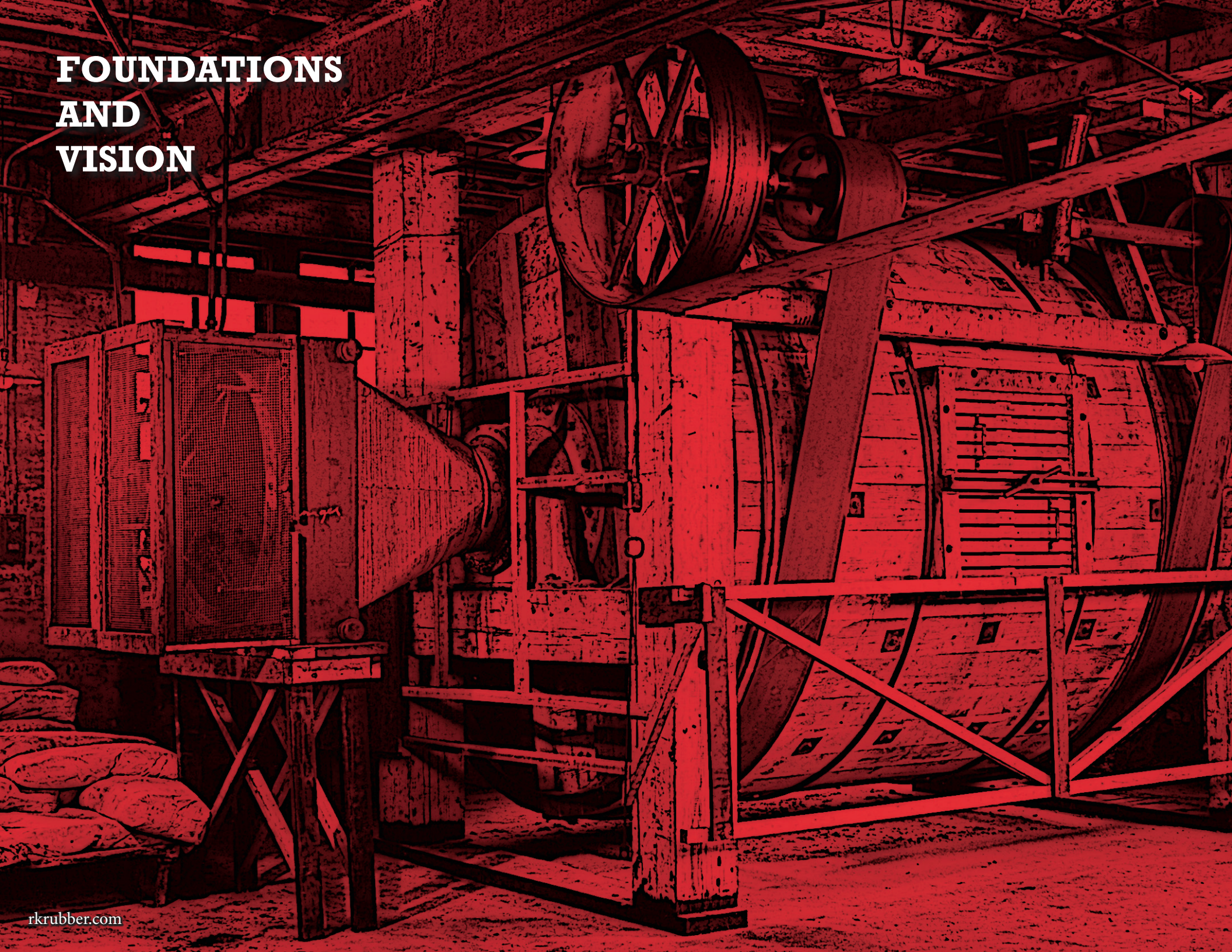
At the time, Milwaukee—and Wisconsin, for that matter—was one of the country's top beer-producing centers. Furthermore, Korfmann already had beer-industry experience, having worked for a coppersmith that made mashing equipment for breweries. In 1898, he became a partner in the company, which changed its name to the Baumbach-Reichel Co., reflecting the addition of another partner, one Ernst Reichel.

Although its main customers were breweries, the company already was forging a connection with rubber products by supplying corks, bungs, hose, rubber buckets, and flat power-transmission belts to breweries.

