

## “Crash”

Colin Dougherty is known for his exacting standards and his infamous 3 a.m. e-mails (“It depends on when you work the best.”) Asked what he does for fun, he’ll quickly say, “I work on my business.” He expects as much from himself as he does the people he employs.

“I always try to surround myself with people who know as much or feel as much as I do or better than me. I can say that for every single person who works here. I’m really lucky to have such a dedicated crew of people who believe in the vision, believe in what I have set out to create and I have a pretty serious obligation to them.”

It’s hard to keep up with Colin. The man is driven. But just recently he eased up a little bit... all because of a baby girl. It was tense there for a while. Employees were walking on eggshells. She was overdue by more than a week!

But that all changed when, “a happy healthy little girl, Caroline Keating Dougherty, which is a mouthful for most Irishmen I know,” made her appearance June 23. Overnight, her Dad became a changed man. “The kid has been just a total blast,” he smiles broadly.

There’s a funny story about “Crash,” which was Caroline’s nickname before she was born. It was last October. Colin had persuaded Chris to participate in Synergy Racing’s annual Fall Fling Driver’s Education event at Virginia International Raceway in Danville. But Chris was not feeling well...driving uncharacteristically slowly, five and six seconds off her usual blazing pace. She even went off track and damaged her racecar. She called her mom in Keswick to tell the story. “You’re pregnant,” sensed her mother immediately.

On the drive back from Danville, Colin and Chris bought six different brands of over-the-counter pregnancy tests and “and lo and behold, yes she was pregnant,” remembers Colin. Later, at the doctor’s office, they read an article that said a newborn will cost \$10,000 in its first year. Colin quotes Chris, “Well considering that I just wrecked my 2005 Porsche GT3 Cup Car, the baby’s in debt for a lot more than \$10,000 a year.”



Colin Dougherty and newborn daughter, Caroline Keating Dougherty.

“They bring this beautiful girl over. She’s got this real natural look to her. She’s 20 years old. She’s at a Porsche DE event. You don’t really see this often. I’m saying ‘Wow, what a great package... she was beautiful, she was entertaining, she was fast on the track.’”

school, and went on to drive in what Colin calls “the big leagues.” On her 23rd birthday she won first in class at the Six Hours of Mt. Tremblant, the second woman ever to win in the Grand Am Series. Today, Colin says, “She is an awesome driver and she is faster than me at some tracks and I am faster than her at far less tracks than she is faster than me at. She does a great job.”

One day, Chris and Colin looked at each other and asked “Why are we living in the city?” They both loved where Chris grew up. “Let’s move there,” he remembers her saying. “She being just an avid sports car enthusiast and a farm girl at heart and the land and this county, it was a natural fit for CDOC and us to be down here and not in a big city and really enjoying everything that is important to us.”

“Important to us.” Take customer service, for example. “We’re always focusing on customer service.” Colin leans forward in his chair; his piercing blue eyes intensify. “If you continue on that path of providing the best cus-

tommer experience that someone can have with the 150 product lines that we carry, the tangible stuff, growing sales, number of employees increasing, possible expansion, west coast location, things like that, they’ll carry on the coat tails of that all-important guiding credo of great customer care.”

Last summer, Colin was invited to drive in the Baja 1,000, “the toughest off-road race in the world.” He calls the experience, “the most grueling thing I’ve ever done in my life.” He drove for 11 hours and came in eighth in class out of 369 cars entered. “It’s 1,000 miles through mountains, across deserts.”

On straight sections they hit speeds of 80 or 90 miles an hour. On other sections, “you’re going 10 miles an hour, but it’s like the roughest, most awful terrain you’ve ever seen in your life.”

Colin has been invited to drive in next year’s Baja 1,000. Will he go? “Yeah, probably,” he says sheepishly.

“That was easy,” chirps the “easy” button. Not.



Hanging on the wall at CDOC’s Gordonsville headquarters is a picture of the car Colin Dougherty drove for 11 hours in the world’s toughest off-road race, the Baja 1,000.

Photo by Phil Audibert

## “That was EASY”



Colin Dougherty’s piercing blue eyes focus on the “easy” button...a little red plastic thingy on his cluttered modern designer desk. He punches it and a little voice chirps, “That was easy.” He probably keeps this novelty close by because, well, it never really is easy is it? But Colin makes it look that way.

