

After False Conviction, Veteran Painter Wows New Boss with his SATA guns



by Autobody News Staff

A random event can change our lives in a millisecond. If you don't believe it, just ask **Steve Jones**, a veteran painter whose work has been praised ever since he entered the collision repair industry back in 1995.

Well-known for his ability to create a fantastic finished product every time by using his beloved SATA spray guns, Jones was making big bucks and living the good life until Oct. 2, 2014.

Jones' nightmare began when the mailman came to his door with a package that he signed for. Before he could even open the small box, the local police stormed into his house and accused him of drug trafficking.

"The package contained a pair of shoes with four bags of MDMA inside (also known as ecstasy)," Jones said. "The return address on the package was from somewhere in Amsterdam and was fake. I went into shock as I was arrested and taken to jail."

Jones discovered this is a common occurrence. Many other people are victimized by this scam the same way, he said.

"Drug traffickers find someone's name and address and then send them the drugs, hoping that they're not home when the package is delivered. Then they grab it without assuming any of the risks," he said.

After sitting in a jail cell at the Hall County Jail in Gainesville, GA, for 45 days, Jones was able to post bail to the tune of \$50,000. That's when everything went sideways.

"I hired a highly regarded attorney who fumbled my case from beginning to end," he said. "They harassed my family and said if someone didn't take responsibility for it, they would all end up in jail. After a trial, I was found guilty and sentenced to 10 years in prison followed by 20 years on probation. I was taken into custody immediately and spent the next 10 months in Ware State Prison in Waycross, GA."

After hiring a new lawyer, Jones went through the appeal process while sitting in prison.

"When we finally got back in front of the same judge, she recog-



Steve Jones is heralded for his painting skills and an eye for detail while always using his beloved SATA spray guns.

nized that it was an improper prosecution and that the cops and the prosecutor screwed up big-time," he said. "I think that once they charged me, they were going to do anything they could to convict me, whether I was guilty or not. They were devious and my lawyer was just plain incompetent, so it was a toxic combination for me."

The judge took two months to make her decision while Jones sat in his cell, but in August 2018, he was released from prison.

"I started looking for a job one week after I got out," Jones said. "It took me a while to acclimate to the real world because when you're in there, you're more like a caged animal than a human being."

With top references and a solid work record, Jones landed a job at *Gerber Collision & Glass* after 10 days of asking around. Once hired, he hit the ground running. He put his 26 SATA guns right to work, and his employers were quickly blown away by his volume and efficiency.

"I'm the only painter here, but almost immediately, I was logging 375 hours every two weeks while painting 40 vehicles. I had been away from my SATA guns for a long time, but the minute I picked them up, it was like riding a bike. When I joined the crew, their profit margin was roughly 48 percent, but it's now al-

most 68 percent, and my manager is obviously pleased," he said.

Additionally, his wife, **Cindy**, was hired as his prepper.

"She wants me to succeed and has pride in her work," he said. "We have minimized comebacks and rarely have to re-paint anything. It's a great relationship both personally and professionally, and we also get to spend more time with each other after being apart for so long."

One of the first things Jones did after being released was purchase two new SATA guns.

"I bought two of their new SATAjet X 5500 guns, one RP and one HVLP," he said. "They provide exceptional coverage and use less material, plus I can work faster to hit my numbers."

"I can never get that lost time back, but I'm fairly confident that I will be compensated for the mistakes that were made. I've learned that 20 percent of all the people in our prisons right now were wrongly convicted, and only 7 percent of those get appeals. I'm making good money now, and I'd like to thank everyone who supported me through this ordeal, including my wife, my family and even the people at SATA, especially **Dan-Am's** director of sales and marketing, **Tony Larimer**. You truly find out who your friends are when you have to go through something like this."

Gerber Collision & Glass

Location: Duluth, GA

(770) 654-5281

www.gerbercollision.com

Company At A Glance...

Type: Collision Repair

Facility Employees: 12

In Business Since: 2001

Number of Locations: 400+

Combined Production Space: 15,000 square feet



Jones's wife **Cindy** is his prepper at *Gerber Collision & Glass* in Duluth, GA.



Jones owns 26 SATA guns and is always looking to add to his collection.

Dan-Am Company

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