In 1922, the company's name changed again, this time to Reichel-Korfmann Co. By now, the company had branched out from brewery supplies, machinery and equipment to industrial supplies and mechanical rubber. Moreover, it eventually became one of the first distributors for B.F. Goodrich rubber products, a relationship that lasted more than 70 years.



FOUNDATIONS AND VISION



Business Focus Changes

In 1957, current owner Don Gutknecht was hired as an inside salesman. A few years later, Korfmann—who was preparing to retire—sold the company to Gutknecht and two other employees, the late Bill Ehlers and Lou Miller.

The ensuing two decades proved eventful for RK Rubber as the company adapted to changing times. In the early 1960s, the company moved from its shop on the south side of downtown Milwaukee to the city's northwest side. In addition, the company switched gears in 1968 and became a full-line distributor of Goodyear rubber products, including conveyor belts, V-belts and sheet-rubber and engineered products for industrial companies.

“It was a pretty exciting time,” Gutknecht recalls. “We bought the whole kit and kaboodle and had lot of great ideas and high hopes... and it all paid off.”

The business landscape changed, too. During the early 1960s, business volume was split just about evenly between brewery supplies and rubber products for industrial companies. But the brewery side of the business slowly faded, reflecting a larger beer-industry trend as smaller breweries around the state gradually went out of business.

Go-To Guys for Solving Problems

By the late 1980s, RK Rubber made a key decision that dramatically changed the scope of its business. In order to play to its strength—solving problems for customers by fabricating custom rubber products—the company decided to end its relationship as a Goodyear distributor.

Changes in the marketplace influenced the company's decision. Over the years, distributors became mega-distributors—one-stop shops for everything from rubber products to motors, chains, gearboxes and sprockets. They could sell product, but not necessarily offer the technical expertise that customers expect.

That left a niche for players like RK Rubber, which through decades of experience had established a sterling reputation as problem solvers.

That sharper business focus led to a shop expansion that increased the company's capabilities by creating room for new equipment that could handle new styles of belting and applications. And the company's clientele changed, too, as new companies emerged and older ones disappeared in the wake of increased global competition and tumultuous economies.

“It's a changing world all the time,” Gutknecht points out. “There's always something new coming along, whether its different customers or new products for new applications. We can do so much more now than we could back then, when our resources were more limited.

“We've established a nice reputation,” he continues. “Lots of old companies have disappeared, but there are still plenty around who recommend us to new customers.”

Amid all the changes, though, RK Rubber is, ironically enough, a lot like vulcanized rubber: Even when subjected to pressure and stress, it's

lasting and flexible enough to always bounce back strongly.

“The bottom line is, we're the problem solvers,” Gutknecht notes. “It's what we do best.”

For more than 114 years... and counting.



Don Gutknecht

**CAPABILITIES
AND
EXPERTISE**



Where Depth of Knowledge Meets Expert Craftsmanship

The craftsmen at RK Rubber have a simple goal: Be the number-one supplier of specialized rubber parts and components. Nothing more. Nothing less.

“Some companies want to be everything to everyone, sort of like a big-box retailer,” says Dell Gutknecht, general manager.

“But we like to keep our focus on a relatively small area of expertise: fabricated industrial rubber products.

“We want to be the company that gets the first call when someone needs a specially designed part or runs into a problem,” he adds. “And if we get that opportunity, we’re usually the first ones they call when something else pops up.

“We really enjoy the challenges—taking on the oddball stuff and finding cost-effective solutions to customer problems,” Gutknecht concludes. “We try very hard to not say ‘no’ to anybody. We are the problem solvers. Sometimes there’s no money in providing a cure—but that is how we build relationships.”

RK Rubber became that go-to firm for so many customers by:

- **Delivering quality products**, fabricated with materials made only in the U.S.A. All compounds meet ASTM specifications. And there’s no use of lowest-cost import products, designed to meet minimum specs.
- **Assembling an experienced team of craftsmen** that now boast almost 150 years of combined experience.

- **Fabricating low-volume parts** that other companies can’t—or won’t, because it’s not economically viable.

- **Investing in a large array of specialized, high-tech equipment** that enables craftsmen to fabricate parts and components for a wide variety of applications.