In case you haven’t noticed, this distributor and supplier of racecar products has quietly bought and moved into the old Liberty Fabrics/Hafner building in Gordonsville. And



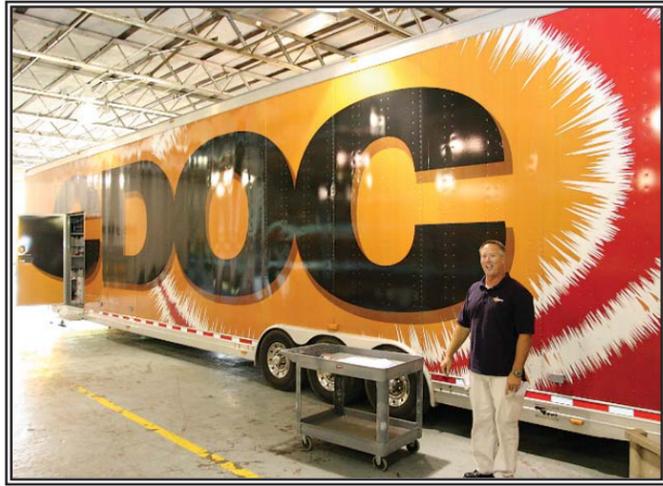
Above, Colin Dougherty stands in front of one of CDOC’s two “mobile warehouses” at a racetrack. Here, drivers and pit crews can purchase anything from helmets to radiators for their high performance racecars.

Photo by Bob Chapman

At left, CDOC’s founder and President, Colin Dougherty started his business just four short years ago. It outgrew its Charlottesville location and has moved to the 227,000 square-foot Liberty Fabrics/Hafner building in Gordonsville.

Photo by Susie Audibert

## the story of CDOC



Steve Pecaut re-supplies one of CDOC's rolling goody stores before sending it to a racetrack.

Photo by Phil Audibert

although he does not employ as many people as those textile industries once did, there is little chance that this new Orange County business will be out-sourced to China or India. You see, the letters CDOC are a play on Colin's name...Colin Docherty, and no matter how you spell it, Colin Dougherty and CDOC are both here to stay.

"At the center of it all is that small business that was started about four years ago that grew into a big business pretty quickly and needed a bigger home," says the company's founder and president of the move from Preston Avenue in Charlottesville to the 56-acre site in Gordonsville. Colin's commute to work is now just eight miles. "This is the perfect place to move the business to," he says with a satisfied smile.

The business will also have plenty of room to grow. CDOC only needs about a fifth of the 227,000 square foot-building to warehouse its 250,000 products (covering 150 brand names) and its two mobile goody stores. Colin has already leased most of the rest of the space to local book distributor VHPS.

CDOC also now owns the town's skyline-defining water tower with its 300,000-gallon capacity. But unlike its thirsty predecessors, CDOC only needs enough water to tend to the personal needs of its 18 workers. In fact, Colin says, the town of Gordonsville, "has expressed an interest in

getting it back so they can feed the needs of all these new communities." Annadale will be CDOC's next-door neighbor.

Despite the rising price of gasoline, motor sports are becoming increasingly popular. And it's not just NASCAR. Look at the numbers of weekend warriors driving car carriers to racetracks near and far;



Steve Marcus, of Marcus Motor Sports, steers through traffic while prominently displaying the CDOC logo on the hood of his Porsche racecar.

Photo by Bob Chapman

there are almost as many of them on the road as there are horse trailers, and for our area, that's saying something.

If you are one of these motor sports addicts, CDOC is your candy man...CDOC is the automotive equivalent of Hershey, PA to the chocoholic. This is the place where you can find those feather-light bucket racing seats that wrap around you

like a designer suit, the roll bars, the ventilated Bell helmets with comfy neck collar, drink tube and Head And Neck Support (HANS) system, the Bilstein racing shocks, the OMP gloves, the Nomex fire-retardant suits, the Piloti round-heeled racing shoes. It's all right there in their catalog and it is all warehoused and shipped from right here in Gordonsville.

Or, this candy store goes on the road, bringing its way-cool products directly to the racers at the tracks. Parked in one corner of this massive building behind the Gordonsville Food Lion, sit two 53-foot, boldly painted tractor-trailer trucks... "fully-stocked, mini rolling warehouses...they're custom built, the whole side lifts up, and we have a good across-the-board sampling of products to support the people who are participating in those races," explains Colin. Need a tire pressure gauge? Want to accurately measure tire temperatures? Need a fitting for your air jack? Step right this way.

Steve Pecaut is readying these goody stores...one for a trip to Barbour Motor Sports Park in Alabama; the other for a 45-day tour to tracks in Salt Lake City, San Jose, Denver and Wisconsin. "We've anticipated the run rates and we can kind of see what we need for those next five events. So, we load the truck accordingly," he says of his stocking strategy. If the truck runs

"C-Doc," as he was nicknamed by his parents, became the "go to" guy whenever someone had a problem with a racecar. He understood both sides of racing; he not only drove racecars, he could work on them.

short of anything, the road crew will phone Gordonsville Warehouse Manager, Ian Desautel and "he'll meet us at a track, we'll load it up again and we'll make the racers happy."

