

## Rogers Uses Charmilles For Rocky Mountain High

*It was the summer of '92. Joe Rogers had worked for someone else for 15 1/2 years and now it was time to strike out on his own.*

"I was encouraged by several people to do it," Rogers says of his decision to leave Denver's Alfred Manufacturing where he programmed and ran all of the CNC equipment. The 43-year-old continues, "I looked into it and from my experience with all of the different types of machining and my affinity for computer-aided manufacturing, wire EDM was the way I wanted to go. I like how clean it is, how accurate it is and there wasn't the competition for wire EDM that

there was for milling and turning. That's why I went that way."

Actually, machining was in Rogers' blood long before Rogers Wire EDM Service opened its doors in Arvada, CO, a Denver suburb. Joe's father was a manufacturing engineer at Argonne National Laboratory in Illinois. Joe recalls his dad showing him around different area shops.

Another constant in the junior Rogers' career has been Charmilles' machines. He began working with them in 1977 when he started at Alfred. "They were very reliable," Joe says of the Charmilles quality.



When it came time to choose an EDM partner for his own shop, the choice was obvious. "I was real familiar with the programming and the machines," Rogers says of the Charmilles line, "so it was not much of a learning curve to go out on my own even though I got a different model wire machine."

Rogers opened the doors in 1992 with a Robofil 300. He says today, "It was a great time to get into the trade and it was a great machine to come out at the time." Rogers liked the modular design, the fact that cutting speeds were much improved over previous models, and, not unimportant to someone just beginning his business, the price on the unit had declined.

There were plenty of other features that made the Robofil 300 appealing to Rogers. "I really liked the multiprocessor which can be programmed while the machine is cutting and you can prepare your next job and get it all completely debugged and ready.

"The graphics were also better on this machine. This machine had the collision protection on it so if you run into something, it just stops. It doesn't knock everything out of alignment. This one also had auto restart. If the power fails, it will automatically start over on its own and continue to cut. On the old machines, you would have to start all over."

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distributor that has sold Rogers all of his machines. "He took a gamble. When he did it, there weren't any other wire job shops in Colorado. He was the first wire job shop in the state. Now there are six of them."

Rogers Wire EDM is thriving. Two summers ago, Joe moved the business to a 2,880 square-foot location in Arvada. There are now three employees. Most important, there are 150 customers. Joe estimates that 2000 revenues will be

\$500,000. Rogers mostly does work for other shops in the area that build tooling for plastic injection molds or stamping dies. They do all of their work and then Rogers does the wire EDM part of it.

"It's gone a lot better than I expected," Rogers says. "Sales exceeded my projections by quite a bit and then I purchased my second machine a lot sooner than I thought I would and then I purchased my third machine within a couple of years after that so it's been steadily growing and it's exceeded what I ever thought it would."

Those second and third machines were Charmilles', too. Rogers purchased another non-submerged machine, the Robofil 500 at the end of 1993. He has subsequently added a threader to make it a 510.

Rogers' expectations were more than met by the Robofil 300. "The machine has been great," he says.

An efficient, reliable machine was a must for Rogers when he began his business because he was a one-man band. Except for a part-time employee who was helping with the bookkeeping, Rogers was toiling alone. He was doing everything — sales, billing, and of course, the work itself.

"It was a lot of hours," Rogers recalls of his six-day, 60 to 70-hour weeks. "A lot of work — I didn't have much time for other things. But I was able to establish a good rapport with a lot of shops around town. Moldmakers move around a lot. They seem not to be too content at any one place. One moldmaker would find out about me and he'd move to another shop and tell them about me and it just kind of went from there, by word of mouth mainly. I did a mailing at the beginning, about 400 pieces, and got some results from that but mostly it has been word of mouth."

"He really rolled the dice," says an admiring Matt Davis, President of Quantum Machinery Sales in Englewood, CO and the Charmilles



The appeal of the 510 for Rogers was its size. It's one of the biggest EDM machines on the market and one of the largest in the Denver area, Rogers believes. With it, Rogers was able to take in parts that weighed up to 2,200 pounds.

"The 510 has been a real workhorse," says Rogers. "That's the one we use the most and keep the busiest because it has the greatest capacity. It's a bigger machine so it's easier to move around and indicate parts even if they're not big parts."

Unwittingly, Rogers' purchase of the large 510 machine signaled a new era in Colorado machining, according to Charmilles distributor Davis. "The purchase of Joe's machine opened a new mindset on the ability to design large moldbases in

conjunction with the use of wire EDM," Davis said.

Three years ago, Joe purchased his first Charmilles-submerged machine, the Robofil 4020SI. He likes the terrific accuracy that the 4020SI gives him and the ability to achieve greater angle cuts. Rogers also liked the on-board anti-diagnostic program that comes with the machine. This allows him to diagnose machine failures without calling the service department.

The support after the sale is another reason Rogers trusts Charmilles. "They're really helpful," he says, "and if there's a part you need, they can have it to you the next day." 🤖