- **Compiling in-depth knowledge** of elastomers, fabrics and other critical elements.

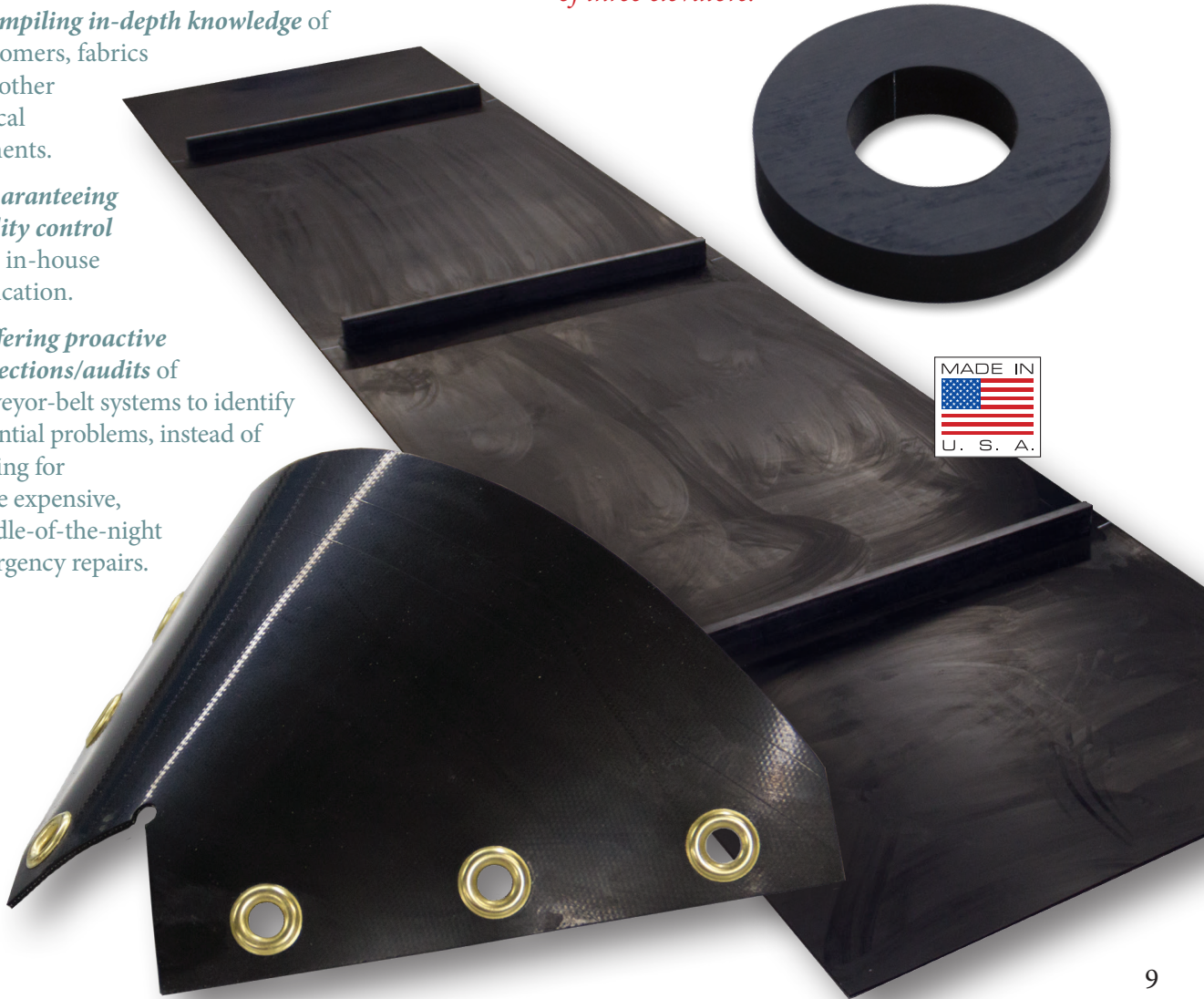
- **Guaranteeing quality control** with in-house fabrication.

- **Offering proactive inspections/audits** of conveyor-belt systems to identify potential problems, instead of waiting for those expensive, middle-of-the-night emergency repairs.