You might ask what is their biggest seller, and the answer is a bit of a letdown...brake fluid. Okay, what's the next best seller? Helmets. At CDOC they stock 15 different models of Bell helmets in all sizes. They also push the HANS device, which tethers the helmet to the harness. Desautel explains. "When you come to a dead stop, it doesn't allow your head to snap down and break your neck at the base of the skull. Most motor sport deaths are basal skull fractures from where you stop and your body keeps going." In fact, not wearing a HANS device may have been what killed Dale Earnhardt.

Colin Dougherty's idea for CDOC came when he took six months off from working in his Dad's legendary Swedish and German automobile repair shop in Westchester, PA. He hung around racetracks, "seeing everything that was happening...the way people were buying products and the way people were using products." He got to thinking, "What would be the ideal master warehouse distributor of automotive racing and performance parts? Unlike an Auto Zone or a Pep Boys, that specializes in everything from air fresheners to sophisticated oil," he surmised, "CDOC would just go after that niche market of products that are being used by professional racers and people who wanted their cars to perform like a professional race car."

According to the Motor Sports Industry Association, that "niche market" is 450,000 people strong. And whereas CDOC, in the past, focused on just sports car enthusiasts,

the road track guys, it is now expanding its customer base. Hence the move to Gordonsville...they need room to grow.

Colin sees a new kind of customer. "Our doors are wide open to hobbyists, hot-rodders, renovation people, drag racers, dirt track, circle track, go-carters. The warehouse is chock full of things to serve all those people. We're trying to do a better job of broadcasting our message more clearly...we're not just for sports car enthusiasts."

"We know how you feel about racing," Colin Dougherty recites the company mantra. "Just about everyone that works here has some direct experience with motor sports or racing or does racing themselves." He points to one of his salesmen, Mark Francis. "He did one of these things that you're not supposed to do. He turned his hobby into his career." Mark swivels away from the computer screen and tells a story of another life, working in the Washington, D.C. area and spending his weekends being a car club driving instructor. He and his family now live in Keswick; his hobby is his job.

"We work in a business that we're all passionate about," continues Colin. "I think everybody here loves coming to work every day. They may not love the 3 o'clock in the morning e-mails, just because I can't sleep. But the sales have doubled every year since we've been in business and we've been very lucky. We have a strong direct marketing



CDOC's Warehouse Manager, Ian Desautel, shows just one of the many different styles and sizes of helmets that CDOC offers its motor sports customers.

Photo by Phil Audibert



Chris and Colin Dougherty introduced a Vespa motor scooter dealership to Charlottesville. That business has expanded into the old CDOC space on Preston Avenue while CDOC has moved to Gordonsville.

Photo by Phil Audibert

approach that puts our products right at the point-of-use at the racetracks...we have a direct-mail catalog that goes to target audiences, the 450,000 people who are participating in motor sports in the United States right now."

Colin was 11 when he went to his first car club race. He remembers seeing the sleek Porsches and saying, "This is pretty cool. 'Dad you ought to get one of these.'" He drove in his first event at age 18. By the time he was 21 he was a certified driving instructor, himself. "C-Doc," as he was nicknamed by his parents, became the "go to" guy whenever someone had a problem with a racecar. He understood both sides of racing; he not only drove racecars, he could

work on them.

And so he and his Dad started setting up shop at racetracks where "people would drop by for a roll bar and a set of slicks." One day, Chris Perot's car was overheating at a Driver's Education event at Summit Point up near Berryville. Colin was working on somebody else's problem, and his friends kept saying, "You have to meet this girl. You have to meet this girl." I'm kind of like, 'guys, I'm busy with this customer. What's the problem?' " And then he saw her. He remembers vividly the moment he met his future wife. "They bring this beautiful girl over. She's got this real natural look to her. She's 20 years old. She's at a Porsche DE event. You don't really see this often. I'm saying 'Wow, what a great package...she was beautiful, she was entertaining; she was fast on the track.' "

Chris, who hails from Keswick, has always loved fast cars. She recalls her disappointment over her high school graduation present. "I had an unfortunate run-in with the city's finest for reckless driving-although still, to this day, I totally disagree; I was in complete control of the car the entire time-and my license was suspended for six months, thus preventing my attendance to race school. I got some earrings instead," she said bitterly in an interview two and a half years ago.

Anyway, she eventually did attend race