

Look Out Seattle, the Ninjas are Here!

NinPaintSu puts a **Ninja** spin
on the contracting business



BY BARBARA WALSH

Ninja painter and bouldering enthusiast, Elisha (Eli) Dena is Owner/Operator of NinPaintSu, a recently formed Seattle Washington painting contracting company. NinPaintSu is a full service painting and coatings company serving both residential and commercial customers since December 2012.

Earlier this year NinPaintSu connected with me on Facebook asking a few social media questions. With a business name like NinPaintSu, and their equally amusing logo, I was interested in finding out more about this Seattle, WA based company. Eventually we

began a conversation, and I found out why people in the Seattle area want to hire these experienced ninjas! From painting apprentice, to AutoCAD draftsman at a contracting company, to owner/painting contractor, Eli Dena has an interesting story to tell.

Barbara Walsh (BW): Tell us how you began painting.

Elisha Dena (ELI): I like to say that I was “lucky” to learn to paint in the way that I did. My boss, a small painting contractor, learned to paint in the painter’s union. He was very conscientious and had an excellent

Eli Dena goes “Over The Edge” from the top of the Ranier Tower in Seattle. At 525 feet, we wonder if he’s checking for paint failure.



eye for detail. The "lucky" part being that he was, we'll say...iron fisted. Pretty much, I was constantly frustrated with him all the time because it seemed like he would never get off my case. Looking back, and starting up a business of my own, I wouldn't have had it any other way because I learned how to do it right the first time from one of the best.

BW: Give us some background on your career and why you decided to start your own painting contracting company at age 39.

ELI: I actually began painting in 1995 and worked up from "helper" to "apprentice." I was getting into some of the more advanced techniques of painting by around 2000 when a friend had asked me if I had ever heard of AutoCAD. There was a position available at the drafting contracting company he worked for and he asked if I might like to apply. Well I hadn't, at the time, known what AutoCAD was or much about the drafting field at all for that matter, but it sounded like a great challenge.

Being only 26 and more than a little unsure as to what I truly wanted to do "when I grew up," I jumped at the chance to expand my horizons a bit and am very glad that I did. I excelled in the drafting field bringing my desire for accuracy, efficiency, and developing systems to get my projects done into my work. While working full time, I continued to paint residential interiors and exteriors on the weekends in an unofficial capacity for friends and



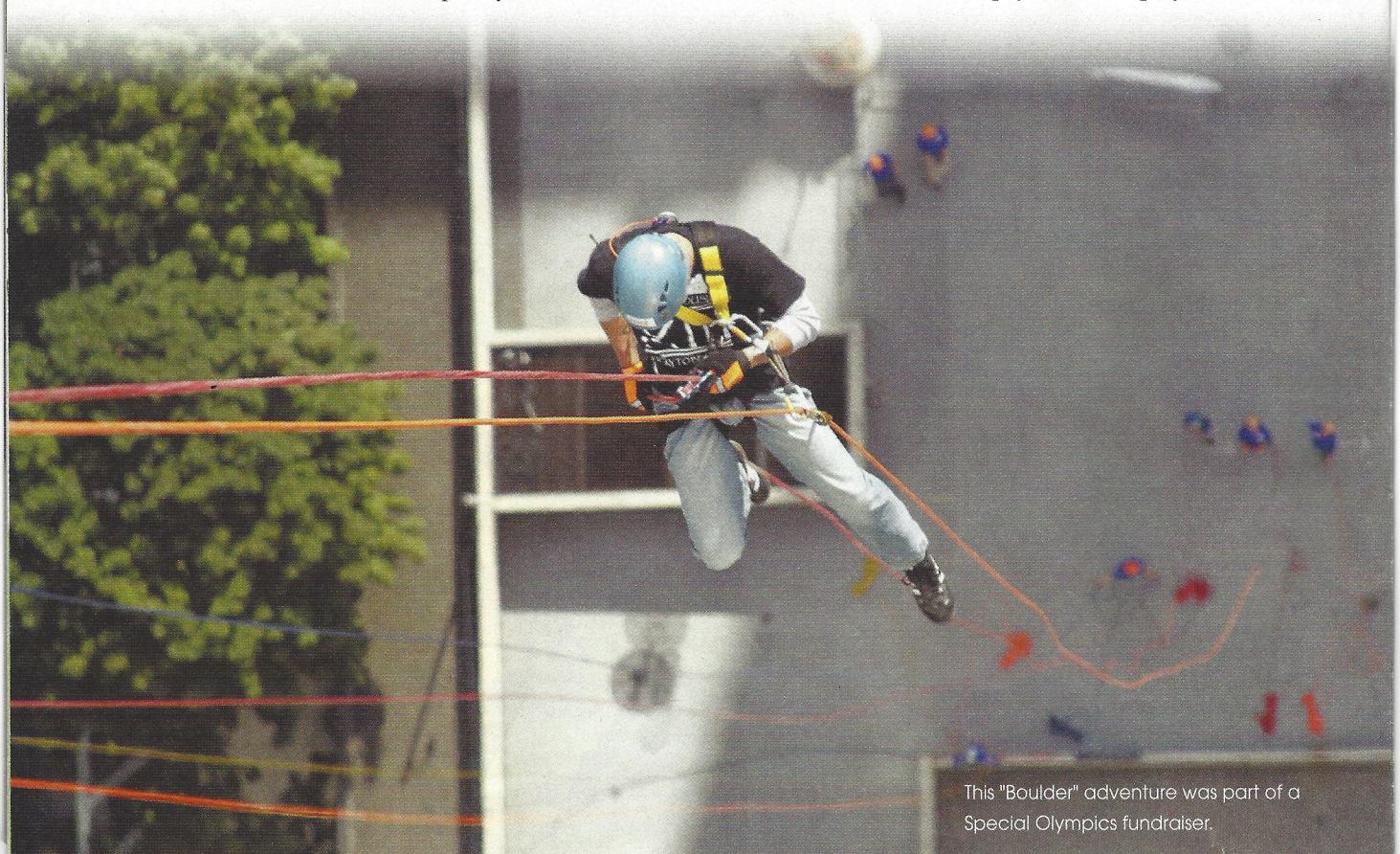
family. Doing this enabled me to keep my skills fresh and keep current on the uses and advantages of new paints and products offered at my local paint supply store.

