

JetMachining a Path to More Business

Earl Maudlin, President of Kemah, Texas-based Maudlin & Son Mfg. Co., Inc. would not use the company's sixty years of business success as an excuse for complacency. It was his ongoing desire to improve shop performance that led Maudlin & Son to purchase its third waterjet machine, the OMAX 2652A JetMachining Center.

On the Cutting Edge

Maudlin & Son has always sought to be on the cutting edge of technology. In 1972 the company became what is thought to be the first production shop in Houston to own a Wire EDM. "A local vinyl extrusion company had one for in-house use," says Maudlin. "I saw it and said, 'I have to have one of those!'"

But the purchase of waterjet technology was nearly accidental. "I was really looking for a laser to be my next move," Maudlin recounts. "I attended an industrial trade show where a guy began by showing me fiberglass cut with a waterjet; at that point I was mildly interested. When he pulled out a box of titanium pieces cut by a waterjet, that really got my attention. My focus immediately turned to the waterjet, because I saw the variety of things it could do that a laser could not. Besides, laser technology was already established in Houston, and I like to offer something that's different."

Maudlin used his first waterjet machine to cut and trim glass, marble, fiberglass, and other materials. "It turns out the waterjet fit us a whole lot better than a laser. It was also less expensive. It worked so well for us, we bought a second waterjet a few years later to handle the building volume of business."

The JetMachining Center

"I bought the JetMachining Center at the Houstex SME Show. In fact, it was the very machine OMAX had on display there. The machine itself was so easy to set up, we had it cutting parts within two days of bringing it home. All we had to do was connect the utility lines, hook up the high pressure line to the pump, and we were in business."

The two other waterjets owned by Maudlin & Son have an overhead gantry for loading extremely large pieces of material and cutting large items. But, as Earl Maudlin points out, ninety-five percent of what Maudlin & Son does can be done on a small machine. "We just don't have those huge jobs all the time," he comments, "and space is a consideration, also the fact that we just don't need the enormous tables. Still another reason for buying the JetMachining Center was that it's much more accurate than our big waterjets."

Maudlin's old waterjets are not obsolete. The company still uses the larger machines, in part revitalized by the new P2040 pump manufactured by OMAX Corporation. "I like

the P2040's electric-drive motor versus the hydraulic pump motor on my other waterjets," Maudlin says. "When I bought the JetMachining Center, I also bought a second pump to install on one of the other waterjets. I have it plumbed across the shop so that if the JetMachining Center pump is idle at any time, I can throw a lever and put the other P2040 into action. It serves as a backup as well as a primary pump."

"I went to school on the first waterjet we purchased. That was because I had no idea of the maintenance involved with high-pressure equipment. And all of it is different; each has its unique maintenance problems due to varying pressures. But I like the JetMachining Center better than anything else I've seen. Many of its components cost less than those on our larger waterjets. And I believe the reduced maintenance of the OMAX pump and the more durable consumable components of the JetMachining Center will save us money."

The operators who run the new waterjet like it better than Maudlin's older waterjets because it's easier to use. "That's another thing that impressed me about the JetMachining Center. It is much more user-friendly than our other PC-based units. We go through longer, more involved procedures to ready our larger machines for cutting than we do with the JetMachining Center. With the OMAX 2652A you just fill in the blanks, and let it go."

Close-Tolerance Work

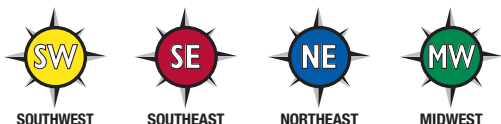
Maudlin & Son does work for nearly every industry involved with manufacturing. "We manufacture component parts for the oilfield industry, petrochem and electronics, equipment manufacturers, safety and household products, and prototype health-related products. The OMAX machine allows us to quote and receive that kind of close-tolerance work."

"We do parts on the OMAX that we wouldn't be doing otherwise, because to do them on another machine wouldn't be economical. We even use the OMAX to cut shims, much of which is close-tolerance work with very thin materials. We stack cut a lot of materials, and the OMAX gives us a cleaner cut all the way through than other machines. And, of course, it leaves no heat affected areas, which is very important in what we do."

Can-do Attitude

Maudlin's can-do attitude was inherited from his father and grandfather, self-styled entrepreneurs who started the company in 1938. "Dad was working for a munitions company during World War II, and Grandfather was working for a taxi meter company," Maudlin explains. "They got to jobbing out and building taxi meter parts from the basement of

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their house, and it just expanded from there. I entered the business as soon as I was tall enough to work."

Metal stamping was the original business, but when they began manufacturing louvered windows under the name Louver-Lok in the 1950s, the family created a holding company, Maudlin Industries. "Then in the early 1960s," Maudlin said, "somebody told us we couldn't build sailboats. Well, that was the wrong thing to say." For the next fourteen years, Gulf Coast Sailboats was an important addition to the Maudlin Family's corporate business. At its peak, Gulf Coast employed more than one hundred people to design and build eleven different models. "We also owned a company called Blutworth Sails," adds Maudlin, "where we manufacturing sails and cushions for our boats."

Gulf Coast Sailboats was closed in the mid-1970s when increasing resin prices made it difficult to remain competitive. They continued manufacturing industrial fiberglass products under the name Fiberglass Incorporated until about five years ago.

Maudlin's son-in-law, Kirk Tindall, is the newest family member to join the business. "He's really put a bright star in it for us," says Maudlin. "He's energetic and really likes what he's doing. In fact, his enthusiasm kind of got me excited about it again."

Today, Maudlin & Son generally employs around forty-five workers, seven of which are waterjet operators and one who is a programmer. The company typically runs a single

shift, but averages two shifts on its waterjet equipment.

A Good Fit

According to Earl Maudlin, the main benefit to having the JetMachining Center in his shop is the closer tolerances it offers which, in turn, gives his company the capability to do jobs now it couldn't even bid on before. "It's a selling feature that has definitely created new opportunities for us. It has also unloaded some work off our Wire EDMs, enabling us to load up the Wire EDMs with the work they should be doing. It's a good fit with the rest of our equipment. Not only can our Wire EDM machines take on more work, but we can bid on closer tolerance waterjet jobs as well."

For more information contact:

Reed Leistad
Maudlin & Son
P.O. Box 699
Kemah, TX 77565
281-334-7566
Fax 281-334-7560

Omax Corporation
303 26th St. N.E.
Auburn, WA 98002
206-833-0343
Fax 206-833-9443
www.omax.com