Solution? No Problem.

Problem: *Frequent breaks in bucket-elevator belts in a large Chicago food-processing plant create costly downtime for repairs.*

RK Solution: *Fabricated stronger food-grade elevator belts that last 18 to 20 months, resulting in six-figure annual savings in each of three elevators.*



FACILITIES AND MACHINERY



Equipped To Do the Job

Some companies don't mind farming out work to subcontractors. RK Rubber responds with a simple, four-word philosophy: Not in our house.

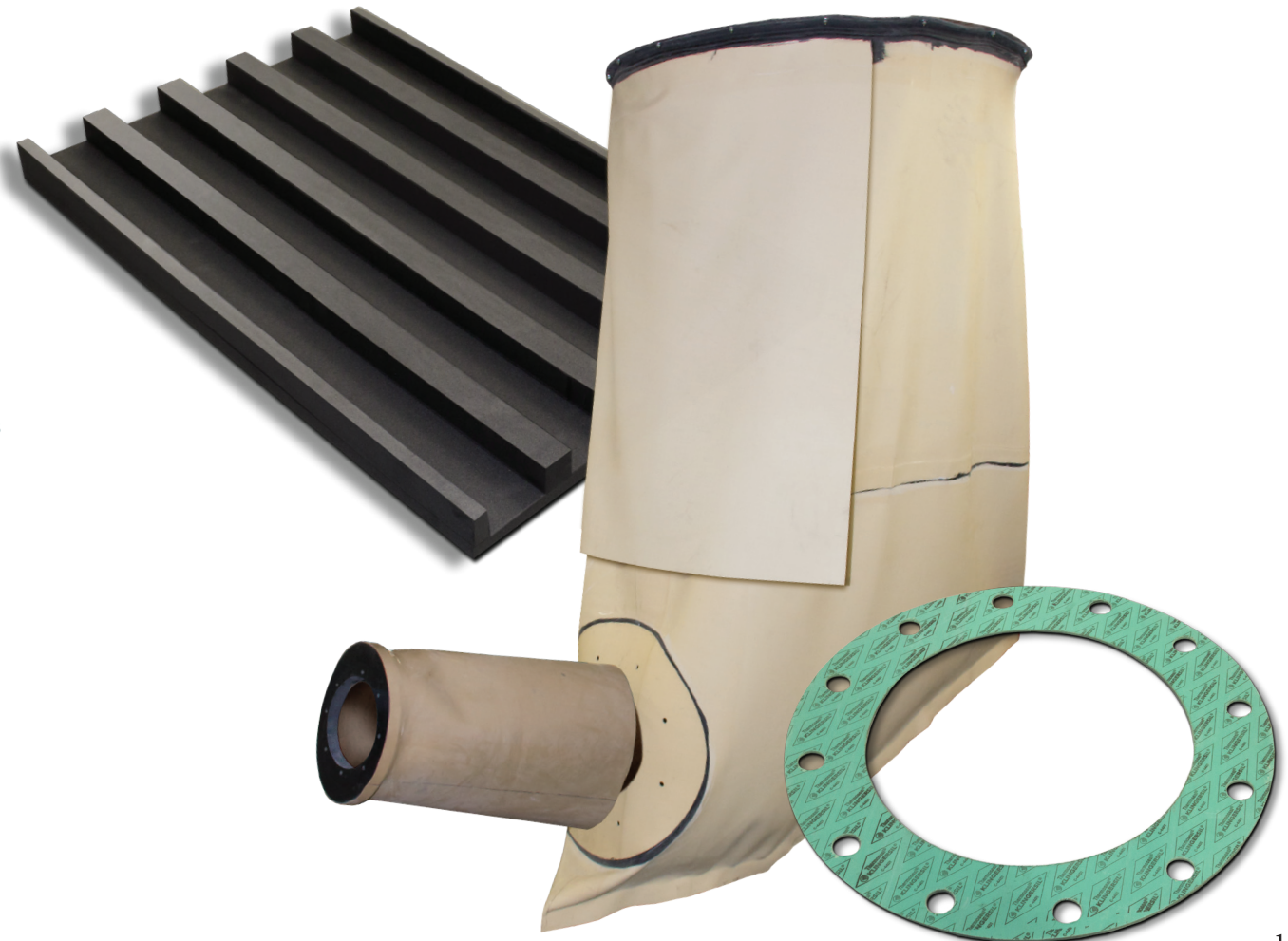
"If we can't fabricate something ourselves, we're not afraid to tell them to go to XYZ Company," says Dell Gutknecht, general manager. "We don't want to be the middleman on parts, and end up apologizing for a vendor who may not perform as well as we perform."