After a dozen years, however, I became disenchanted with staring at a monitor and sitting for hours on end at a desk. So, what else could I do that I could get a strong sense of satisfaction from, excel at, and that brings with it mental as well as physical challenges so I can feel healthier and stronger on a daily basis? Well.... starting my own painting business, of course!

BW: What has been your most interesting project to date?

ELI: One of the most interesting projects I had the fortune of working on was also one of the most challenging. It was a historic residential exterior in the Montlake area of Seattle, WA, with intricate architectural features that we were able to be set off by painting different selected colors for the varying depths of these features. Our ability to spend the time and focus on achieving this kind of architectural differentiation, at the homeowners request, really allowed us to ply our trade in a way that not all projects do.

Additionally, there were the further challenges of having had to strip at least one complete sun-beaten side almost completely down during the prep phase as well as block brushing the entire house for the prime and finish coats. Let's just say we all had forearms like Popeye after this project!



This "Boulder" adventure was part of a Special Olympics fundraiser.

BW: What has been your largest project to date?

ELI: One of the largest projects I had the chance to work on was painting two stairwells in a 38-story building. I have to say that this one doesn't fall into the category of favorite projects; it was 38 floors of stairwell walls and stairs, twice. Plus we also had to paint about 1,500 "kick plates".....yes, that's right, plates that people kick notched into each stair as a protective measure for the concrete. I typically put a fair amount of care into what I do, so to think people would daily "kick" my work was difficult to digest.

BW: Your company name and logo are unique for a painting company. What made take go the ninja route?

ELI: I got the name "NinPaintSu" simply because of a propensity I have for all things corny, and I happen to love ninja humor which is great for me because it seems to dominate our social-scape these days. So NinPaintSu is simply a play on Ninjutsu, which is the martial arts style of Ninja. And no, I do not personally have any training in the style other than some Shorin Ryu training as a younger lad. I am not a ninja master, as sad as it is for me to say that.

I developed my own logo using Microsoft PowerPoint. I had an idea in my head and began overlaying shapes (ovals, circles and lines) on top of one another until the image in my head appeared on the screen. Then I drew the paint brush, it was really kind of fun!

But beyond the simple aspect of it being a product of my cheesy sense of humor, there are certainly some more pertinent reasons as to why I went in the ninja direction. As my company grows, I'd like to instill in all of my crew a desire to keep our workspaces clean and organized and pick up after ourselves as we go as opposed to just at the end of the day or even at the end of a job. I want us to be respectful, efficient, and one of the best companies at doing what we do. Basically, and I know this is an exaggeration, I want to be the company that paints your home very well without you knowing we were ever there!

BW: With so many painting companies in the Seattle area, what makes NinPaintSu unique? Why should a customer choose to hire you over "the other guy?"

ELI: What sets NinPaintSu apart is that

it employs painters who enjoy their work and want to be able to walk away from a project proud of what they've accomplished. Because of this, a few things will be evident to homeowners as we are conducting our trade in or around their home, or as we are consulting with them on a potential future project.

A couple of these things are that we don't see problems or issues, but rather challenges and opportunities... plus customers appreciate our respectfulness, tidiness and general organization. The evidence of these traits, coupled with a confidence in a prospective contractor's experience in their trade. is what I believe homeowners look for when making their important decisions. Additionally, while working on the exterior of a home. the neighbors have the fortuitous opportunity to see firsthand what level of care we put into our work and how clean we keep our workspace (the person's property). From that point, I believe it's a natural decision to go with NinPaintSu.

BW: Other than your love of painting, what hobbies do you enjoy in your personal time?

ELI: Aside from painting I like to boulder, which is a lot like rock climbing, but you don't go nearly as high and you don't use a rope. Also I've been writing what some might call poetry for quite some time now. I would be remiss if I didn't at least mention that I do have an Xbox 360, but I rarely find the time to play anything these days. I also enjoy sporting events, and am a huge Seattle sports fan (Seahawks, Sounders FC, Reign FC, Mariners).

NinPaintSu may be a young start-up, but they are in it to win it! With Eli's experience in painting and the business world, plus his love of the craft and professionalism, there is no doubt the ninjas are here to stay! To learn more about NinPaintSu visit: www.NinPaintSu.com or call Eli Dena at (206) 661-0249. TPC

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A finished project in the Snoqualmie area of Seattle. The company's website not only talks up the benefits of hiring it, but also has a helpful blog to explain to customers understand paint and do a better job on their own.