

## Rex Heat Treat a quiet gem in Lansdale

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Maria Monje works on a metal part to be used in a Harley Davidson motorcycle at Rex Heat Treat in Lansdale. (The Reporter/Geoff Patton)



Michael Jackson at work in a production area at Rex Heat Treat in Lansdale. (The Reporter/Geoff Patton)



A worker in a production area at Rex Heat Treat in Lansdale removes a metal part following a quenching procedure.  
Photo by Geoff Patton



A production area at Rex Heat Treat in Lansdale. (The Reporter/Geoff Patton)

By DAN SOKIL, Staff Writer

For more than seven decades, Rex Heat Treat has brought metal components from all over the world together, right here in Lansdale.

And borough officials recently thanked Rex Heat Treat for sticking with Lansdale for so long, honoring the business at a council meeting.

“This is really the first time that we’ve ever been recognized by anybody in the borough of Lansdale,” said owner John Rex II.

“It still sort of amazes me that we’ve been here for 70 years, but very few people know who we are or what we do,” he said.

Founded in 1938 by John’s father J. Walter Rex and business partner Elmer Erb, the company started in a two-car garage in the borough and was founded to heat treat metal components, including World War II weaponry for the Army and Navy.

The company moved in 1958 from the first location on Third Street to the current site on West Eighth Street, and John took over the company’s operations from J. Walter in 1973.

“We are in the business of heat treating, hardening and tempering of metal parts,” said John Rex.

“We have no products, we don’t make anything. We take other people’s metal products and do a thermal process on them and give them the properties required,” he said.

In the 1970s, the company opened branches in Georgia and Florida, and opened a second Pennsylvania facility in Bedford in 2000 and in Alabama in 2005, but many of the company’s most historic moments took place right here in Lansdale.

“You’ve heard of the Minuteman missile? It’s a three-stage missile, and the first time that the three stages ever came together anywhere, made from three different manufacturers, was here in Lansdale, Pennsylvania, to be processed by our company,” said John.

That’s not the only brush with history that Rex Heat Treat has had, John told council.

“The Chilean miners (rescued last year) were drilled out with drill bits that were processed through our facility, and the BP oil well that burst, there were a lot of emergency things that were done rapidly; we treated jaws and bolts and all kinds of things that ended up being down there on those robots,” he said.

The company currently treats components of the Harpoon and Tomahawk missiles, and engine components for the F-35 fighter and Sikorsky helicopters, said John’s son Johnathan, a third-generation Rex who is the Lansdale facility’s plant manager.

“We have about eight major aerospace or military companies that we really do work for here, and we’re very proud of that, but we’ve been working very hard to attract new clientele,” Johnathan said.

During a recent council meeting, father and son showed a video from the company’s website [RexHT.com](http://RexHT.com) briefly depicting the company’s operations.

Borough Mayor Andy Szekely said the idea for an honorary proclamation came about after Rex’s support of last year’s Lansdale Oktoberfest, when he went to return a banner to their facility and was given a guided tour.

“It just sounded like a funny name to me, ‘Rex Heat Treat,’ but in talking to (John) he took me on a tour of their facility and I was really impressed by it,” Szekely said.

“They employ between 60 and 70 employees in Lansdale, they’ve been in business since 1938, and they also pay quite a bit in electric each month,” he said.

That number fluctuates between \$50,000 and \$65,000 per month depending on how busy the facility is, Johnathan said, but Rex Heat Treat has helped the community in other ways too — from supporting the Oktoberfest to sponsoring a classroom at the Indian Valley Boys and Girls Club.

“As Rex Heat Treat has shown, their commitment to the community goes much deeper than jobs, taxes and electricity. Their support of local charities and events is admirable,” said Szekely, reading from the official borough proclamation.

“In short, Rex Heat Treat is truly a member of the Lansdale family, and as mayor of Lansdale I commend you and your company for making Lansdale a better place to live. We wish you another 75 successful years here in Lansdale,” he said.