To handle the steady flow of unique fabrication situations requires a stable of technologically advanced machinery that's up to the challenge. As Gutknecht puts it: "I'm not aware of anyone else that does the amount of fabrication we do—or has as many machines to do it."

For example, RK Rubber owns more than a dozen different kinds of vulcanizers, which can "cook" everything from small to large items and efficiently handle a wide variety of applications—and do them more efficiently than less-well-equipped competitors. Craftsman also use various lathes that can machine parts, which requires significantly less manufacturing lead time than extruding or molding them.

"We do 99 percent of our splicing 'hot,' using heat, pressure and uncured materials," Gutknecht notes. "That ensures parts will be anywhere from 80 to 110 percent as strong as the rubber itself...you don't get that by gluing pieces together."

"We have a longitudinal, belt-splicing vulcanizer press that allows us to do more than just longitudinal splicing," he adds. "We can run three 30-inch belts side by side and 'cook' two cleats per belt, which means we effectively do in an hour what it might take others six times longer to do. It's all about efficiencies."



Solution? No Problem.

Problem: Wisconsin foundry needs to protect an expensive robotic cleaner that scours investment castings with blasts of abrasives or high-pressure water.

RK Solution: Fabricate a custom 8-foot-high, 6-foot-wide vulcanized rubber shroud that resists tearing and shields robot from harmful cleaning products.

**PRODUCTS
AND
MATERIALS**



A Reputation for Versatility

Just when the fabricators at RK Rubber think they've seen it all, along comes a customer with a need for a completely new part. Their attitude? Bring it on.

Whether it's a prototype part or something tried and true, the company draws on more than 100 years of experience to fabricate components that lower customers' costs and decrease maintenance requirements. RK Rubber's business centers on, but is not exclusive to, the following products:

- Conveyor belts (light- and heavy-duty and food-grade belts)
- Conveyor-belt fasteners
- Conveyor-belt products (bumpers, wipers, scrapers and seals)
- Vulcanized gaskets (small- and large-diameter)
- Tubes and sleeves (chemical- and abrasion-resistant components that are FDA-compliant for food-processing facilities)
- Flexible connectors (round, square and rectangular)
- O-rings and cord rings (small- and large-diameter)

Belt Capabilities

- Hot vulcanized cleats and vanner edges
- V-guides in various profiles
- Endless, open-end or prepared laps
- Grooving and profiles machined into covers
- Mechanical fasteners

Materials Used

- Sheet rubber
- Neoprene
- White FDA
- PVC sheet
- EPDM sheet
- Silicone
- Pure Gum
- Skirtboard
- Open- and closed-cell sponge rubber
- Sheet-rubber rolls or stripping—with or without adhesive



Solution? No Problem.

Problem: *The rubber belt on a conveying machine in a German manufacturing facility doesn't hold the product correctly, which allows parts to roll off it.*

RK Solution: *Fabricated a custom material-handling belt with a sponge in between two layers of rubber; the belt compress and hold the parts being transported.*

MARKETS SERVED



Adding Value for Varied Customers

When a company prides itself on accepting just about whatever rubber-fabrication challenges come down the pike, it's easier to say what industries they don't serve than to list all the ones to which they do cater.

"We don't do consumer products or aviation-related products," says Dell Gutknecht, general manager of RK Rubber. "Otherwise, we're pretty much handling a lot of unique stuff. One thing is for sure: All of our customers rely on us for fabricating solutions."

