

KECO GPR Helps G&C Auto Body Stay at the Forefront of Technology



by Autobody News Staff

Following a stint in the Air Force where he honed skills as a painter, **Gene Crozat** landed a job at a northern California body shop in the late '60s. He later moved to his hometown of Santa Rosa to work at a local Datsun dealership.

In 1972, unhappy with the circumstances of their employment, Crozat and a coworker, body man **Leo Gassell**, quit their jobs and opened *G&C Auto Body* across the street from their former employer. The business flourished, quickly earning a reputation for quality workmanship and customer satisfaction. Upon his retirement, Gassell sold his shares to Crozat, who kept the name intact.

"My dad didn't want to change the business name," recalled COO **Patrick Crozat**, the youngest of four siblings, all of whom hold key positions within the company. "We had an established reputation and brand recognition, and he felt that was important to preserve." It was a smart move.

From humble beginnings, G&C's Santa Rosa flagship campus now encompasses five acres housing two 25,000-square-foot buildings — including a state-of-the-art, Spanish-style main facility.

At the urging of his eldest brother, **Shawn** — whose vision as CEO was to expand upon their father's legacy to ensure the family's future — they embarked on a slow-growth strategy, opening two satellite shops in the mid-'90s. "We sat on these locations through the early 2000s," said Crozat.

But keen on taking G&C to the next level, they began opening two new locations yearly. By 2019, they had 15 locations. With the pandemic onset, things changed dramatically.

"Shawn had spent years cultivating relationships with single-shop operators. When COVID hit, they started calling and wanted out," said Crozat. "At the time, a lot of venture capitalists wanted to get into the industry. But Shawn, my brother **Josh** and I said why don't we grow too." And so they did.

G&C's reach now includes 43 family-owned body shops strategically located within 14



G&C's Santa Rosa flagship campus encompasses five acres housing two 25,000-square-foot buildings, including the state-of-the-art headquarters. Together, the facilities contain a full production shop, body shops, mechanical department, ADAS calibration, paint shop, aluminum clean room and a family-owned calibration business.

counties. With a staff of 650 employees, the stores collectively churn out roughly 2,800 vehicles monthly.

As a top-tier enterprise, G&C holds OEM certifications from Mercedes-Benz and Tesla. Both the company and its employees have earned I-CAR Gold Class status, a point of pride for Crozat.

"As the chief operating officer, I've always been passionate about training and equipment. All of our technicians, our estimators, managers, everybody is Gold Class certified," he said. "For the stores to be Gold Class certified, all staff has to be certified and it's also mandatory with a lot of our insurance partners. So we invest heavily in equipment and training."

Case in point: G&C recently made a hefty investment in KECO's top-of-the-line L2E Glue Pull Repair Collision System, purchasing one system for each of its 43 stores. The system includes on-site training as part of the package cost.

"Glue pulling or PDR has been around for a long time, but it was always a specialty job for third-party PDR people. It wasn't embraced by the body shop side because it was foreign to technicians. They wanted to grind off the paint, use their stud and nail guns to pull out the metal the old-fashioned way," said Crozat, who noted some of G&C's insurance partners are now

urging shops to employ a glue pull process. "The exterior sheet metals used in vehicles nowadays are thinner. Aluminum is becoming more prevalent, so in order to repair these panels, Glue Pull is paramount.

"It helps keep the original panel intact on the vehicle. It's less intrusive [because] you don't have to deal with a welder that will burn through the e-coating on the backside of the panel, so there are no corrosion issues down the road," Crozat said. "And because you use less filler on a panel, there's less chance of damaging the factory paint."

While noting he had purchased a few GPR systems in the past that largely went unused, Crozat said KECO's training helped gain technician acceptance.

"KECO's instructor did a phenomenal job," Crozat said. "He hosted 17 courses to train all of our technicians on how to use the equipment. The classes really helped the technicians feel comfortable using the product and seeing its benefits. And as they see other technicians embracing it, it becomes the new norm.

"The product is great. The training was professional and well thought out. We want to be progressive in repair methodology. To fix the latest technology vehicles, you have to have the latest technology."

G&C Auto Body

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Company At A Glance...

Type: Collision Repair
Facility Employees: 650
In Business Since: 1972
Number of Locations: 43
Combined Production Space: 344,000 square feet



KECO trainer Danny Hacker demonstrates how to repair a damaged hood using the L2E GPR Collision Repair System during a training session held at G&C's Fremont facility.



Dillon Turner, a technician at G&C's Berkley facility, uses Glue Pull to straighten a panel.

KECO Body Repair Products

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