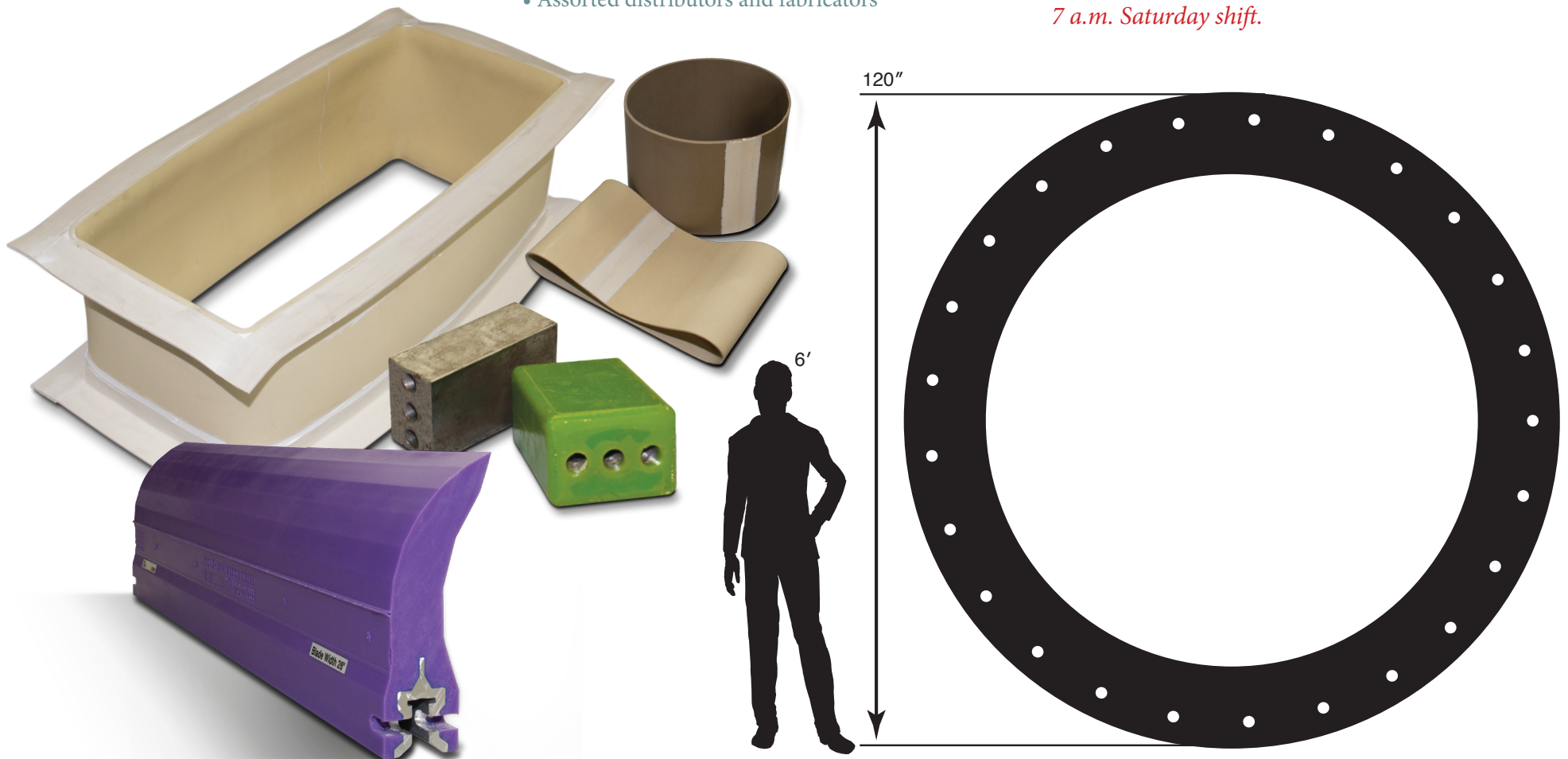
RK Rubber has experience in and services the following industry categories:

- Pulp and paper
- Sand and gravel
- Mining
- Food processing and manufacturing
- Construction-equipment manufacturing
- Recycling (mechanical separation)
- Assorted distributors and fabricators

Solution? No Problem.

Problem: A Milwaukee-area recycling firm calls at 4:40 p.m. on a Friday after a conveyor belt in a shredding machine breaks, threatening to halt the next-day's production.

RK Solution: Quick diagnosis reveals an under-sized belt fastener installed by the shredder's manufacturer. Installation of a heavier-duty fastener results in a fully operational machine, just in time for the 7 a.m. Saturday shift.





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